From periphery to core: exploring experiential learning in business education through the lens of signature pedagogies

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Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Doctor of Education is entirely my own work, and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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List of Abbreviations

AACSB: Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
AEE: Association for Experiential Education
AOL: Assurance of Learning
CAQDAS: Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis
CoI: Community of Inquiry
CoP: Community of Practice
CPD: Continuous Professional Development
CRM: Customer Relationship Management
CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility
EBM: Evidence Based Management
EL: Experiential Learning
HE: Higher Education
HRM: Human Resource Management
PG: Postgraduate
SME: Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
TA: Teaching Assistant
UG: Undergraduate
UN: United Nations
VLE: Virtual Learning Environment

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Abstract

From periphery to core: exploring experiential learning in business education through the lens of signature pedagogies

Joanne Lynch

In business education, experiential learning (EL) is an increasingly common teaching approach, and it is strongly endorsed as a core pedagogy by leading business school accreditation bodies. EL theory posits that learning is enhanced when students engage in reflective problem-solving by connecting theories and knowledge to real-world experience (Young *et al*., 2008). It is this ability to bridge the theory-practice gap that makes the pedagogy particularly attractive to business educators, as it allows learners to engage in authentic tasks that mirror the professional practices they will need in their future careers. EL has the potential to be a powerful pedagogical approach, but studies suggest that the practical implementation of this theory is challenging for educators and that the effective learning impact of the pedagogy cannot be achieved without opportunities for reflection on the experience (Perusso *et al.,* 2019). Using the lens of signature pedagogies (Shulman, 2005a), this thesis explores business educators' experiences of using EL approaches across a range of disciplines in one business school. Signature pedagogies provides a research framework to explore not only the surface acts of teaching using EL but also the deep and implicit assumptions about discipline knowledge and values that underpin educators' pedagogical choices, thus influencing learners' professional formation. Using an exploratory case study design, 36 interviews were conducted to explore educators' implementation of experiential learning and their perspectives on the benefits and limitations of the approach. The findings provide evidence of extensive and creative use of EL in business education. However, the data also indicate that the approach imposes significant demands on educators' pedagogical competence, time commitment and access to resources. Using EL approaches with large undergraduate classes emerges as a particular challenge. In addition, critical reflection on the process of applying a signature pedagogy lens to the evaluation of EL as a core pedagogy in business education has provided significant insights and recommendations to researchers and educators are provided.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This research study explored business educators' experiences of teaching in higher education (HE) using experiential learning (EL) approaches**.** EL is an approach that emphasises active learning experiences to enable students to develop knowledge and skills that are applicable to real-world business situations. Research indicates that EL has the potential to be a powerful pedagogical approach (Bevan and Kipka, 2012; Farashahi and Tajeddin, 2018), and it has become increasingly prevalent in business education (Burch *et al.,* 2019; Bell and Bell, 2020). However, researchers have identified challenges in using the pedagogy, and studies suggest that translating EL theory to practice in the classroom is particularly difficult (Ewing and Ewing, 2017; Kreber, 2001; Heinrich and Green, 2020). Dean *et al*. (2020) argue there is much that is unknown about business educators' goals in using EL, and they surmise that "there are many questions about the practice of experiential pedagogy that would benefit from empirical investigation" (p. 580). As EL moves from periphery to core in business education (Hodge *et al.*, 2014; Perusso *et al.,* 2019), it is timely to look at the pedagogy more closely.

Using a single case study design, this thesis addressed this research challenge by examining how business educators implement EL in one business school in the Republic of Ireland and explored their views on the benefits and challenges associated with this teaching approach. Business educators' implementation of EL was examined through the lens of Signature Pedagogies, a concept that refers to the distinctive teaching and learning practices associated with particular disciplines (Shulman, 2005a). Signature pedagogies offer a framework to explore not only the surface acts of teaching using EL but also the deep and implicit assumptions about pedagogy which underpin educators' teaching and learning approaches. Educators' pedagogical choices, methods and competencies influence how students learn, so these are critical decisions. Pedagogies, especially those that carry signature status, should not be taken for granted. Their fitness for purpose should be questioned (McAlpine and Amundsen, 2011) so that we understand "what makes them wise and what makes them flawed" (Falk, 2006, p. 76). Therefore, as EL becomes more prominent in business education

(Bartholomew *et al.,* 2020; Dean *et al*., 2020), then it is reasonable to use the concept of signature pedagogies to frame this exploration of EL.

This chapter begins by outlining the background of the study amid the challenges facing business education in the 21st century. Possible reasons behind the growth of EL in business education are proposed and the research problem is explained. In this study, the concept of signature pedagogies was used to frame the research inquiry and a rationale for this decision is presented. The main research questions are stated and the chapter concludes with an outline of the contribution of this study to knowledge and practice and a description of the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Background

The 21st-century HE environment is complex and challenging for institutions, educators and students. The unprecedented challenge wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 had a far-reaching impact on the lives of students and staff and the operation and delivery of third-level education. While the pandemic has been described as a once-in-a-generation 'black swan' event (Krishnamurthy, 2020), HE institutions worldwide have been under pressure for several years due to a myriad of factors including globalization, economic instability, technological advancements, and issues related to student diversity, inclusion and access (Corneul, 2007; Canals, 2009; Starkey and Thomas, 2019; Cannon *et al*., 2021). Universities and colleges are subject to growing public scrutiny, as they are expected to demonstrate accountability and transparency and the attainment of measurable outcomes and standards (Clarke *et al.,* 2015). As a result, in many countries, HE is under mounting pressure to demonstrate "the legitimacy and efficacy of its offerings and how successfully it meets the needs of significant stakeholders" (Tomlinson, 2022, p. 46). HE institutions face a difficult balancing act to ensure they are adhering to principles of good pedagogic practice while responding to these external demands.

This is particularly relevant in the context of contemporary business education where there is debate on the legitimacy of business schools and the extent to which they serve the needs of students and society in the 21st century (Pettigrew and Starkey, 2016; Snelson-Powell *et al*., 2016). Much is expected of today's business graduates: they are expected to be critical

thinkers and problem-solvers, effective communicators, technologically savvy, good team players, adaptable, resilient and able to demonstrate a commitment to ethical and sustainable behaviour (Butler *et al.,* 2019; Harrington *et al.,* 2015; Jackson and Chapman, 2011).

However, stakeholders from both the business and academic communities have expressed concerns about gaps in graduate knowledge and skills and disparities between current educational approaches and their suitability for preparing students for the realities of the workplace (e.g., Farashahi and Tajeddin, 2018; Worthen, 2022, Hansen, 2021). The problem is compounded by the pressure to equip graduates with the skills and knowledge necessary not just for today's workplace, but for jobs that may not even exist yet (McNamara and McNamara, 2019; Peschl *et al.,* 2023) and "for working in a world that is rapidly changing, uncertain, interconnected and ecologically precarious" (Conlon, 2022, p. 342). Consequently, there are calls for educators to examine the purpose and content of business education and the methods being used to teach contemporary learners to become practicing business professionals (Tufano, 2020; Worthen, 2022). Educators are facing growing demands to demonstrate how their curricula and pedagogies can provide students with the knowledge and competencies necessary for the real world of business (Blasco, 2012; Okoli *et al.,* 2019; Conlon, 2022).

1.3 Experiential Learning In Business Education

One way in which business schools and academics have responded to this challenge is through the adoption and increased use of EL pedagogies (Agogué and Robinson, 2020; Baird and Parayitam, 2019). Definitions of EL vary but in the context of business education, it can be described as an active learning pedagogy where students learn through reflective problem-solving by connecting theories and knowledge to real-world experience (Hamilton and Klebba, 2011; McCarthy and McCarthy, 2006). Across various disciplines, EL covers a range of learning activities including case studies, internships, study abroad, simulations, live cases, problem-based learning, role plays and consulting projects. Through participation in EL activities, students develop a reflective mindset which enables them to transfer their learning to a work context upon completion of their studies.

Research suggests that EL can be an effective educational approach to encourage greater learner engagement (Radford *et al.,* 2015) and to improve academic performance (Piercy, 2013). Proponents claim EL is associated with improved learning outcomes (Burch *et al*., 2019), increased student engagement (Kosnik *et al*., 2013), enhanced research and consulting skills (Bove and Davies, 2009), higher self-efficacy and teamwork skills (Childers *et al*., 2020) and greater student satisfaction and career confidence (Caza *et al*., 2015). One of the most frequently documented benefits of the use of EL pedagogies is improved problem-solving and critical-thinking skills (Dahl *et al*., 2018; Okoli *et al*., 2019). EL activities aid the attainment of these outcomes by the application of theories and concepts to real-world situations thereby connecting theory directly with practice (Okoli *et al*., 2019). It is this ability to bridge the theory-practice gap that makes EL particularly attractive to business schools as it allows students to engage in tasks that mirror the professional practices they will need in their future careers (James and Cassidy, 2018).

EL is not a novel approach in business education but in recent years, the integration of EL initiatives into business school curricula has accelerated rapidly (Laufer *et al.*, 2018). Hodge *et al.* (2014) observe that EL has advanced from periphery to core, from the "uncommon, exceptional experience" to a standard method of business education (p. 1). EL has been described as a fixture in business schools worldwide (LeClair, 2018) and indeed today, many US universities make completion of EL credits mandatory for business majors (Baird and Parayitam, 2019).

While there are well-researched pedagogical reasons for the adoption of EL, other factors have played a part in the increased interest in this teaching method. HE institutions are operating in dynamic and challenging environments and active and applied learning approaches such as EL help to meet market expectations for 'oven-ready' graduates with real-world skills (Fletcher-Brown *et al.*, 2014). EL may also be a means to differentiate institutions competing for funding and students in competitive HE markets.

It is also argued that endorsement of EL by business school accreditation bodies has contributed considerably to its more widespread adoption (Ames, 2006; Wright *et al*., 2019). Seen by some as the encroachment of managerialism into pedagogical practice (Kalfa and

Taksa, 2017), others describe accreditation as a critical factor for a business school's success (Kundu and Majumdar, 2020). The number of schools seeking accreditation has increased significantly over the last twenty years and within the sector, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) is considered one of the most recognised and sought-after accreditations (Miles *et al*., 2015). AACSB schools represent the top 5% of all institutions worldwide offering business degrees and attainment of accreditation is widely regarded as the gold standard in business education (Trifts, 2012). In their 2020 standards for membership, the AACSB mandated member schools to document their teaching and learning strategies and to provide evidence of "a portfolio of experiential learning opportunities that promote learner engagement between faculty and the community of business practitioners" (2020, p. 39). Adherence to the standards is essential for a business school to maintain its accredited status. Therefore, in over 900 AACSB-accredited schools worldwide (and in institutions aspiring to membership), educators are encouraged to utilise EL as a core pedagogy.

In this thesis, it is argued that this explicit encouragement of EL by the AACSB represents an endorsement of this teaching approach as a signature pedagogy for business education. The term 'signature pedagogy' is credited to research by Lee Shulman and his colleagues in the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, a US-based education research and policy centre. According to Shulman (2005a), signature pedagogies are the distinctive teaching approaches that are used to prepare students to think and act like experts in their future professional domain. Advocacy of particular pedagogies is significant for professional development because, according to Shulman, "they implicitly define what counts as knowledge in a field and how things become known. They define how knowledge is analyzed, criticized, accepted, or discarded" (2005a, p. 54). Borders (2020) contends that a signature pedagogy "essentially defines a profession, through both its pedagogical approaches (strategies) and its teaching goals" (p. 13).

A signature pedagogy does not exclude other forms of teaching and learning (McLain, 2020) but any decision to emphasise one pedagogy such as EL over others has far-reaching implications. Such choices can define how and which competencies are fostered in learners, thus significantly influencing professional formation (Raj *et al.,* 2021). Signature pedagogies

can impact curriculum development, programme design and resourcing, academic workloads and even the structure and architecture of the learning environment itself (Crookes, 2020; McLain, 2020; Stoten, 2023; Shulman, 2005a; 2005c).

1.4 The Research Problem

In theory, much is promised from EL as a pedagogy, and the benefits of using EL as a teaching and learning approach have been documented extensively in the business education literature (e.g., Edmondson and Matthews, 2021). While acknowledging the advantages of EL, notes of caution about its employment as a pedagogy have been sounded (Dean *et al*., 2020), and indeed, a variety of challenges have been identified in the literature regarding the implementation of EL in business education.

From an institutional standpoint, implementation of EL pedagogies can be expensive (de Pillis *et al.,* 2020), time-consuming (Okoli *et al*., 2019), ethically complicated (Dean *et al.*, 2020) and difficult to implement with large classes (Agogué and Robinson, 2021; Mantai and Huber, 2021). Roberts (2018) warns that introducing EL into formal curricula is both a structural and pedagogical challenge and teaching experientially has been described as "complex" (Beard, 2018, p. 34). It is perhaps unsurprising therefore, that Isaak *et al.* (2018) claim that "faculty use of these methods appear to be unevenly applied and often misunderstood" (p. 24). The role of reflection, as a key component of EL, has been identified as a particular area of concern in business education. Reflection serves as a bridge between the practical experiences students encounter and the academic knowledge they acquire, enabling them to integrate and apply their learning in a meaningful way (Gray, 2007). However, from the business education literature, there are suggestions that reflection may be overlooked or given insufficient time in business modules (Perusso *et al.,* 2019; Ferguson *et al.,* 2016; Rosier, 2001).

The issues described here resonate with my personal experience of using various EL techniques to teach marketing in a business school. As a discipline specialist with limited pedagogical training, I was largely left to find my way in my use of EL, a situation that is not unusual in HE (Bell and Bell, 2020). In Ireland, as in many countries worldwide, there is no professional training requirement for HE teachers (Yurekli Kaynardag, 2019) and

consequently, it could be said that as my students were learning by doing, I was learning by teaching. My EL journey has been rewarding but challenging, particularly once I began to use more complex EL activities involving real companies. I also had to negotiate my own zone of proximal development on reflection, as I endeavoured to support my students' reflective learning as part of the EL process.

The next sections outline the main research questions for this study, the research approach and focus and the rationale for adopting signature pedagogies as a lens to examine EL in business education.

