

# ENGAGING INNOVATIVE KNOWLEDGE THROUGH APPLIED QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

MCAST 2<sup>nd</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS



## The impact of study placements on Health and Social Care for Level 3 students within Vocational Education in Malta; a Grounded Theory Study

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## Introduction

The advantages of placements surpass any drawbacks that this method may have, as mentioned by (Davies 1990), and these will be investigated in my research.

There is relatively little study on placements in nursing homes and daycare facilities, despite the fact that the majority of MCAST health and care students visit these locations. This study envisages to provide useful propositions, regarding students studying health and social care subjects at MCAST and to provide a greater understanding of the broader benefits of placements; as there is a dearth of placement research in the local landscape and practice setting.

**Objective:** The purpose of this study is to shed light on how MCAST may enhance the students' experiences with work placements in an environment that is constantly changing, to the advantage of local small businesses.

**Research Question:** What is the impact of study placements on Health and Social Care EQF level 3 students within Vocational Education in Malta?

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# Justifications

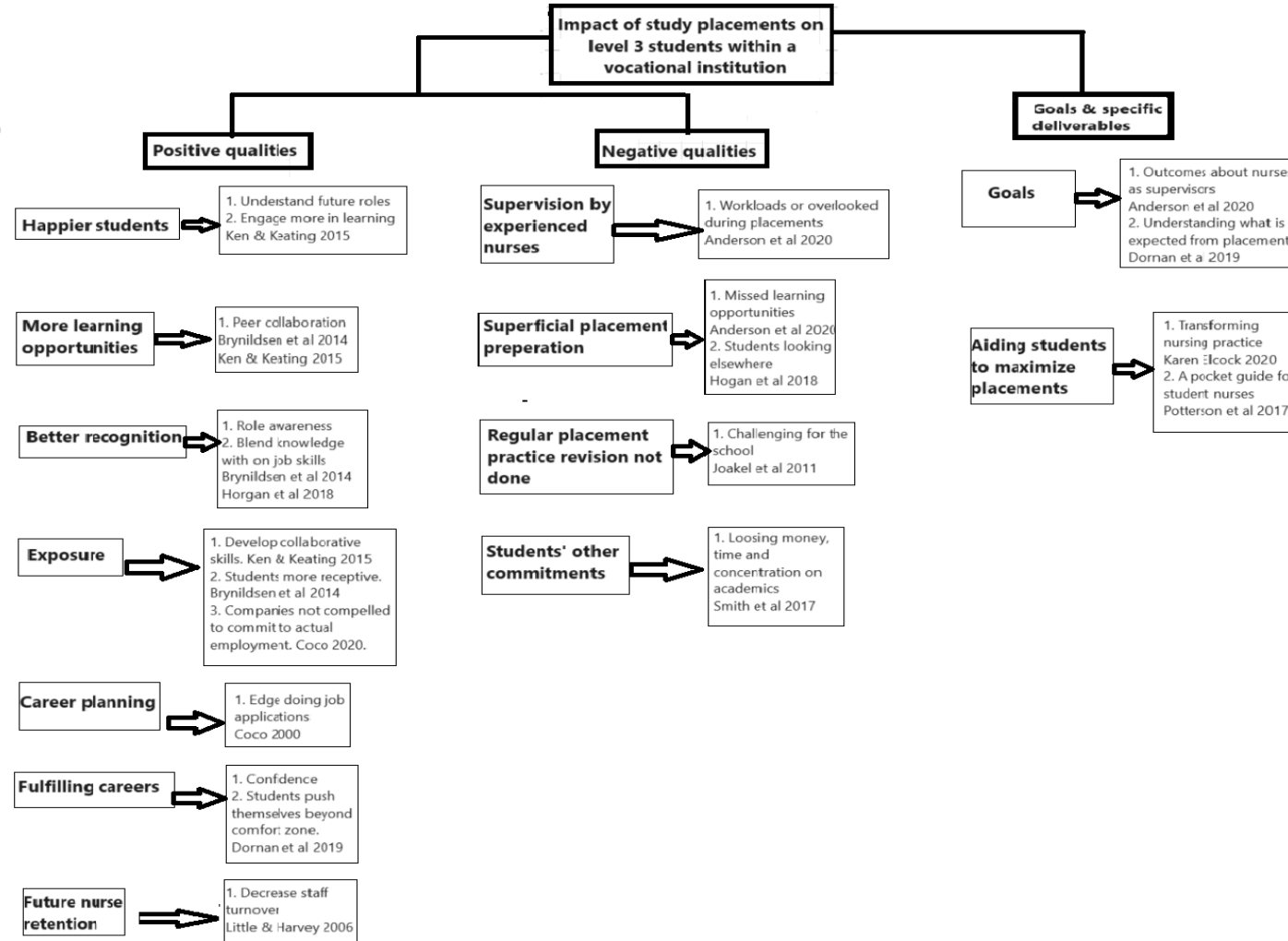
- **Personal Justification:** The wider benefits of placements have never been really and thoroughly analysed and this research offers an opportunity of delving deep in this phenomenon and drawing the necessary conclusions.
- **Practical Justification:** The purpose of the study is to explore and understand 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.
- **Social Justifications:** This study aims to give a valuable social contribution to challenges such as limited supervision, time constraints, and emotional demands of working with vulnerable populations, which will highlight the need for more robust support systems and structured guidance in support of the current placement system.