1.5 Main Research Questions

The main research questions for this study were:

- How do business school educators implement EL?
- What are the challenges associated with using this pedagogy in business education?

1.6 Research Approach and Focus

The thesis adopted an exploratory case study design and used the concept of signature pedagogies as a lens to explore how EL is implemented in practice in one business school. There is a considerable body of research on EL in business education but this largely consists of individual educators' narratives of their own teaching experiences and are typically focused on one particular academic discipline and in either undergraduate or postgraduate education, but not both. By focusing on EL practitioners within a business faculty, this research provided a broader perspective of how the pedagogy is enacted across a range of business disciplines. In addition, research that encompasses both undergraduate and postgraduate business education yields particular benefits as it provides insights into the continuity or variations in EL practices across educational levels. Understanding the nuances of EL at different levels aids educators in designing curriculum elements that align with the specific needs and developmental stages of students. Recognizing areas of success or challenges at each level could facilitate targeted interventions to enhance the overall effectiveness of EL initiatives.

Much of the published research on EL in business education has focused on the student perspective, e.g., measuring the perceptions and learning experiences of the students who participate in EL activities (e.g. Childers *et al*., 2020; De Zan *et al*., 2015; Elam and Spotts, 2004). The perspective of the faculty who design and use EL approaches is much less researched (Agogué and Robinson, 2021; Mantai and Huber, 2021). There is a need, therefore, for research that goes beyond an audit of faculty awareness and use of EL to include a focus and study of how academics perceive, design, and deliver EL in business education. Participants in this study were members of the staff of a business school in an Irish public university. The business school provides degrees at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels and offerings cover both general business and discipline-specific degrees.

The discussion now turns to detailing and justifying the adoption of signature pedagogies as a lens through which to investigate the use of EL by a cohort of business educators in higher education.

1.7 Rationale for Signature Pedagogies

The concept of signature pedagogies was introduced by Shulman in a series of papers in 2005 (2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2005d). In these articles, he depicts signature pedagogies as the characteristic forms of teaching and learning that educate future professionals to think, perform and act with integrity. Such pedagogies are multi-dimensional with surface, deep and implicit structures and are characterised by features that facilitate the acquisition of professional knowledge and skills (2005a).

There are several reasons why the concept of signature pedagogies is used to frame this study of EL. Firstly, it provides a lens that can be used for "recognising, discussing and critiquing pedagogical approaches" (McLain, 2021, p.1631). Hyland and Kilcommins (2009) claim that signature pedagogies offer an infrastructure for the exchange of teaching ideas that prompts "thinking about the assumptions, commitments, priorities and 'pathways of enquiry' that underpin teaching practices" (p. 34). Using this concept to frame pedagogical inquiries is documented in the literature in both general education (e.g., Zhao *et al.,* 2021; Esterhazy *et al*., 2021) and business education (e.g., Trank, 2014; Wright *et al.,* 2019; Schmidt-Wilk, 2010; Ramsgaard and Blenker, 2021).

Secondly, the concept of signature pedagogies encompasses three core elements - structures, features and habits - which can facilitate the interrogation of a pedagogical practice (McLain, 2021). Shulman's articulation of surface, deep and implicit structures provides an infrastructure to gain insight into the 'what', 'how' and 'why' of teaching (Borders, 2020). This approach encourages the researcher to explore not only the surface or observable acts of teaching using EL approaches but perhaps more importantly, to also examine the deep and implicit assumptions about teaching and learning which underpin educators' pedagogical choices. In addition, the concept of signature pedagogies raises the question of a shadow structure where elements of a pedagogy may be omitted or only weakly exemplified (Shulman, 2005a).

Given the challenges facing business education, Shulman's conceptualisation of the features of signature pedagogies is interesting. He depicts signature pedagogies as *pedagogies of uncertainty* (fostering the ability to make judgements in complex and fast-changing environments); *pedagogies of engagement* (creating highly participative learning situations); and *pedagogies of formation* (generating teaching and learning experiences that can influence learners' values, dispositions and beliefs). These are core features of professional practice (Poole, 2007), and exploring these features as they manifest in business educators' EL practices could provide valuable insights into how business students are prepared for the complex and unpredictable world of professional work (Esterhazy *et al.,* 2021).

Shulman describes the goals of professional education as habits of the mind, hand and heart (2005a). Signature pedagogies contribute to the development of these habits as students come to understand the theory of their discipline, are able to apply this knowledge in practice, and also demonstrate a commitment to professional standards of practice (Lock *et al*., 2018). In line with this thinking, Kosnik *et al.* (2013) suggest that effective business education should deliver three types of educational value: academic value (business knowledge); professional value (application of business skills); and moral value (integrity, social responsibility and good citizenship). In light of the challenges of the 21st-century business environment, a holistic approach to business education that attempts to balance intellectual, technical and moral dimensions is of growing interest to scholars (Lock *et al*., 2018; Schmidt-Wilk, 2010; Wilkerson, 2010; Thomas and Cornuel, 2014; Raj *et al*., 2021). The development of habits of

the mind, hand and heart are ambitious goals for any pedagogy, and Shulman admits that the goals may not receive equal attention and in some professions, particular dimensions may be notable by their absence (Shulman, 2005a). Business education has been criticised for both a theory-practice gap (Berdrow and Evers, 2011) and for failing to adequately address moral dimensions of business practice such as ethics, corporate governance and corporate social responsibility (Brunstein *et al*., 2018; Akrivou and Bradbury-Huang, 2015). Using signature pedagogies as a lens to explore EL across disciplines within one business school offers an opportunity to see the pedagogy in practice and to understand educators' perspectives of the motivations behind their pedagogical practices.

Finally, using this framework to explore teaching practices across disciplines within a business school provides an opportunity for interdisciplinary insight into teaching and learning practices. The benefits of using signature pedagogies in this way are explained by Borders (2020):

> Scholars of signature pedagogy do not approach their work with "extreme assumptions that the ways of thinking in one discipline are inapplicable to others" (Chick *et al*., 2009, p. 12). Rather, they suggest "wandering into...disciplines similar to one's own can be revealing," as "the best pedagogical practices...across disciplines will help faculty better examine and assess their own teaching." (Borders, p. 43)

By looking at EL across disciplines within the business school, it also opens up the possibility for the development of 'trading zones', that is, opportunities for transdisciplinary sharing of ideas and knowledge among peers (Algers and Bradley, 2020).

1.8 Contribution Of The Research

This study makes a significant contribution to extant research on both EL and signature pedagogies. Firstly, by focusing on the implementation of EL in one business school, the study provides an in-depth insight into the practical application of this pedagogy by educators in diverse business disciplines. By adopting a cross-faculty approach, the thesis offers a unique account of EL that contributes to knowledge by offering a detailed, context-specific understanding of teaching practices, filling gaps in the existing literature and providing insights that have practical implications for educators and educational leadership.

The findings indicate that EL is a core pedagogic approach used by participating educators to provide students with opportunities to actively apply their knowledge and skills in authentic business situations. The study makes a particular contribution to knowledge on the role of reflection in EL and how it was used by educators in this study to help students make sense of their experiences and to connect theory to practice. By conducting a thorough literature review, the thesis identifies limitations in the current knowledge on reflection in EL in business education. The empirical research addresses these limitations, providing new data and insights that enrich the scholarly conversation in the field. The findings also provide insights into the implications of EL practices for educational leadership and policy within the business school. This information can inform decision-makers on strategies for curriculum development, faculty development and resource allocation to further support effective EL practice.

Secondly, the thesis offers an original contribution to the literature by applying the conceptual lens of signature pedagogies to explore EL in business education. Using this lens, the research provided insights into the pedagogical choices made by educators and their views on the facilitating and constraining factors of using different EL approaches. Much of the published work on signature pedagogies in business education is conceptual (McLain, 2019; Schmidt-Wilk, 2010; Jones, 2019) so the empirical evidence provided by this study advances understanding of this concept within the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Over and above the contribution that this thesis makes to EL, from an international perspective, the development of a proposed signature pedagogies framework is particularly significant. This framework refines Shulman's original concept by considering the interplay between structures and features in the examination of EL pedagogy. The application of the framework in this way highlights the need for a holistic model that captures the complexities of pedagogical practices in higher education. The refined framework addresses limitations identified in the existing literature and provides a more comprehensive tool for examining and critiquing pedagogy. In addition, the revised framework provides the basis for a recommended template for module and curriculum planning which can be used to enhance pedagogical design and professional development.

1.9 Organisation Of The Thesis

In Chapter One, the background to the research problem, the rationale for the study and the main questions were outlined. The theoretical framework for this study is presented in two chapters. Chapter Two provides an overview of EL and contemporary interpretations of this theory. The concept of signature pedagogies is explained as are the challenges in using this concept as a research framework. The limited extant research on signature pedagogies in business education is reviewed to ascertain how the concept has been utilised and the conceptual framework and its application in this thesis are also presented. Using the lens of signature pedagogies, Chapter Three provides a detailed insight into pertinent literature on EL in business education. Chapter Four outlines the methodology employed in this study with particular reference to how the ethical issues pertaining to insider research were addressed. The findings from the data collection are analysed in Chapter Five and these are discussed in relation to existing literature and research. In Chapter Six, the conclusions and the main findings from the study are presented. Three sets of recommendations are proposed and the chapter concludes with suggestions for further research on EL and signature pedagogies.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION - EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND SIGNATURE PEDAGOGIES

2.1 Introduction

This research study explored educators' implementation of EL in business education through the lens of signature pedagogies. The literature review for this thesis was conducted through a comprehensive search strategy, incorporating specific parameters and criteria to ensure a thorough exploration of the relevant scholarly landscape. To begin with, electronic databases such as Academic Search Complete, Education Research Complete, ERIC International, JSTOR, Sage Journals Online and Google Scholar were systematically searched for articles focusing on EL and signature pedagogies in various educational contexts. To enhance the relevance and currency of the literature, a time frame was established to focus on recent developments in the field. However, attention was given to seminal works and key authors, employing citation tracking to identify foundational texts and seminal papers.

The search terms were carefully crafted, combining keywords such as "experiential learning AND business education," "reflection AND business education," and "signature pedagogies". Additionally, the inclusion criteria were refined to encompass studies that not only explored the theoretical foundations of key concepts but also delved into practical applications of EL in business education. The search on signature pedagogies also considered the interdisciplinary nature of the topic and incorporated literature from education, psychology and related fields. Peer-reviewed articles, books, and conference proceedings were prioritized to maintain academic rigour and credibility. A reference list comprising two hundred and fifty-three articles on EL, one hundred and thirty-eight on reflection, and one hundred and seventy-one on signature pedagogies was compiled using the reference management tool, Zotero.

To contextualise this exploration of EL, the chapter opens by presenting a broad overview of the "terms, concepts, models, thoughts, and ideas" (Merriam and Tisdell. 2016, p. 84) which underpin our understanding of EL in higher education. The review considers the origins of EL theory as well as contemporary interpretations and contributions by leading theorists. The

discussion then turns to the concept of signature pedagogies which, as noted by McLain (2021), "not only provides a framework for pedagogical dialogue, it also suggests a structure for strategic research and enquiry into the subject's praxis" (p. 1644). Extant research on signature pedagogies in business education is reviewed to demonstrate the diverse interpretations of Shulman's work and the challenges associated with using the concept. Drawing closely on Shulman's writings, the chapter closes with an overview of the conceptual framework for the study.

2.2 Experiential Learning

The relationship between experience and learning has long been of interest to educators and the intellectual origins of EL theory are closely associated with the works of 20th century educationalists and philosophers. According to Seaman *et al*. (2017), interest in learning from experience coincided with the advent of institutionalized education in the early twentieth century. In the United States, John Dewey was particularly critical of educational approaches that emphasised rigid school curricula which he considered to be ineffective and indeed, inhumane. He contended that education should be concerned with transformative experiences rather than a narrow concentration on curriculum and memorisation of knowledge (Beard, 2018). In 1938, he published *Experience and Education*, where he promoted learning through meaningful and interesting experiences as an alternative approach to traditional forms of learning. For Dewey, the creation of new knowledge involved a cycle of experiential inquiry where the learner becomes aware of a problem, ideates, tries out a response, considers the consequences and either confirms or adjusts previous assumptions (Lewis and Williams, 1994). This approach gained Dewey his reputation as a proponent of *experiential learning*, although there is little evidence that he ever used this expression in his writings (Wurdinger and Carlson, 2009).

While Dewey is strongly associated with the concept, many other writers have made significant contributions to the development of the field of EL. Seaman *et al.* (2017) suggest that the adoption of EL as a general concept owes much to Kurt Lewin's work in the 1950s on social psychology, where EL emerged as a training format linked to personal growth. Jean Piaget's cognitive development theory is also cited as an important influence on EL theory as his work emphasizes the importance of active learning and concrete experiences (1964).

Contributions from humanist psychology have also been acknowledged as key influences on EL theory, most notably those of Carl Rogers and Donald Schön (Hannon *et al*., 2004). Rogers (1961) emphasized the holistic nature of the learning process and equated experiential learning to personal learning and growth. He also highlighted the importance of the educator as an educational facilitator, rather than a transmitter of content. Schön (1983) is best known for his writing on the key role of reflection in bridging the gap between experience and learning, and his theories are discussed later in this chapter.

Lewis and Williams (1994) also include Paulo Freire and Jack Mezirow in the list of writers who emphasized experience in their theories. Freire (1970) viewed education as a process of empowerment and his perspective that praxis involves both action and reflection provides theoretical grounding for EL theory. Freire is also credited as influential in the development of Mezirow's transformative learning theory which links to EL theory through its conceptualization as a continuous cycle with core elements of experience, critical reflection and dialogue (Mezirow, 2000).

2.3 Understanding of Key Terms

Calls to define EL can be "disconcertingly difficult to respond to" (Reynolds, 2009, p. 387) and it is not unusual for scholars to use a *learning by doing* explanation of the concept (Lewis and Williams, 1994; Green and Farazmand, 2012). The use of such a simple explanation is unsurprising when attempts to define EL are variously described as complicated, differing widely and open to debate (Moon, 2013; Burch *et al.,* 2019). Seaman *et al.* (2017) observe that the concept is challenging because it "simultaneously expresses an empirical phenomenon, a set of pedagogical strategies, and an ideology" (p. 14). Indeed, for some scholars, EL is not just an alternative way of learning but in fact, a movement that challenges traditional practices of education (Elam and Spotts, 2004; Reynolds, 2009).

Such complexity may be why it is not unusual for discussions on definitions to start by stating what EL is *not*. According to Beard, EL is "definitely not the mere memorizing of abstract theoretical knowledge, especially if taught by traditional formal methods of instruction such as lecturing and reading from books" (2018, p.29). Thus, as an educational approach, EL is frequently positioned as a contrast to traditional, didactic teaching and learning methods.

EL theorists emphasise the central and foundational role of experience in the learning process with Moon (2013) stating that "all learning is, in effect, learning from experience" (p. 104). The Association for Experiential Education (AEE), a non-profit community of educators, professionals and learners provides a comprehensive definition of the concept stating that it is**:**

> a teaching philosophy that informs many methodologies in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities. (aee.org, 2022)

This definition highlights the centrality of an experience to EL but also identifies the key role of reflection which Rogers contends offers perhaps more than any other concept in HE, "potential for engendering lasting and effective change in the lives of students" (2001, p. 55). In a review of the various theoretical concepts of reflection, Rogers (2001) surmised that reflection was an active cognitive or affective process, initiated by an unusual or unclear experience that necessitated an examination of assumptions and beliefs and resulted in new insights into the experience (p. 41). While the literature is replete with definitions, Dewey's is one of the most commonly cited stating that reflection is "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (1933, p. 118).

Moon (2013) reports that 'reflective learning' and 'reflection practice' are increasingly part of the current reflection vernacular. She defines the former quite simply as "the intention to learn as a result of reflection" (p. 80) and she attributes the increased focus on reflective practice to the publication of Donald Schön's book *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983). Moon surmises that reflective practice has a professional connotation and is "in essence, a professionalized form of 'reflective learning'" (p. 80). This thesis adopts Moon's approach which chooses to use the terms 'reflection' and 'reflective learning' interchangeably and 'reflective practice' where it connects to reflection in a professional context.

In the next section, contemporary theories of EL are examined with a particular focus on the work of preeminent EL researcher, David Kolb.

2.4 Theories of Experiential Learning

Moon (2013) identifies the work of Boud *et al*. (1990) and Kolb (1984) and their sequential models as being particularly influential in explaining contemporary theories of EL. Boud *et al*. provide propositions about EL which, according to Moon "progressively identify the boundaries of experiential learning" (p. 111). Their propositions state that experience is the foundation of and the stimulus for all learning; learners actively construct their own experience; learning is a holistic process that is socially and culturally constructed, and it is influenced by the socio-emotional context in which it occurs (Moon, 2013, pp. 8-14).

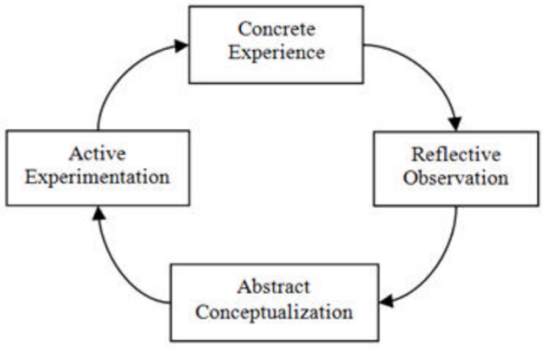
Within the EL domain, Kolb is the most extensively cited researcher and he is widely credited with advancing understanding of the theory in a range of educational contexts. While other models have been also proposed (e.g., Bergsteiner and Avery, 2014; Matsuo and Nagata, 2020), Kolb's framework is predominant in many studies of EL.

Kolb (2005) explains his interpretation of EL theory by expanding on six principles he derived from the work of philosophers such as Dewey, Lewin and Piaget who gave experience a central role in their learning theories. His first proposition is that learning is a process, "a continuing reconstruction of experience" (Dewey, 1916, p. 1). Secondly, the process is one of relearning and continuous examination and testing of ideas. The third proposition suggests that learning is about the resolution of conflict by moving between action and reflection. Fourthly, learning is not just a cognitive process but a holistic one involving thinking, feeling, and behaving. Kolb's fifth proposition is drawn from Piaget's theory of equilibrium (1977) which suggests that learners assimilate and accommodate new experiences with existing concepts. Finally, Kolb positions EL as a constructivist learning theory where social knowledge is transformed into personal knowledge, thus directly contrasting EL with more traditional, transmission learning theories.

According to Kolb, there are two forms of experience: concrete experience (CE) and abstract conceptualisation (AC), and two ways in which experience is transformed into knowledge: reflective observation (RO) and active experimentation (AE). In a concrete experience, the learner is actively involved in either a new experience or an existing one that has been reinterpreted. Knowledge can also be acquired through consideration of theories and

concepts from prior experiences (AC). Knowledge transformation takes place when the learner actively reflects on the experience through the lens of particular learning objectives (RO) and experiments or tests knowledge through practical application (AE). Kolb depicts his theory as a four-stage learning cycle where learning can begin at any stage, but EL is most effective when it encompasses all stages (Kolb, 1984). The model is depicted in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: The Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984)



Within the literature, Kolb's model may have acquired a 'taken for granted' status (Tomkins and Ulas, 2016) but this has not averted a considerable academic stream criticising the model on both conceptual and empirical grounds. In particular, the model has been criticised for its lack of clarity (e.g., Miettinen, 2000; Bergsteiner *et al*., 2014) and an overemphasis on individual rather than social learning (e.g., Reynolds, 1998; Kayes, 2002).

While Kolb's model has been the subject of particular criticism, scholars have also raised more general concerns about the translation of EL theory into practice (e.g. Seaman *et al*., 2017; Giraud-Carrier *et al.,* 2021). Heinrich and Green surmise that "existing EL theories help educators, collectively, address what EL is and why to do it, but only begin to help educators how to teach using EL. This dynamic leaves classroom educators with overly simplistic guides to EL, disconnected from integrated models for design and implementation" (2020, p. 206). Hence, it may be argued that the success of any educational intervention depends not only on its theoretical soundness but also on the practical implementation of the approach (Hung, 2011).

From this discussion, it is evident that EL is a rich area of study that can be examined using various theoretical approaches. Before deciding to examine EL in business education through the lens of signature pedagogies, several theoretical approaches were considered based on their relevance, applicability, and alignment with the research objectives. In business education, Kolb's model is one of the most frequently used frameworks for examining EL (e.g., Young *et al*., 2008; Radford *et al*., 2015). Donald Schön's work on reflective practice in professional education has also been used to examine EL as it focuses on the capacity of individuals to reflect in and on action. Researchers use this framework to examine how professionals learn from their experiences and continually refine their practice through reflection (e.g., Perusso *et al*., 2019). Another possible lens for the study was Mezirow's theory on transformative learning which focuses on how individuals undergo transformative learning experiences that challenge and reshape their fundamental beliefs and perspectives. Researchers can apply this framework to understand how certain EL opportunities have transformative effects on individuals' worldviews. Bell and Bell (2020) combine the work of all three of these theorists in their proposed framework to underpin the experiential entrepreneurship learning process.

The decision to use the signature pedagogies framework over models like Kolb's, Mezirow's, or Schön's stemmed from a desire to comprehensively explore the teaching practices, structural elements and contextual nuances inherent in EL within business education. Understanding the challenges that EL presents to those involved in business education necessitates a thorough exploration of educators' pedagogical practices and underpinning assumptions. While models like Kolb's focus primarily on the learner's experience, signature pedagogies emphasize the role of educators in shaping the learning environment. Given that the study aims to explore how educators design and implement EL in business education, a framework that explicitly considers the practices and perspectives of educators was deemed to be more relevant. Signature pedagogies also allow for a holistic examination of the pedagogical context within a discipline, encompassing teaching practices, assessment methods and the broader educational environment. This comprehensive approach is valuable when investigating the multifaceted nature of EL in business education.

The discussion in this chapter moves on now to Shulman's concept of signature pedagogies which is examined to provide background and context for its use as a lens in this study.

2.5 Background to Signature Pedagogies

The concept of pedagogy is highly significant in the teaching profession and Thomson *et al.* (2012) suggest that it encompasses not only teaching methods, curricula and assessments but also "relationships, conversations, learning environments, rules, norms and culture with the wider social context" (p. 10). The importance of the pedagogical choices made by educators in higher education is highlighted by Shulman who states:

> Whether in a lecture hall or a lab, in a design studio or a clinical setting, the way we teach will shape how professionals behave - and in a society so dependent on the quality of its professionals, that is no small matter. (2005a, p. 59)

The term 'signature pedagogies' is credited to research by Shulman and others in the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Their studies focused on the exploration of pedagogy and practice across a range of professional occupations including medicine, law, nursing, the clergy, engineering, and teacher education (Earls Larrison *et al.,* 2011).

According to Shulman, signature pedagogies describe the characteristic forms of teaching and learning that are distinct in professional education such as rounds in medicine, or the case dialogue method typically used in law schools. Shulman argues that these distinctive pedagogical approaches teach not only the content of the discipline but also how to think and act like a responsible professional within the discipline itself. He describes three dimensions - thinking, performing and acting with integrity - as the fundamental goals of professional education (2005a). As a pedagogical concept, this is significant as it recognises that teaching is not just the transmission of knowledge but is, in fact, a professional education apprenticeship that serves to socialise a novice into the appropriate ways of thinking and performing within a discipline (Hyland and Kilcommins, 2009). Shulman argues that there is much to be learned about the "personalities, dispositions and cultures" of a field by examining its core pedagogical practices (2005a, p. 52). Borders (2020) expands on this stating that through the study of signature pedagogies, educators can explore not only the teaching

methods used in a discipline but also the underlying values, beliefs and assumptions that serve to characterise identity within a profession.

Since the publication of Shulman's seminal articles in 2005, signature pedagogies has been used as a framework to explore teaching and learning practices in a wide range of disciplines including social work (Boitel and Fromm, 2014), nursing (Crookes *et al.,* 2020), counsellor education (Baltrinic and Wachter Morris, 2020), engineering (Moozeh *et al.,* 2021), leisure studies (Knee and Means, 2018), teacher education (Parker *et al.,* 2016; Tan, 2019), journalism (Woolley, 2018), public administration (Abel, 2009), design and technology education (McLain, 2021), music education (Creech *et al*., 2022), and e-learning (Eaton *et al*., 2017).

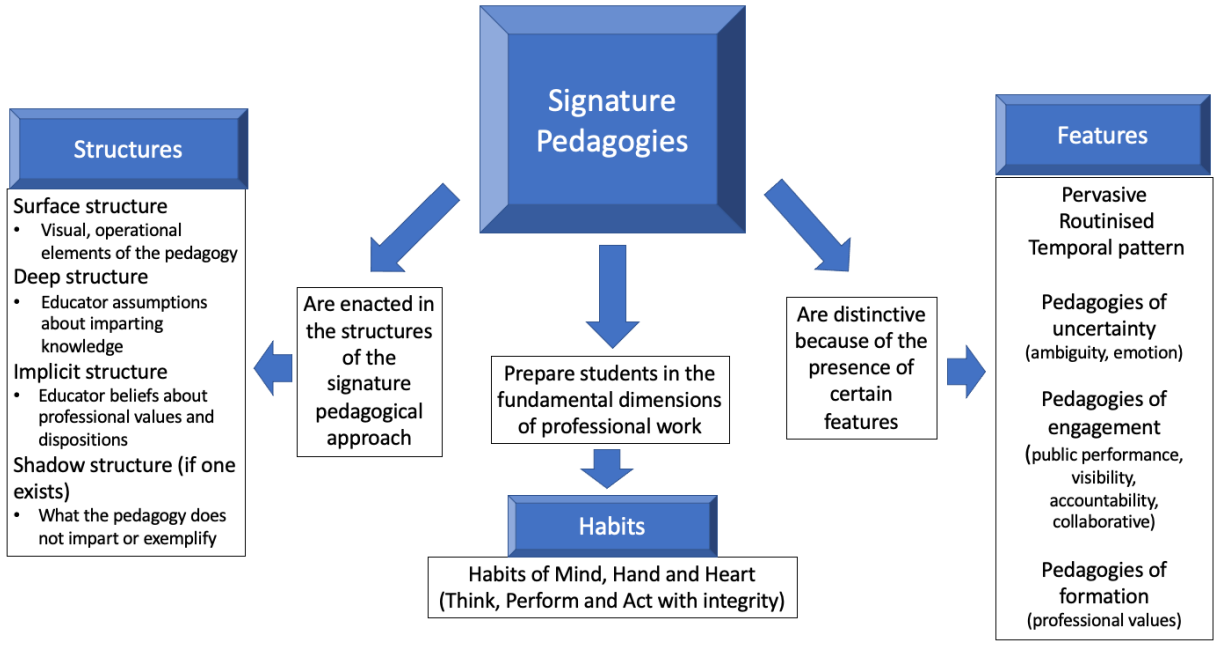
In the next section, Shulman's hypotheses and the key elements in his conceptualisation of signature pedagogies are outlined.

2.6 Critical Analysis of the Signature Pedagogies Concept

Shulman does not make exploration of a signature pedagogy a straightforward task. Much of the difficulty with the concept arises from a lack of definitional clarity (Khoo and Kan, 2020) as evidenced by the wide array of terms used in Shulman's writing to describe signature pedagogies including 'structures', 'levels', 'dimensions', 'features', 'characteristics', 'temporal patterns', 'apprenticeships' and 'habits' (2005a, 2005b, 2005c). McLain suggests that Shulman "presents a framework with flexible boundaries, for educators to engage with disciplinary pedagogical routines; to understand and promote, or to challenge and change them" (2021, p 1631). Eisenhart (1991) notes that in academic research, frameworks come in different shapes and sizes with varying degrees of elucidation. While it could be argued that Shulman's work is more an elucidation of his philosophy about the nature and goals of professional education than a workable framework, it will be referred to as a framework for the purpose of this research study. Several researchers have attempted to interpret and illustrate the concept of signature pedagogies (e.g., Baumann, 2010; Tan, 2019; Nørgård *et al*., 2017; Conlon, 2022) and examples of the diverse visual depictions of signature pedagogies proposed by these researchers are in Appendix A. From a review of the research to date, it is clear that there is an absence of a cohesive, commonly accepted framework which makes the

investigation of the concept particularly complex (Yendol-Hoppy and Franco, 2014). Therefore, as an initial step in interpreting the concept for the purpose of this research, the key elements in Shulman's writings are presented in Figure 2.2 and analysed in the following sections.