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## Literature Map

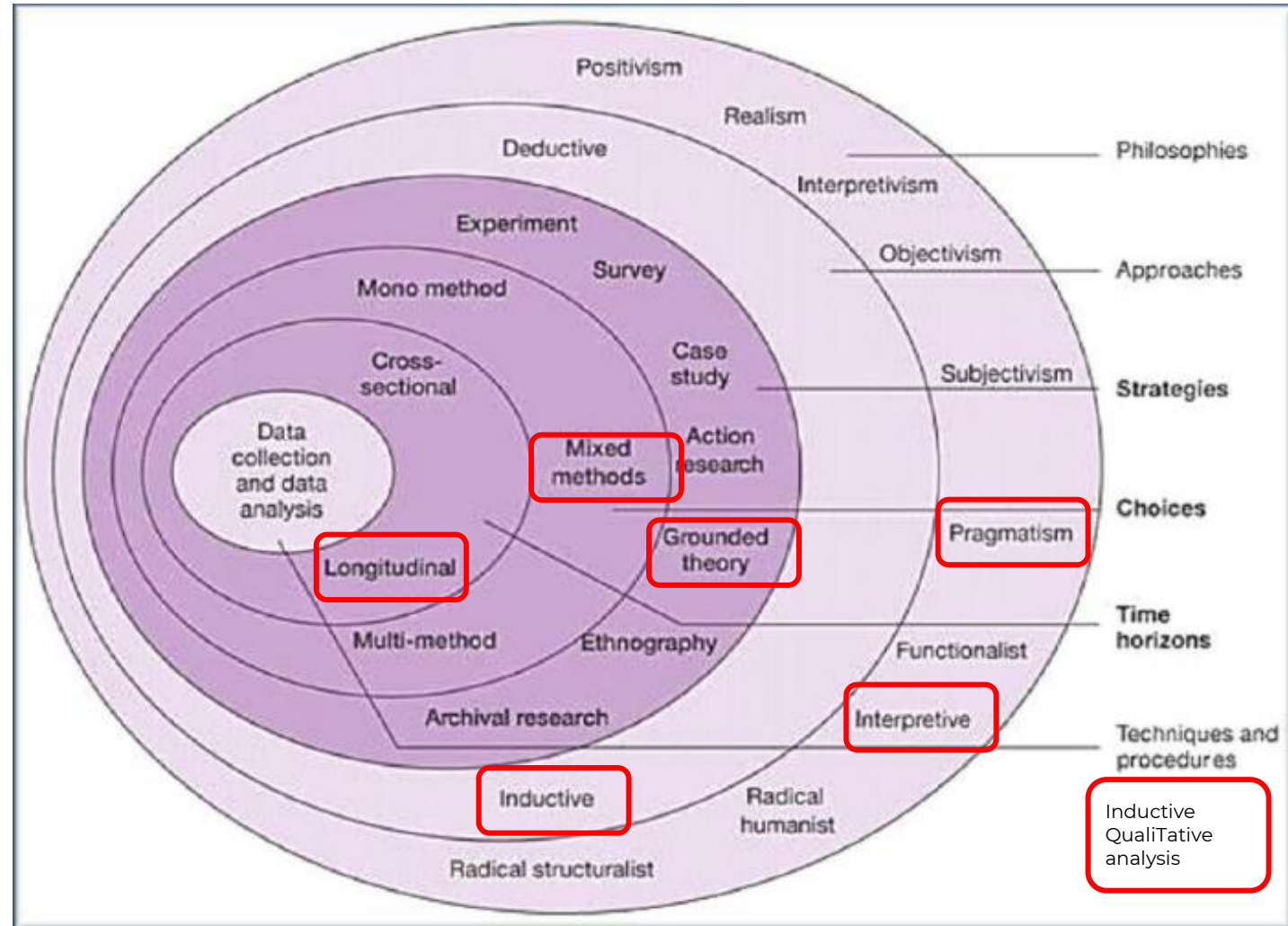


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## Research Onion



Research onion illustrating the chosen approach (adopted from Saunders et al. 2009 p.138)

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## Methodology

- **Method:** Before the project's data collection phase, which is using a qualitative research approach, a portion of the existing literature was assessed, and additional literature is being studied as the research proceeds forward. The decision to conduct a qualitative study was obvious given that this method is frequently used to understand opinions and perceptions. Qualitative methodology presents complex views collected through interactions with participants
- **Grounded theory:** is an approach to research in which the researcher gathers and analyzes data without a predetermined hypothesis or preconceived theory. Instead, the research process involves generating theories or patterns from the raw data through a bottom-up approach. In other words, it starts with specific observations and works towards generalizations and theories based on those observations.
- **Researcher's role:** Grounded theory allows the researcher to investigate new or understudied issues, formulate theories, and identify opportunities for additional investigation. This method of inquiry identifies patterns, themes, and hypotheses
- **Sample population:** The participants in the data collection are level 3 students at MCAST, a significant vocational college in Malta. Students studying health and social care who were varied ages, females and males who physically attended MCAST and were placed in various health care settings made up the sample frame. The sample also included the supervisors who monitored each placement. The researcher started with a pilot study of 5 students which will then increase to approximately 25 cases to achieve a representative study of all the targeted level 3 students in MCAST. The students who were chosen are significant because this academic year is when initial placements take place.
- **Research instruments:** Data with the convenience sampling was carried out and collected via face to face semi-structured interviews with the students, and observations of the placement setting. The key justification for choosing semi-structured interviews is the potential to restore some control to the interviewees. By using a semi-structured interview, some consistency in the themes being looked at can be kept without taking away too much from the interviewee thus offering a certain level of flexibility.