Figure 2.2 Key Elements of Signature Pedagogies (adapted from Shulman, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c)



Three key elements are central to Shulman's discussions on pedagogies for professional formation – habits, structures and features – and these are explained below. The discussion begins with habits as these are the goals of professional education.

2.6.1 Habits

According to Shulman (2005a), signature pedagogies prepare students for the fundamental dimensions of professional work. The main goal of professional education is to instil learners with core pedagogical content knowledge and three key *habits*, that is, habits of the mind, hand and heart. This is achieved through the synthesis of three apprenticeships. *Habits of the mind* are developed via a cognitive or intellectual apprenticeship (where one learns to think like a professional); *habits of the hand* are acquired through a practical apprenticeship (where

the emphasis is on the application of knowledge); and *habits of the heart* are fostered via a moral apprenticeship (where one learns to think responsibly and with integrity) (2005b). The importance of each habit may differ from discipline to discipline but Shulman argues that "a sound professional pedagogy must seek balance, giving adequate attention to all the dimensions of practice - the intellectual, the technical, and the moral" (2005a, p. 58).

2.6.2 Structures

Signature pedagogies are enacted through the structures of the signature pedagogical approach which, in the case of this research study, is EL. Shulman provides a broad overview of the infrastructure of signature pedagogies by stating that they can be examined at different levels (2005a) and it is suggested that these levels (or structures) can be used to explore the "what", "how" and "why" of teaching (Valley *et al.,* 2017; Borders, 2020). The *surface structure* reflects what educators do and refers to the visible, operational methods used in teaching and learning. In EL in business education, this refers to educators' employment of different types of EL such as case studies, role plays or simulations. The second level is the *deep structure***,** a set of educator assumptions about how best to "prioritise, value and impart knowledge" (Hyland and Kilcommins, 2009, p. 32). The *implicit structure* addresses the question of why educators do what they do and encompasses the beliefs, values, and behaviours that they believe contribute to the formation of professional identity. Finally, Shulman reminds us that educators invariably make choices among alternative teaching approaches, and thus, an examination of signature pedagogies should also consider *what it is not*, that is, what is absent or only weakly promoted and this is the *shadow structure* (2005a). In studies of signature pedagogies, researchers have noted that the identification of the surface structure is relatively straightforward but identifying and distinguishing between the deep and implicit structures is more complex (Yendol-Hoppy and Franco,2018; Dawson *et al.,* 2011).

2.6.3 Features

Shulman observes that signature pedagogies are distinguished from other teaching approaches due to the presence of distinct features and he mentions more than a dozen of these in his writings (2005a; 2005b; 2005c; 2008).

According to Shulman, a pedagogy has distinctive signature status because it is pervasive, routinized and exhibited through a temporal pattern in a curriculum. Pervasiveness refers to the repeated occurrence of the pedagogy within a curriculum so that students learn to think like professionals as they go from course to course (Shulman, 2005c). Pervasiveness leads to routinization of learning through the signature pedagogy which allows both learners and educators to focus on the subject matter rather than on constantly changing pedagogical approaches. Shulman also suggests that many signature pedagogies exhibit a temporal pattern where the pedagogy is emphasised e.g., at an introductory level, or as a capstone feature in the final year, or occurring through all years of a degree.

Shulman grouped several of the features associated with signature pedagogies into three categories which he describes as *pedagogies of uncertainty, pedagogies of engagement* and *pedagogies of formation* (2008). Signature pedagogies are noted for engendering uncertainty (for both students and teachers) and this unpredictability exposes learners to the challenges inherent in dynamic and evolving business environments. In addition, signature pedagogies are pedagogies of engagement and this is manifested through teaching and learning approaches that emphasise learner visibility, public performance, accountability, participation and collaboration. Finally, as pedagogies of formation, signature pedagogies emphasise the development of the professional values and identity associated with a discipline's moral framework (McLain, 2021, p. 1631). Shulman places particular importance on this feature stating that "...a true professional does not merely practice: he or she performs with a sense of personal and social responsibility" (2005b, p. 18).

These three elements - habits, structures and features - represent the nucleus of Shulman's signature pedagogies philosophy. However, from a review of the literature, it is clear that the concept is abstract and multi-dimensional (Khoo and Khan, 2020) and researchers have applied Shulman's ideas in different ways, depending on the purpose and discipline of their inquiry (McLain, 2021). In some studies, elements of the theory have been used to identify what might be the signature pedagogy for their discipline (e.g., Valley *et al.,* 2017), while others have focused on contesting or affirming the suitability of a pedagogy designated as signature within their profession (Hyland and Kilcommins, 2009; Earls Larrison and Korr, 2013). These studies indicate diverse interpretations of Shulman's work and this is particularly

evident in the next section where the different ways in which it has been applied in business education research are outlined.

2.7 Signature Pedagogies Research in Business Education

From a review of the literature on signature pedagogies, it is apparent that only a limited number of studies are located within the field of business education and these are listed in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Research on Signature Pedagogies in Business Education

Author	Discipline	Type of paper	Focus
Schmidt-Wilk (2010)	Management	Conceptual	Editorial article on a signature pedagogy for management education
Blasco (2012)	Management	Conceptual	Responsible management principles in the curriculum
Varga-Atkins (2020)	Management	Empirical	Digital capabilities in management education
Trank (2014)	Management	Empirical	Evidence-based management as a signature pedagogy
DeWitt (2010)	Business	Conceptual	Internships as a signature pedagogy for business education
Donnelly (2021)	Business	Conceptual	Supporting a teaching and learning community in business education
Zhao *et al.* (2021)	Business	Empirical	Designing assessments for a signature pedagogy in business education
Conlon (2022)	Business	Empirical	Product lifecycle management as a signature pedagogy
Kan and Ismail (2021)	Business communication	Empirical	Competing values framework as a signature pedagogy for business communication
Jones (2018)	Entrepreneurship	Conceptual	Identification of a signature pedagogy for entrepreneurial education
Peschl *et al.* (2020)	Entrepreneurship	Conceptual	Identification of a signature pedagogy for entrepreneurial education
Gess *et al.* (2021)	Entrepreneurship	Empirical	Case study of professional entrepreneurial culture
Alshurafat *et al.* (2020)	Forensic Accounting	Empirical	Identification of a signature pedagogy for forensic accounting education
Wilkerson (2010)	Accounting	Conceptual	Signature pedagogies in accounting education
Maier *et al.* (2012)	Economics	Conceptual	Signature pedagogies in economics education

These papers are a mix of conceptual and empirical studies and in each, the author has focused on different elements of Shulman's theory (habits, structures, features) to consider what currently is, or should be, a signature pedagogy for their discipline. For example, Schmidt-Wilk (2010) uses Shulman's concept of *habits* or apprenticeships (cognitive, practical and moral) to evaluate two forms of management education, namely, the use of case studies, and client projects. She surmises that both approaches could lead to the development of cognitive and practical habits but proposes that teaching future managers to act with integrity needs to be explicitly designed in management curricula. Trank (2014) looks at a specific approach to management - Evidence-Based Management (EBM) - which is premised on the belief that management decisions should be based on a combination of critical thinking and current best evidence. Like Schmidt-Wilk, Trank's interpretation focuses on signature pedagogy habits, that is, how pedagogical choices teach learners to think, to perform and to act with integrity. From her own experience as a graduate student and as an educator, she concludes that in an era of rapid social change, attending to all three habits is critical for any signature pedagogy in management education.

Most of the articles by the entrepreneurship authors in Table 2.1 are concerned with identifying a signature pedagogy for entrepreneurship education, which has emerged as a business sub-discipline in recent years (Kuratko, 2005). A focus on signature pedagogy *structures* (surface, deep, and implicit) is prevalent in these articles. For example, Peschl *et al*. (2021) use these constructs to examine different teaching approaches that might engender an entrepreneurial mindset and skills in business graduates. In a different context, but using structures also, the study by Gess *et al.* (2021) looks at how entrepreneurs working in innovation hubs enact thinking, performing and acting with integrity in their work. It is interesting to note that all of these articles advocate an EL approach to entrepreneurship education, with Jones placing particular emphasis on pedagogy that encourages deep and repeated reflection (2018).

Research on a possible signature pedagogy for forensic accounting education by Alshurafat *et al*. (2020) differs from the other studies in that it attempts to identify the *features* rather than the structural dimensions of an appropriate pedagogy. The findings from this paper

propose an experiential approach for this discipline, even though it is not widely reflected in current forensic accounting teaching practices.

Extant research is largely discipline-specific except Donnelly's use of the theory to describe a distinctive set of teaching and learning practices across all business disciplines in an Irish University (2021). She describes a faculty-wide signature pedagogy that utilizes a range of EL activities including case studies, live industry projects and problem-based learning, each of which is underpinned by reflective practice and a focus on critical thinking and technology-enhanced education.

It is evident from the review of signature pedagogy theory in business education that researchers have interpreted the concept in diverse ways, placing differing levels of emphasis on the key components of structures, features and habits. It could be argued that the limited number of studies utilising signature pedagogies in business research raises questions about its suitability as a lens for examining pedagogy and indeed, a number of challenges associated with its use for this study were identified. These challenges are addressed in the next section.

2.8 Challenges in Using the Signature Pedagogies Framework

The first challenge is that the concept of signature pedagogies does not come in a readily usable format. The confusion around the terminology used by Shulman has been noted earlier and this, coupled with the lack of a commonly accepted framework, means that researchers face challenges in both interpreting and applying the concept. This thesis attempts to address this challenge by proposing an approach to examining EL pedagogy in business education.

A second challenge that emerges in the context of business education concerns the use of the word 'profession' which is central to Shulman's writing. Early studies of signature pedagogies at the Carnegie Institute focused strongly on traditional professions such as medicine, teaching and law (Shulman, 2008). However, the relationship between pedagogy and professional formation is a theme of growing interest in the business education literature (Montrosse-Morehead *et al.,* 2021; Ramsgaard and Blenker, 2021) where there is a long-standing debate as to whether business or any of its sub-disciplines constitute a profession (e.g., Bennis and O'Toole, 2005; Trank and Rynes, 2003). Various definitions of profession

have been proposed in the literature and typical interpretations focus on those characteristics associated with professional status including specialist knowledge and expertise; autonomy; oversight of professional practice; a sense of responsibility and service; and the ability to make judgements with integrity in conditions of uncertainty (Hoyle and John, 1995; Gardner and Shulman, 2005). The extent to which management practitioners satisfy some or all of these criteria has resulted in mixed reviews (Cabrera and Bowen, 2005; Khurana *et al.,* 2005; Thomas, 2006; Barker, 2010; Segon *et al*., 2018). This debate on professionalism is also present in other business sub-disciplines including human resource management (HRM) (Kochan, 2013), accounting (Carnegie and Napier, 2010), and marketing (Hunt, 2002).

Proponents of professionalism such as Bennis and O'Toole argue that management is a profession, albeit one that requires a stronger focus on the integration of knowledge and practice (2005). They and others (e.g., Pfeffer and Fong, 2004; Khurana *et al*., 2005; Trank and Rynes, 2003) are strongly supportive of an aspiration to build a genuine professionalization of management as a possible solution to the challenges facing business education. This perspective resonates with arguments for business education to adopt a more holistic approach that attempts to balance intellectual, technical, and moral dimensions (Kosnik *et al.,* 2013; Lock *et al*., 2018). Horn (2013) notes that Shulman's original paper proposed that signature pedagogies emerge to shape the development of students in particular professions. However, whether the pedagogy or the habits come first, could be a philosophical chicken-and-egg question. It is unlikely that the direction of influence between pedagogy and discipline is one-way only and she suggests that through the concept of signature pedagogies, "we can identify ways of teaching which have such influence that they may in themselves shape disciplines" (p. 351). This echoes a broader interpretation of signature pedagogies that has emerged in recent years. According to Chick *et al*. (2019):

> ….signature pedagogies in academic disciplines don't necessarily seek to create future professionals (e.g., professional historians and history professors). They suggest that disciplinary ways of doing, thinking, and valuing are important for reasons that transcend career goals: they develop thoughtful, ethical, and able citizens who have a range of habits to navigate an increasingly complex, global, and technological world. (p. 42)

The approach taken in this study to adopt signature pedagogies as a lens to study EL at its surface, deep and implicit levels affords a more holistic view of the pedagogy and therefore contributes to the discourse on professionalism and business education.

Finally, it should be noted that the concept of signature pedagogies has been described as "a necessary yet fraught concept" (Dow *et al*., 2021, p. 650). These authors highlight the danger of deep-rooted signature pedagogies which fail to evolve with societal changes and indeed, Shulman himself warns of the danger of pedagogical inertia when signature pedagogies continue to be employed, even if their effectiveness has diminished (2005a). Furthermore, Waern (2013) cautions that signature pedagogies have the potential to distort teaching by forcing learning into a limited range of practices. In this thesis, it is not suggested that there should only be one, singular way to teach in a discipline as it is recognised that a diversity of pedagogical approaches enhances thinking and learning skills (Lozano *et al.,* 2017). Also, it should be noted that the approach in this thesis is not based on the assumption that EL is automatically a good or indeed, the best pedagogy for business education. Rather, the researcher subscribes to McLain's view that signature pedagogies "should not be considered in terms of binaries, such as correct or incorrect, good or bad" (2021, p. 1630). Instead, the researcher agrees with Crookes *et al.* who argue that Shulman's goal was to identify those pedagogies which appear to "be most crucial in developing the three fundamental dimensions of professional work – to think, to perform, and to act with integrity" (2020, p. 9).

Notwithstanding the challenges identified here, the concept of signature pedagogies provides an opportunity for an in-depth examination of EL in business education and therefore, this study builds on a limited but noteworthy body of emerging research on this topic. In the next section, the conceptual framework used for this study is outlined.

2.9 Conceptual Framework for the Study

Eisenhart (1991) defines a conceptual framework as "a skeletal structure of justification" that presents "an argument that the concepts chosen for investigation or interpretation, and any anticipated relationships among them, will be appropriate and useful, given the research problem under investigation" (p. 209). It is evident from a review of signature pedagogies in both the general and business education literature that researchers have interpreted the

concept in diverse ways, placing differing levels of emphasis on the key components of habits, structures and features.

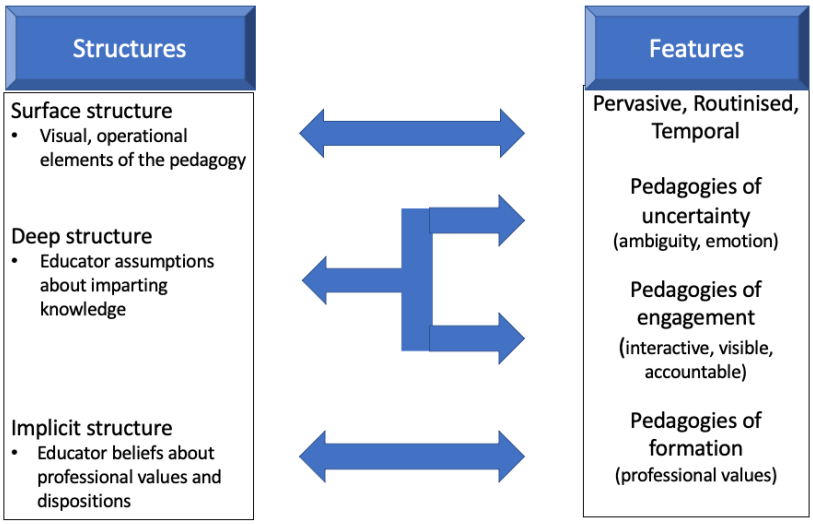
In this thesis, the approach adopted in response to the research questions mirrors that of other researchers (e.g., McLain, 2021; Hyland and Kilcommins, 2009; Valley *et al.,* 2017) by focusing primarily on Shulman's structural dimensions (surface, deep, implicit and shadow structures) to explore the implementation of EL in business education. This strategy reflects recent interpretations of the concept of signature pedagogies, albeit in different disciplines, where pedagogies are examined through the lens of structures, e.g., geography education (Seow *et al*., 2019); computing education (Raj *et al.,* 2021); and engineering education (Moozeh *et al.,* 2021).

However, following Ciccone's view that the idea of signature pedagogies invites "creative and thought-provoking elaboration" (2009, p. xv), it was recognised that a consideration of the features identified by Shulman could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of EL in business education. In his writing on signature pedagogies, Shulman does not associate individual features specifically with the surface, deep or implicit structures but it could be hypothesised that some features pertain more to particular structural levels than others. For example, pedagogies of formation would appear to relate closely to the implicit structure. However, relationships between structures and other features such as pedagogies of uncertainty and engagement are less clear. Therefore, the approach taken in the initial conceptual framework was to consider which features *might be most associated with each structure* and then revisit these hypotheses in the final chapter when reviewing the conceptual framework. The hypothesized relationships are described below and shown in Figure 2.3.

- Pervasiveness, routinization, and temporal pattern are largely operational features that may relate most closely to the surface structure.
- Pedagogies of uncertainty and engagement encompass features such as uncertainty, visibility, accountability, collaboration and public performance. The inclusion or absence of these features in EL reflects educator assumptions about teaching and learning and therefore are hypothesized to pertain most closely to the deep structure.

- Pedagogies of formation represent the moral dimension of a discipline and thus are hypothesized to relate most strongly to the implicit structure.

Figure 2.3 Hypothesized Relationships between Structures and Features



2.10 Conclusion

This chapter presented a conceptual clarification of EL and signature pedagogies to provide a foundation for the thesis. The key terms and theories associated with both of these concepts were discussed with a particular emphasis on extant research to date on signature pedagogies in business education. An initial conceptual framework based on an examination of EL using both structures and features was proposed. In Chapter Three, these two dimensions of signature pedagogies are utilised to scaffold an in-depth exploration of the surface, deep and implicit levels of EL in business education. The possibility of the existence of a shadow structure, as proposed by Shulman (2005a), is also examined.

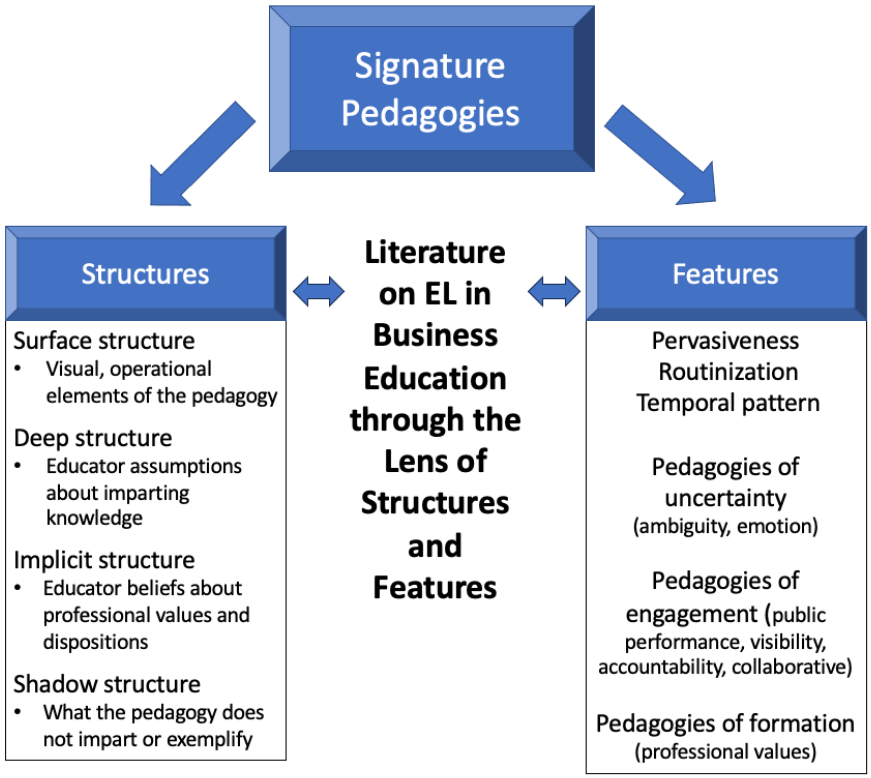
CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN BUSINESS EDUCATION

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the extensive literature on EL in business education is reviewed. The review is facilitated through the lens of signature pedagogies structures and features as described in the initial conceptual framework in Chapter Two. Figure 3.1 below provides an overview of the aspects of structures and features that are used to scaffold the discussion of EL. In the chapter, EL is examined at surface, deep and implicit levels as well as through the features hypothesized to pertain to each level. The chapter concludes with an exploration of a possible shadow structure of EL in business education.

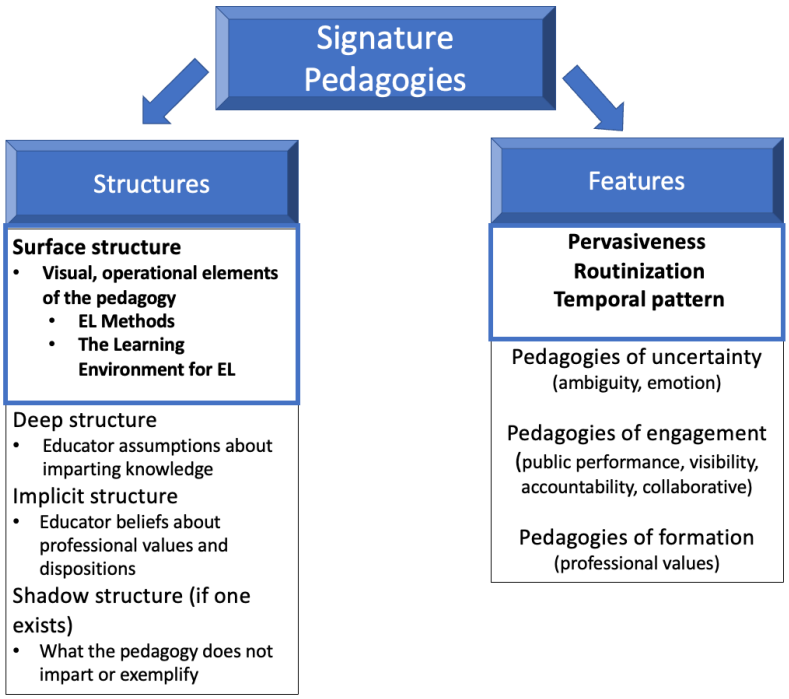
Figure 3.1 Overview of Signature Pedagogies Structures and Features



3.2 The Surface Structure of EL

The surface structure is the most externally visible dimension of a signature pedagogy (Dow *et al.,* 2021), and according to Shulman, consists of the "concrete, operational acts of teaching and learning" (2005a, p. 54). For this study, the review of the surface structure is broken into two parts. Firstly, the predominant methods of EL in business education and the learning environment in which they take place are examined. Secondly, the features of signature pedagogies hypothesized to relate to the surface structure (pervasiveness, routinization, temporal pattern) are considered. The approach taken is shown in Figure 3.2 below.

Figure 3.2 Exploring the Surface Structure and Features of EL in Business Education



3.2.1 EL Methods in Business Education

In business education, EL can be broadly categorized according to whether it is classroom-based or field-based learning (Hamer, 2000). Field-based EL may take the form of study abroad or an internship where a learner completes a period of supervised work in a real workplace (Patrick *et al*. 2008, p. iv). The benefits of internships are acknowledged widely in the business education literature and work experience programmes are increasingly a key

feature of many undergraduate business degrees (Larkin and Beatson, 2014). As field-based EL takes place outside of the classroom, it is not included within the scope of this thesis.

Within the category of classroom-based EL, business educators have a wide range of experiential techniques to choose from including case studies, role plays, consulting projects, live cases, simulations and problem-based learning activities. Application of these approaches can vary widely in terms of experiential content and complexity from small, in-class exercises to assignments where EL constitutes a major part of a module's assessment.

Within business education, learning entirely through EL is uncommon and indeed, lecture-based instruction continues to be a dominant pedagogy in many business disciplines, particularly with large classes (e.g., Helms and Whitesell, 2017; Wurdinger and Allison, 2017). There is a school of thought that lectures are an important contributor to EL in that they "provide the content basis, the mental model and the required information to shape the foundation for experiential learning" (Farashahi and Tajeddin, 2018, p. 133). This argument is also put forward by Bell and Bell (2020) who suggest that lectures can support the experiential process in the 'pre-experience' stage but concerns persist that a reliance on this pedagogy alone fails to expose students to the realities of managerial decision-making (Cannon *et al*., 2021).

Opportunities for EL in business education are provided in the guise of a variety of different teaching and learning approaches. From a review of the relevant literature (e.g., Kosnik *et al.,* 2013; Moylan *et al.,* 2016; Farashahi and Tajeddin, 2018; Perusso and Baaken, 2020), the predominant EL approaches used in HE business education appear to be case studies, live cases, simulations, and role plays, and the main characteristics of these methods are outlined below.

3.2.1.1 Case studies

Case studies have been used in business and management teaching for over a hundred years (Harreid, 2011) and the 'case method' is a broad term encompassing a range of teaching styles and techniques. Typically, information on a company is presented in a narrative format that invites questions, analysis and decisions. Perusso and Baaken (2020) describe the original

Harvard case method whereby the student takes on the role of a decision-maker tasked with providing a solution to the issues in the case. Cases may vary considerably from short vignettes to complex cases that require considerable application and evaluation. To ensure an appropriate learning experience, Brennan (2009) advises that the selection of cases should take student, course and case study characteristics into consideration.

In business education, the use of case studies appears to be well-accepted at all levels of higher education including undergraduate, postgraduate, and executive level. Proponents of this EL method cite several advantages including increased student interest, enhanced understanding and retention of material, and improved analytical, interpersonal and communication skills (e.g., Brickner and Etter, 2008; Grassberger and Wilder, 2015). Most importantly, cases are perceived to be an approach that enables the learner to bridge the gap between academic theory and practical application. According to Montrosse-Moorhead *et al.* (2021), a particular advantage of case studies is that they allow learners to practice the decision-making and problem-solving required in a business profession but in a low-risk environment.

Despite these advantages, critics have questioned the use of case studies as a method of EL describing them as a weak substitute for more direct learning approaches (McCarthy and McCarthy, 2006). Also, it has been suggested that the popularity of the traditional case method may have peaked as HE educators seek alternative forms of hands-on learning (Hodge *et al*., 2013).

3.2.1.2 Live Cases

Live cases (also variously described as live-client or client-sponsored cases) are seen as an extension of the traditional case method in that they involve direct student interaction with a real company where the learners work on solving an authentic business problem (Elam and Spotts, 2011). Proponents of live cases say they provide a more realistic and applied learning experience due to this direct, personal encounter with a business (McCarthy and McCarthy, 2006). Typically, the live case is fully integrated into a module or academic programme, providing the basis for authentic learning and assessment (Schonell and Macklin, 2018). Roth and Smith (2011) suggest that there can be significant, measurable benefits from the

employment of this pedagogy and there is an extensive body of literature supporting claims of enhanced learning outcomes (e.g., Culpin and Scott, 2012; Laukkanen *et al.,* 2013; Grassberger and Wilder, 2015; Tomlinson, 2017; Childers *et al*., 2020). Using live cases also brings a set of challenges for business educators including the sourcing of appropriate clients (Lopez and Lee, 2005), designing an effective learning environment (Shanahan *et al*., 2019), and providing project support and timely feedback (Lebrön *et al.,* 2020). Concerns have been raised about the resource intensity of live cases with Schonell and Macklin (2018) observing that issues related to classroom management and workload may make the approach ineffective with large classes.

3.2.1.3 Simulations

Business simulations are games that are designed to represent aspects of real-world decision-making in a repeatable and controllable environment (Gabrielsson *et al.,* 2010). They can be seen as an interactive learning environment with input, application, reflection and feedback components (Geithner and Menzel, 2016). A typical business simulation provides learners with a series of management issues and problems, and participants must choose an appropriate course of action. For example, a marketing simulation might require student teams to launch a new product for a company and to make choices on pricing, marketing communications and distribution options (Vos, 2015). Through participation in the simulation, students are expected to relate their knowledge of marketing research, theory and concepts to propose a solution to the task.