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# Ethical Considerations

- It is very important to follow the ethical provisions of the GDPR to protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants' personal data.
- Participation was voluntary with the right to withdraw with no further obligation.
- Each participant received an email with a participant information letter that included the major goals of the study, the technique to be followed, and a request for consent. The researcher was the only one who knew the participants' names and placement areas.
- To conceal the identity of the respondent, pseudonyms were employed. This guarantees anonymity and confidentiality whilst boosting mutual confidence between the researcher and the participants

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## Analysis Process

Step 1:	Transcripts were created and inputted in the MAXQDA software to later assist the analysis.
Step 2:	The audio recordings of each session were listened to several times and contents noted. Transcripts were read and re-read, in turn, elucidating the participants' narrative.
Step 3:	The analysis process was a reflexive exercise that explored emotions and feelings as well as social conditions.
Step 4:	In this research, inductive qualitative analysis was used. As is commonly observed in such presentations, this type of research involved open ended questions, flexibility and adaptability to identify different themes.
Step 5:	An inductive qualitative analysis approach was chosen to gather and analyze data through emerging themes and common patterns found across results.
Step 6:	Transcripts were examined in search for patterns, divergences and limitations. In this respect MAXQDA software was used to facilitate the process.
Step 7:	Themes and sub-themes were merged.
Step 8:	Following the analysis, the outcome was discussed by producing reliable arguments that are supported by literature and the participants' experiences.



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## Main Themes

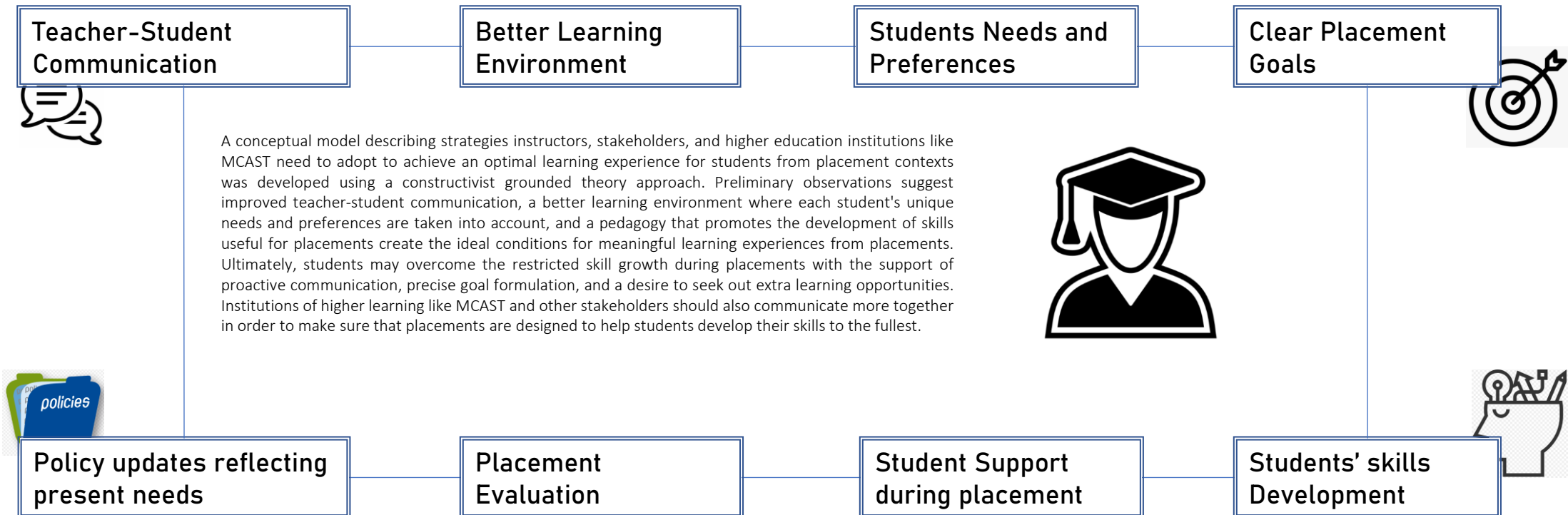
- Theme 1 Factors influencing the placements' goals
- Theme 2 Dealing with diversity in placements
- Theme 3 Barriers influencing placement experience
- Theme 4 Students Professional and Work Aspirations
- Theme 5 Student Personal Development
- Theme 6 Factors influencing the placements' goals

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## Emerging Models



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## THANK YOU