Simulations are an established learning technique in business higher education and are considered particularly effective at developing transferable skills such as teamwork, communication and time management (Brown *et al.,* 2020). Canhoto and Murphy (2016) comment on the repeatability of the simulation as an advantage over live cases as it provides students with several opportunities to apply what they have learned. In a comparison of three teaching methods (lectures, simulations, case studies), Farashahi and Tajeddin (2018) found that simulations were considered by both MBA and undergraduate students to be the most effective teaching method.

3.2.1.4 Role-Plays

There is a considerable body of research supporting beneficial learning outcomes from the use of role-plays in business education disciplines, with Barnabè *et al*. (2013) suggesting that they are effective in stimulating learning in affective, cognitive and behavioural domains. A typical role-play immerses the participants in a scenario where they "assume roles, and experience the consequences of their actions and the actions of others" (Taylor, 2018, p. 774). For example, in a module on human resource management, students may act out the parts of a manager and an employee conducting a performance appraisal in a workplace scenario. To be effective as an experiential learning activity, role-playing requires careful selection and management of the simulated situation by the instructor. Taylor observes that an advantage of using role-plays is that they teach students skills for operating in stressful, complex, or unfamiliar circumstances.

While the four methods discussed here appear to be predominant in business education research, it is acknowledged that other approaches exist and educators may implement EL in different ways. It is also important to acknowledge the role of the learning environment in the implementation of these EL approaches. In his writings, Shulman places particular emphasis on the educational settings where educators and learners interact (2008). Therefore, in the next section, the learning environment in which EL occurs in business education is examined.

3.2.2 The Learning Environment for EL

The learning environment is a very broad term that can encompass a range of factors relating to the context within which learning takes place. A definition by Aldridge *et al*. suggests that the concept "refers to the atmosphere, ambiance, tone, or climate that pervades the particular [educational] setting" (2004, p. 110).

Shulman focuses strongly on the physical environment of HE and expresses concern that aspects of this environment can impede active, participatory learning. He criticises the standard architecture of many HE institutions which are designed primarily for lectures saying "if you design all your buildings and build them to deliver lectures, your degrees of freedom have just dropped to very close to zero and you become prisoners of your sites" (2005c, p.

15). This argument is supported by McLain (2021), who contends that signature pedagogies impact, and are impacted by, the learning environment. The effect of the physical learning environment on EL practice has been a growing theme within the literature for some time (Dean and Wright, 2017), and Clarke *et al*. (2020) note the importance of the space structure in classrooms for facilitating student-to-student and student-to-instructor interactions in EL activities. Unless well-designed, learning environments can result in a mismatch between space and pedagogy, a point observed by Dean and Wright who report the difficulty of engaging students in EL activities when they are confined to a physical setting "with seats close together, bolted to the floor" (p. 661).

Of course, not all EL initiatives take place in a physical classroom. The innovative use of technology and virtual spaces has been part of EL pedagogy for many years (e.g., Zych, 2013; Canhoto and Murphy, 2016). However, the Covid-19 pandemic and the enforced move to remote learning have disrupted the traditional model of university teaching and opened up new opportunities for EL in a blended and online learning environment. Clancy *et al.* (2021) note that a clear understanding of the benefits and costs associated with these reimagined approaches to EL have yet to emerge, but commentators have raised questions about educators' abilities to use technology efficiently and the extent to which EL can be adapted to an online format (Christian *et al.,* 2020).

3.2.3 The Surface Structure and Features of Pervasiveness, Routinization and Temporal Pattern

The surface structure of a pedagogy represents the enactment of decisions that an educator makes based on their assumptions about knowledge and how to impart knowledge (deep structure) and their beliefs about professional values and dispositions (implicit structure). In the initial conceptual framework, it is argued that some features identified by Shulman (2005a), namely pervasiveness, routinization and temporal patterns, are largely operational characteristics of pedagogy and would, therefore, appear to pertain most closely to the surface structure.

Shulman claims that signature pedagogies are pervasive throughout a curriculum but Brackenbury *et al*. (2014) observe that in Shulman's writing, there are no specific measures

that outline how pervasive a teaching approach must be to be designated as signature, and within business education, there is little formal research to indicate how pervasive EL is as a pedagogy. In the absence of formal research, a review of academic publications on EL might provide a proxy measure of its pervasiveness. It is evident that the business education literature is replete with studies on the topic and indeed, Bradford (2019) observes that there have been articles on EL in almost every issue of the Journal of Management Education starting with the first publication in 1975. Similarly, in a review of topics over forty years in the Journal of Marketing Education, Donthu *et al.* (2021) found articles on EL to be both prevalent and among the most frequently cited. Likewise, the use of EL is documented in the education literature for entrepreneurship (e.g., Hägg and Kurczewska, 2021), human resource management (e.g., Matsuo and Nagata, 2020), operations management (e.g., De Zan *et al*., 2015), accounting (e.g., Butler *et al.*, 2019), economics (Henderson, 2018), finance (Black, 2000) and data analytics (Sendall *et al.,* 2020).

Research by professional associations and commercial enterprises also provides an indication of the use of EL in business education. In a survey conducted by MBA Roundtable, a global association of business schools, it was reported that 92% of full-time programmes used client-based experiential learning in their curricula with corresponding numbers of 70% for part-time MBAs and 62% for executive MBA programmes (mbaroundtable.org, 2016). EduSourced, an EL software company that partners with over 100 HE institutions, conducts an annual survey on the use of EL, and their 2020 survey found 87% of responding business schools offering project-based EL (edusourced.com, 2020).

According to Shulman (2005b), the benefit of a pervasive pedagogy is that it becomes routinized and habitual, which makes learning less onerous for students and educators. Routine helps both parties quickly come to understand the "rules of engagement" associated with the pedagogy, thus simplifying the complexity of professional education and allowing more time for core subject matters (Knee and Means, 2018). The absence of formal research on EL use makes the extent to which EL is routinized in business education difficult to ascertain. Much of the academic research on the topic consists of individual educator accounts of their experience with the pedagogy within their disciplines. There is a paucity of

faculty-level, cross-disciplinary research studies that would provide stronger evidence for routinization of EL within business education.

Shulman describes the timing of a signature pedagogy (when students are exposed most frequently to it in a curriculum) in terms of *temporal patterns,* and he suggests that signature pedagogies usually fall into one of three pattern types. In some forms of professional education, there is a "pervasive initial pedagogy that frames and prefigures professional preparation" and the signature pedagogy is emphasised heavily in the early years of a degree. A second pattern is the "pervasive capstone apprenticeship" where the use of the pedagogy is most evident in the latter years of a degree. The final pattern he identifies is an approach where the pedagogy is used consistently throughout the period of professional education in a "sequenced and balanced portfolio" (Shulman, 2005a, p. 55).

This raises the question of what might be the temporal pattern for EL in business education? Hodge *et al.* (2014) argue that traditional approaches to EL in undergraduate business education have not exhibited any pedagogical pattern. Instead, EL "occurred with no regularity" (p. 4), and even where students could partake in EL initiatives, such activities took place "intermittently throughout the academic tenure of the student" (p. 5). From the literature, there are examples of EL projects in the first year of a programme (e.g., Greene, 2011; Alfaro-Barrantes *et al.*, 2021), but researchers have voiced difficulties in using EL with first-year students who typically do not have the real-world experiences necessary to create connections between theory and practice (Kang *et al.,* 2010). In addition, there is a well-documented trend in business education toward larger (over 100 students) class enrolments (O'Connor *et al.,* 2021; Wang and Calvano, 2022). Research indicates that active learning approaches such as EL are associated more with small rather than large class sizes, and some of the more experiential methods (e.g., live cases) can be difficult to manage with large class cohorts (Bove and Davis, 2009; Lyons and Buckley, 2021). Many of the studies reporting EL use in business education appear to be drawn from research with final-year and postgraduate students (e.g., Bartholomew *et al.,* 2020; Caza *et al.,* 2015; Lebrón *et al*., 2020; Miller and Maellaro, 2016), thus suggesting that if a pedagogical pattern exists, it is more likely to be in the form of a capstone apprenticeship.

Having reviewed EL in business education at its surface level, the discussion now turns to an exploration of the deep structure of the pedagogy.

3.3 The Deep Structure of EL

The preceding review of the surface structure of EL only provides a partial glimpse of the pedagogy, so it is necessary to pay particular attention to the deep and implicit structures of EL to examine the assumptions and beliefs underlying the decisions educators make in their teaching choices. This thesis concentrates on the deep structure in particular as this is critical to understanding the practical implementation of a signature pedagogy. The rationale for this focus is explained by Kan and Ismail (2020):

> While the integration of all three structures is of equal importance in constructing a course that is signature, that is, grounded in signature pedagogy, the authors of this article argue that it is perhaps the aspect of deep structure that bears further interrogation. This premise is based on the view that once the deep structure, undergirding the course is rightly oriented, clarity in curriculum design thinking would in turn shape approaches in managing both operational (i.e., surface structure) and moral (i.e., implicit structure) concerns in classroom discourse cohesively. (p. 61)

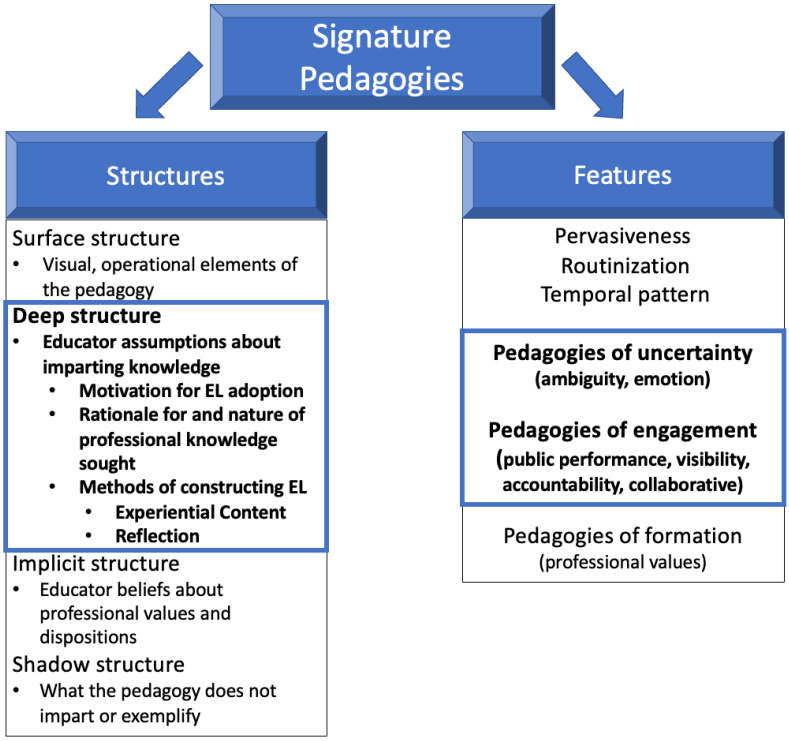
Shulman describes the deep structure of a signature pedagogy as "a set of assumptions about how best to impart a certain body of knowledge and know-how" (2005a, p. 55). Yendol-Hoppy and Franco expand on this explanation by saying that the deep structure:

> ...refers to the embodied assumptions about the rationale for the pedagogy (e.g., under what conditions and to what ends) and an articulation of priorities related to the nature, value, and development of professional knowledge (e.g., type of knowledge sought and method of constructing that knowledge). (2014, p. 19)

While the surface structure of a signature pedagogy is visible in module materials and classroom activities, the deep structure on which the pedagogy is based is less apparent. It requires an examination of the "underlying intentions, rationale and theory that the surface structure models" (Day and Tytler, 2012, p. 186). In this thesis, the deep structure of EL is examined in four parts. The review begins by looking firstly at *motivating factors for educators' adoption of EL in business education*. The literature on EL will then be explored to determine the *rationale for and nature of the professional knowledge sought* through educators' use of this pedagogy. Following this, the *method of constructing EL* in business education will be examined by reviewing the literature on experiential content and reflection.

A review of experiential content entails an exploration of the key constructs of the EL experience to uncover the interplay between realism, ambiguity and complexity that is inherent in EL activities. However, in the criticism of EL as a pedagogy, perhaps the most prevalent theme is the warning that involvement in an experience alone does not guarantee that students have understood concepts or met learning outcomes (Perusso *et al*., 2019). The importance of reflection in EL is emphasised by Rodgers (2002) when he states "What is critical is the ability to perceive and then weave meaning among the threads of experience" (p. 848). Giving equal consideration to reflection in the implementation of EL requires business educators to take a reflective approach to their own teaching and professional practice. The final part of this review of the deep structure of EL examines the *features* that, if present at this structural level, would contribute to EL being a pedagogy of uncertainty and engagement. The overview of this section is illustrated in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3 Exploring the Deep Structure of EL in Business Education



The examination of the deep structure of EL opens by exploring educators' motivations for adoption of EL in business education.

3.3.1 Motivation for Adoption of EL

Literature on the teaching strategies adopted by third-level educators suggests that a continuum of approaches exists, anchored at one end by teacher-centred methods based on the transmission of syllabus content, and at the other end, by student-centred approaches designed to stimulate learner exploration of subject material (Gregory and Jones, 2009).

While theory suggests that an educator's teaching philosophy and decision to adopt a pedagogy like EL should be based on knowledge of learning theories, this is not always the case in practice. Bell and Bell (2020) observe that this may be partly because business academics are discipline-specific educators who may lack the theoretical foundation required for robust pedagogical design. They say that:

> ……educator narratives and practices are often based on foundations that suggest a lack in the depth of knowledge and understanding of the underlying pedagogic learning theories and practice. It is important for educators to understand the underpinning philosophical frameworks to develop a deeper understanding of the "why" and "way" they do things. (p.98)

The selection of an instructional approach is a critical decision for an educator and the decision to use a particular pedagogy should "reflect an underlying educational philosophy based on corresponding learning theories" (Young *et al*., 2008, p, 28). Ertmer and Newby (1993) explain the main learning theories as a behaviourist – cognitivist - constructivist continuum which moves from "teaching to learning, from the passive transfer of facts and routines to the active application of ideas to problems" (p. 58). A constructivist learning philosophy suggests that people learn by creating meaning from experience. As a learning theory, constructivism encompasses a range of perspectives including cognitive, social and radical constructivism. The social constructivism approach emphasises knowledge construction and learning within a social environment, and Bell and Bell surmise that "experiential learning lies at the heart of a social constructivist learning paradigm by meeting the need to develop skills, attributes and competency" (p. 989). Beard (2018) takes a more eclectic view and suggests that EL embraces "elements of behavioral, cognitive, humanist and constructivist thinking" (p. 34).

In practice, a host of factors may motivate pedagogical decisions, and Gregory and Jones (2009) identify several including personal experience as a student; pedagogical knowledge accrued through training or experience; learning from colleagues; educator confidence and contextual factors such as class size, teaching workload, and classroom spaces.

The discussion now turns to the rationale for and the nature of the professional knowledge sought by educators in their use of EL in business education.

3.3.2 Rationale for and Nature of professional Knowledge Sought

Habits of the mind are developed through the content of business education and in an examination of business curricula in European countries, Andrews and Higson (2014) concluded that there was considerable similarity across core content in undergraduate business programmes with most offering generic modules in accounting, economics, strategic management, finance, marketing and HRM**.** However, commentators have criticised the siloed nature of business curricula where domain knowledge is overemphasised and the multi-disciplinary nature of management is underemphasised (Thomas, 2009). Berdrow and Evers condemn what they call "stove-piped pedagogical designs" where acquisition of knowledge and competencies are separated (2011, p. 407) and argue that, in contemporary business education, there is overwhelming evidence to suggest that "knowing is not enough—being able to *apply* that knowledge to analysis, decision making, and problem-solving within a team-based, complex environment is key to success" (p. 407).

As discussed in Chapter One, authors have raised concerns about a theory-application gap right across the business education spectrum spanning management, marketing, accounting and other business sub-disciplines (Bove and Davis, 2009). Developing habits of the hand requires pedagogical practices that support students' acquisition of 21st-century competencies (Perusso and Baaken, 2020), and it is argued that EL, as an applied learning approach, helps to bridge this theory-practice gap and thus, could be an important contributor to both cognitive and practical professional development. From the literature, it is suggested that other desired outcomes from EL include improved problem-solving and critical thinking skills (Dahl *et al*., 2018; Okoli *et al*., 2019), communication skills (Boyatzis and Saatcioglu, 2007), and teamwork skills (Childers *et al*., 2020).

When designing EL for their students, educators make decisions that are underpinned by their knowledge and beliefs about the pedagogy and the resulting EL activities reflect educator assumptions about the pedagogical concepts of experience and reflection. EL theory posits that both components are necessary for learning, but the weighting given to each may differ and may result in considerable variation in the way in which EL is constructed and implemented. In the next sections, approaches to the construction of experiential content and reflection in business education are discussed.

3.3.3 Methods of Constructing EL - Experiential Content

The concept of experience is central to EL theory, and Hamilton and Klebba (2011) identify experiential content as a key construct in determining the experiential level of EL activities in business education. These authors state that experiential content is shaped by three elements: realism, complexity (including task structure), and ambiguity (Hamilton and Klebba, 2011). These factors influence the level of cognitive processing demanded by an EL activity and are instrumental in the development of higher-order critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Perusso and Baaken, 2020). To achieve desired learning outcomes, educators must consider how each of these factors is designed and managed in their EL activities.

3.3.3.1 Realism

Realism reflects the extent to which a learning task mirrors real-world practice, and in business education, EL activities can be viewed along a continuum from low to high levels of realism. Activities that are low in realism (routine problem exercises; activities with hypothetical information) tend to address lower-order learning skills and provide a more structured and passive learning process (Hamilton and Klebba, 2011).

By contrast, EL activities that are higher in realism (e.g., live cases) are considered to be particularly effective at enhancing problem-solving, analytical thinking and critical thinking skills (Grassberger and Wilder, 2015). The real-world element of these approaches exposes learners to “elements of uncertainty, pressure, moral judgements, and risk—situations managers handle in real life” (Perusso and Baaken, 2020, p. 4). While such realism may improve learning effectiveness, Elam and Spotts (2004) warn that it can be a double-edged sword, as ‘real’ EL activities may actually inhibit learning and cause learner frustration due to

the task's potential for increased complexity and lack of structure. This is echoed by de Pillis *et al*. (2020) who observe that EL and real-world activities can be uncomfortable for some students and possibly even cause defensiveness and disengagement.

A final consideration of the real-world nature of experiential content relates to the educator's workload and the demands imposed by some methods of EL. Typically, postgraduate students or senior undergraduates who have completed a work placement as part of their degree have had more exposure to the real world of business and can draw on their own life experiences in EL activities. Indeed, the EL activity at this level may specifically require learners to relate theoretical knowledge to their own work or life experience. However, undergraduates in the early years of a degree programme may have limited authentic exposure to business, and therefore, the educator must 'create' a relevant and realistic learning experience for students. For educators wishing to inject high levels of realism into their EL activities, this may require access to external resources (e.g., client companies) and can prove to be time-consuming and difficult to manage. Various authors (Lopez and Lee, 2005; Parsons and Lepkowska-White, 2009) have noted that more effort and educator involvement are required in EL activities involving real clients, including finding and screening appropriate companies, managing client and student expectations, and providing timely feedback. Also, the efforts involved in creating these realistic experiences are not always recognised. Elam and Spotts observe that EL initiatives are typically encouraged by accrediting bodies, but institutional recognition may not go much beyond a "pat on the back" (2004, p. 60). Equally concerning is research on faculty members' beliefs that such investments in teaching are not just undervalued within institutions but detract from other activities such as research, which are valued more highly in terms of promotion and tenure (McIntyre *et al.,* 2005). Elam and Spotts caution educators thinking of engaging with live EL projects to do so with the knowledge that typical workload structures in HE do not accommodate these types of projects, and those engaging in them will be "penalized from the perspective of time, taking up more teaching time and reducing time available for other scholarly endeavors" (2004, p. 60).

3.3.3.2 Complexity

Complexity in experiential content refers to the number and variety of variables in an EL learning scenario (Hamilton and Klebba, 2020), and educators must decide on the level of

complexity they include in their EL designs. EL tasks that are higher in complexity require learners to engage with a wide range of factors that may impact a business decision and thus require higher levels of analysis and problem-solving. Using the example of case studies, these may vary in length from short vignettes to complex cases that require considerable analysis and evaluation.

Complexity is closely related to the concept of task structure, a key indicator of the level of cognitive processing in an EL activity. Hamilton and Klebba (2011) contend that "the learning experience is deepened as the experiential technique becomes less structured and involves progressively more complexity" (p. 3), but Hamer (2000) suggests that EL in business education can encompass varying degrees of structure and complexity.

In considering the level of structure in EL tasks, it is worth noting that research by Hunter-Jones (2012) suggests that some less structured EL methods may be resisted and disliked by students who are used to highly structured learning environments from secondary school. Her research on more recent generations of learners (generations X, Y and Z) identifies a learner type who seeks control of their academic achievements, does not appreciate the unstructured, non-traditional nature of EL, and indeed sees it as a barrier to their academic success.

3.3.3.3 Ambiguity

Ambiguity has been defined as "the degree to which the constraints, influences and outcomes of a situation are clear and known or must be inferred" (Hamilton and Klebba, 2011, p. 2). Researchers emphasise that learning to act in the face of ambiguity and uncertainty is a core objective in contemporary business education (Pittaway and Cope, 2007; Mandel and Noyes, 2014). McKeen *et al.* (2018) observe that EL, by its nature, is ambiguous when compared to traditional teaching methods such as lectures. While they suggest that the inherent ambiguity and complexity help to prepare students for the types of problems they will face in their professional lives, they also acknowledge that students may struggle with this aspect of experiential content. Students may experience frustration, anger and even conflict when faced with EL activities characterised by incomplete information, working with peers with different agendas, and the need to manage multiple stakeholder expectations.

From the literature on EL in business education, there are mixed messages on how educators should manage ambiguity in their EL activities. On one side, the research stresses that higher degrees of uncertainty help students to think beyond stated facts and recitation of theories and enable them to consider creative alternatives and apply what they have learned in new situations (McKeen *et al.,* 2018). This consideration can be facilitated through a focus on reflection, which enables learners to improve their professional judgement. Some proponents of ambiguity offer explicit advice to educators, exhorting them to "build in uncertainty and ambiguity. Force students to step outside normal educational processes. Heighten emotional exposure by introducing entirely unfamiliar activities or projects" (Pittaway and Cope, 2007, p. 214). On the other side are studies where the authors offer specific advice to educators on how to reduce ambiguity for learners. For example, Lopez and Lee suggest that EL instructions should include samples, templates and "concrete, written instructions…that clearly specify the deliverables students are expected to produce" (2005, p. 180). Lyons and Buckley (2021) make a useful distinction between task and procedural ambiguity. They describe an innovative showcase assessment used for a large undergraduate cohort, a task that provided an opportunity for learners "to explore and ideate to solve complex and ambiguous problems" (p. 412). However, from student feedback, they surmised a need to reduce the procedural ambiguity of the assignment in future iterations and to provide clearer guidelines, marking schemes, and clarity on role specifications.

Understanding the factors shaping the experience in EL activities is necessary to gain insight into this part of the deep structure of the pedagogy. However, while the experience is central to EL theory, researchers have warned of the danger of characterising EL solely in terms of the experience, and Young (2002) reminds educators to strive for a balance between the 'hands-on' and 'minds-on' aspects of the pedagogy. Therefore, an examination of the deep structure of EL requires equal consideration to be given to the role of reflection and the decisions on reflective learning that are made by educators when designing their EL approaches.

3.3.4 Methods of Constructing EL - Reflection

In business education, there is a growing understanding that reflective practice is a critical element of professionalism (Mules, 2018; Schon, 1987) and that one of the goals of higher education is to develop 'reflective practitioners' who have the knowledge and skills to learn from experience, challenge assumptions, consider alternative options, and cope with uncertain and unexpected situations (Gosling and Mintzberg, 2004; Mackay and Tymon, 2016; Berdrow and Evers, 2011). When reflection is absent or weak, student learning may be "haphazard, accidental, and superficial" (Ash and Clayton, 2004, p. 139).

However, navigating the reflection landscape is no easy task for educators. Hedberg (2009) notes Dewey's seminal contribution to the concept and describes Mintzberg as "a good champion for management learning through reflection" (p. 12). However, she also observes that Mintzberg does not provide much guidance on types of reflection, and while many educators have built on Dewey's ideas, she observes that there appears to be little consensus on how such work can be applied and evaluated. Drawing from the education and management literature, she attempts to outline the underlying choices about reflection that educators have to consider when designing and implementing their EL practices. For the purpose of this thesis, two key aspects of reflection will be examined, namely, the *reflective learning focus* and the *methods of reflection.* These are now discussed, as are the challenges faced by educators in *supporting their students' reflective learning* in EL activities.

3.3.4.1 The Reflective Learning Focus

The type of reflection in EL activities can differ substantially based firstly, on whether the educator emphasises formal or informal reflection and secondly, on whether they require students to engage in academic, personal or critical reflection.

Reflection on learning may occur as an informal activity, or it may be formally required as a module or course component (Boud, 2000; Moon, 2001). The need for formal reflection on practice is advocated strongly by some researchers in business education (e.g., Cajiao and Burke, 2016; Hibbert, 2012), with Perusso and Baaken emphasising the need for it to be "intentionally provoked via educational interventions" (p. 4). Mules (2018) views formal reflection as an essential element of professionalism that develops practitioners' creative,

critical and analytical capabilities. Hedberg (2009) warns of the danger of assuming that reflection just happens in business education:

> Viewing reflection as an afterthought, or worse, as an extravagance few can afford, leaves out an essential part of managerial learning. Consequently, it becomes important to deliberately and purposefully build reflective thought into the cognitive repertoire of our business students. We cannot assume it just happens. (p. 11)

Hedberg (2009) differentiates between *subject reflective learning, personal reflective learning* and *critical reflective learning.* Subject reflective learning focuses on a discipline's concepts, theories, and frameworks and is similar to what Ryan and Ryan (2013) call academic reflection. Typically, this reflection approach is structured and formal (Moon, 2001) and may require the learner to connect their learning from the experience to coursework and academic literature.

In personal reflective learning, the focus is less on the academic subject and more on the impact and relevance of the learning to the learner's own life. In a typical example of this type of reflection used in an HRM module, Lambert (2020) explains how students are asked to reflect on what they learned from the EL activity, what challenges they faced, how these were overcome, and how they would use this information in future experiences. According to Hedberg (2009), this type of reflection can be a significant contributor to professional formation, particularly if it leads to insights about habits of the mind and heart. When used in EL, personal reflection may also focus on how the experience has impacted the learner's development of particular business competencies. For example, Perusso *et al.* (2019) describe a personal reflective exercise where the learner evaluates their progress in managerial competencies such as analytical thinking, creativity and communication and considers how these relate to their career perspectives. In another form of personal reflection, students may be asked to consider what was experienced during the EL process itself, an approach typically used when the EL activity involves group work (e.g., Tomlinson, 2017). The use of personal reflection in EL is not without its critics. In particular, Macfarlane and Tomlinson (2017) argue that requiring emotional responses in personal reflections on EL is infantilising and can inhibit truthfulness. They caution that educator demands for 'emotional performativity' may result in learners using strategic approaches to reflection that give the appearance of authenticity rather than demonstrating meaningful learning.

Gray (2007) makes the distinction between personal reflection for individual self-growth and critical reflection, where the learner questions their assumptions, beliefs and prevailing wisdom. Critical reflection aims to encourage the learner to think about experiences in a broader moral, societal, and political context, a practice that necessitates a deeper confrontation of the influences and constraints behind the learner's beliefs and behaviour (Catterall *et al*., 2002). Pelter *et al*. (2005) describe this form of reflection as "the highest of all learning goals" (p. 255). The importance of this approach in business education is noted by MacKay and Tymon (2016), who advocate the use of critical reflection to prepare practitioners to manage risk and to learn to cope with uncertain and fluctuating economic environments. Brunstein *et al*. see even greater advantages from EL with a focus on critical reflection, as it "not only opens spaces for criticism but also for new beginnings……[and] the creation of a strategic imagination directed at progressive management, instigating the belief in the development of human capacity to act differently" (2018, p. 2). While active learning pedagogies such as EL can facilitate the development of critical inquiry (Catterall *et al*., 2002), it is not a process that comes easily to students and requires deliberate facilitation and guidance (Gray, 2007; Perusso *et al.*, 2019). Hedberg also warns that excessive use of critical reflection "may leave students with a sense that they need to question everything and never reach their own conclusions—every assumption or practice is suspect" (p. 19). She advocates combining reflective approaches so that students can form cognitive frameworks to see what they have learned as well as what they still need to explore.

3.3.4.2 Methods of Reflection

The methods discussed here address three questions facing educators when designing and implementing reflective learning in EL: should reflection be individual, group or a mix of both; when should reflection occur in the EL activity; and how should reflective learning be recorded and assessed?

Traditional conceptions of reflection depict it as an individual process (Koole *et al*., 2011), but more contemporary conceptualisations focus on the importance of social interactions with Moon (2013) endorsing the view that the most useful way to view learning is that of an "interaction between the social and individual" (p. 20). This is important in terms of EL as the theory (and Kolb's model in particular) has been criticised for separating learning from a social

and cultural environment (Ramsey, 2005; Miettenen, 2000; Kayes, 2002; Matsuo, 2015). Several studies on EL in business education (Miller and Maellaro, 2016; MacNamara and MacNamara, 2019; Perusso *et al*., 2019) propose that shared or collective discussion enhances reflective learning, with Peltier *et al*. (2005) describing student-to-student interactions as a key condition necessary for improving reflective learning in EL. It should be noted that pedagogies that emphasise dialogic mechanisms such as group and peer collaborations are questioned by some critics (e.g., Rowe, 2019), and MacFarlane and Tomlinson (2017) warn against the 'tyranny of participation' that appears to underpin many student engagement initiatives. Managing a classroom environment that encourages student engagement is also a challenging pedagogical task, and Cajiao and Burke (2016) stress the need for instructors using EL activities to ensure a psychologically safe environment for learners to participate and share information with teachers and fellow students.

The second question for educators when designing EL activities concerns the timing of reflection. The work of Donald Schön is particularly relevant when considering the connection between experience and reflection in EL. Schön's contribution provides an important distinction between the concepts of *reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on-action* (1983). *Reflection-in-action* is a cognitive process that occurs during a complex activity and is akin to 'thinking on one's feet'. *Reflection-on-action* occurs when learners reflect back on an experience to carefully consider what happened, recognise past behaviours, and learn from the experience (Di Stefano *et al.,* 2016). This approach to reflection deepens the learning experience through an explicit examination of what was planned and what was achieved (Helyer, 2015).

Research on reflective learning suggests that students may benefit most from a curriculum with EL that is designed to offer multiple and diverse reflective learning opportunities (Hedberg, 2009). One of the criticisms of Kolb's model is that it conceptualises reflection as a distinct stage in an EL learning cycle, and this may cause it to be interpreted as a once-off activity. By contrast, Hatcher and Bringle argue that "the process of meaningful reflection takes time" (1997, p. 155) and there is considerable support to suggest that continuous, ongoing reflection is necessary if deeper learning is to be facilitated (Bergsteiner *et al.,* 2010; Ramsey, 2005; Grassberger and Wilder, 2015).

The third question to consider under methods of reflection concerns how reflective learning should be recorded and assessed. Oral reflection, in the form of class presentations, discussions and feedback, is becoming more common in EL designs (e.g., Wickham, 2018), but the business education literature suggests that written reflections are the predominant method used, typically in the form of essays, diaries, journals, logs and portfolios (e.g., Chan *et al*., 2020; Muncy, 2014; Ferguson *et al.,* 2016). Typically, written reflections are individual efforts, but team reflections are also used in EL (e.g., Miller and Mallaero, 2016).

The question of how and indeed whether to assess the reflective component of EL, is a topic of considerable debate in the education literature. Dahl *et al*. (2018) comment that more research is needed in business education on the "relationship between experiential learning activities and reflective assessment and learning" (p. 113). Wurdinger (2005) asserts that assessment is an integral element in the EL process as it provides insights to both students and teachers on whether significant learning is occurring. Ash and Clayton (2009) explain that reflective assessment can be used summatively at the end of the learning process to document outcomes, or it can be used for formative purposes to improve both the process and the outcomes.

However, the concept of assessing reflection appears to be fraught with difficulties, with Bruno *et al.* (2011) observing that there is little agreement among academics on methodologies to analyse and evaluate reflection. The question of whether reflective writing should be graded is particularly problematic (Hobbs, 2007), and those against it argue that reflection is, by its nature, personal and subjective and therefore should not be subject to grading (Boud, 2001). Chan *et al.* (2020) identify several additional challenges with assessing reflective writing, including concerns about student privacy infringement, the use of rubrics as marking criteria, cultural and ethical issues in assessment, and the authenticity of the reflective writing itself (p. 3). This last issue has been raised by researchers who question whether 'forced' reflection assignments can be counted as evidence of genuine reflective learning (Hobbs, 2007). Macfarlane and Gourlay advise educators against relying too much on reflection in assessment, as "it can be just as prone to inauthentic writing as the plagiarised essay" (2009, p. 457). Even providing extensive guidance on reflection may not result in authentic reflection. Trelfa (2020) is critical of pro-forma approaches to reflection with

checklists on how to perform it and produce its artefacts. The outcomes of formulaic approaches result in students adopting what she calls a 'plug and chug' approach to reflection, that is, a procedural way of completing a reflective assignment without understanding it or wasting time thinking about it (p. 310).

3.3.4.3 Supporting Reflective Learning

The increased interest in reflection as a component of business education is noted by many authors, but so too is the lack of practical guidelines to structure activities to develop reflective capacity in students (e.g., Veine *et al*. 2020). Most scholars agree that reflection is not an innate skill, and many learners are reflection novices who need considerable support and guidance in reflective practices (Ryan, 2013; Peltier *et al*., 2005; Cajiao and Burke, 2016). Research suggests that simply prescribing reflection or adding it as a summative assessment does not lead to optimal learning (Lundmark *et al.,* 2019). Unless students are guided and scaffolded in reflective writing, many are overwhelmed and unable to benefit from their learning from experience (Coulson and Harvey, 2013).

There are perennial themes in the literature on supporting reflection going back over a decade. Coulson and Harvey emphasise that the benefits of reflection need to be explained to learners, and most importantly, reflective activities need to be structured with "strategic interventions and careful scaffolding" (2013, p. 401). The amount of support that may be required depends on several factors, including students' prior experience with reflection, differing cultural perceptions of the concept, and possible language barriers (Veine *et al.,* 2020).

Teaching and guiding students in reflective practice places additional demands on educators, as Walsh (2009) observes that the development of reflective skills requires "a sophisticated pedagogy" (p. 385) and the instructor must assume the role of a knowledgeable expert to guide and develop students' reflective capacities. However, the literature suggests that many educators struggle with reflection and may lack the theory and practical knowledge to teach their students how to reflect (Bell and Bell, 2020). Coulson and Harvey (2013) maintain that "teachers themselves may firstly have a zone of proximal development to negotiate around reflective practice prior to scaffolding learners' capacity for reflection" (p. 402).

Finally, Hibbert (2012) forwards the hypothesis that educators may choose not to foster reflection in their EL activities if they view the incorporation of reflection into curricula as an unnecessary encumbrance when teaching is already complex and demanding. He also acknowledges that those who do embrace a reflective learning approach in their modules may find their reward is resistance, hostility and poor evaluations from students.

3.3.5 The Deep Structure and Features of Pedagogies of Uncertainty and Engagement

From this discussion on experiential content and reflection, it becomes apparent that educator choices in these aspects of EL could be associated with particular features of signature pedagogies. The review of experiential content highlighted the challenges educators face in managing realism, complexity and ambiguity in their EL activities. In his theory of signature pedagogies, Shulman places particular emphasis on pedagogies of uncertainty, describing it as a feature that is "inherent and unavoidable" (2005, p.1) and one that characterises most professional work. He specifically advocates for educators to create unpredictable and surprising classroom settings to develop one of the most crucial aspects of professionalism, that being "the ability to make judgements under uncertainty" (2005a, p. 57). Shulman acknowledges that pedagogies that promote uncertainty can also cause student (and indeed, lecturer) anxiety, but he highlights the importance of necessary 'emotional investments" by learners when they are challenged to leave their comfort zones (2005c). Indeed, he is unequivocal in his belief that when properly managed, a certain amount of anxiety (what he terms 'adaptive anxiety') actually contributes to learning as it increases student attention and vigilance (p. 12).

Similarly, in the discussion on reflection, the importance of shared reflection is exemplified by the features in Shulman's pedagogies of engagement, which he advocates to address student passivity and lack of accountability, both of which present considerable impediments to learning. He says:

> Harry Potter's cloak of invisibility is worn in more of our college classrooms by more of our students every day than we care to admit. Invisibility on the part of students is the most significant enemy of learning because learning is performance. You perform your understandings and, even more important, you perform your misunderstandings so your colleagues and your teachers can help you recognize how you might understand something better. If you learn by being invisible and mute, you're not learning (Shulman, 2008, p. 17).

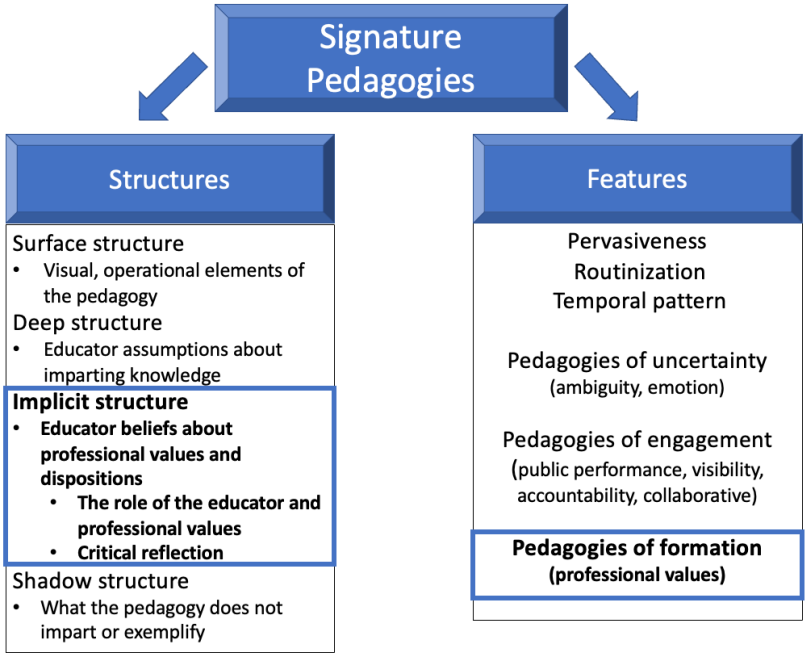
Shulman's features of visibility, public performance and accountability require students to share their learning from EL with faculty, peers, and perhaps even external stakeholders such as the client companies in live cases. Accountability involves responsibility for "hearing, understanding and critiquing what their fellow students have said" (Shulman, 2008, p. 17), and the notion of peer reflection and feedback is a growing theme in EL literature (Miller and Maellero, 2016; Mantai and Huber, 2021; Van Schenkhof *et al.,* 2018; Hodge *et al.,* 2014). Peer reflection also has implications for professional formation, as receiving and producing peer feedback helps to develop key transferable professional skills (Eaton *et al.,* 2017; Ion *et al.,* 2019).

Having considered the surface and deep structure of EL in business education, the discussion now turns to EL through the lens of the implicit structure.

3.4 The Implicit Structure Of Experiential Learning

A full evaluation of EL as an emergent signature pedagogy necessitates examination at surface, deep and implicit levels, but there is some debate as to whether a separate analysis of the implicit structure is required, with Dawson *et al*. saying that "the distinctions between deep and implicit structures are artificial in practice since the tenets of one cannot reasonably be separated from the other" (2011, p. 3). Dawson's argument may be influenced by a theme in the literature that the implicit structure is the most complex element of a signature pedagogy and the most difficult to uncover (Yendol-Hoppy and Franco, 2014; Banham, 2019; Eaton *et al*., 2017). Areas of discussion, shown in Figure 3.4 below, focus on two aspects pertaining to the implicit structure, namely, the role of the educator and professional values, and critical reflection. This discussion of the implicit structure also highlights the hypothesised relevance of Shulman's pedagogies of formation to this structural dimension.

Figure 3.4 Exploring the Implicit Structure of EL in Business Education



3.4.1 Role of the Educator and Professional Values

Shulman (2005a) describes the implicit structure as a moral dimension that encompasses the beliefs, values and behaviours that contribute to the formation of professional identity. Baltrinic and Wachter Morris (2020) concur, saying that this element of a signature pedagogy reflects "the underlying professional morals on how students representing a profession should think, act, and perform ethically with integrity" (p. 2). These authors stress that while the content of the implicit structure of a signature pedagogy may be driven by factors such as professional codes of conduct or desired competencies, the influence of individual educators in shaping this structure cannot be underestimated. Moosmayer (2012) states that the role of the academic in inspiring value-related influence in business schools is fundamental, as they are most proximal to students when they deliver education. Thus, the implicit structure reflects what Brackenbury *et al.* describe as "a symbiotic relationship between the values with which we teach and the values that we are conveying to our students through that teaching" (2014, p. 71).

Moosmayer maintains that educators may exert influence through their module content or by adopting teaching approaches that are anchored in particular value positions. In light of the challenges facing business education, this may require a reconsideration of the traditional methods of teaching and learning used in HE. As observed by Harrington *et al.* (2015, p. 53), there is now a greater emphasis on transforming students' mindsets by facilitating their development as lifelong, critical, reflective learners, and it is suggested that pedagogies that engage students in critical reflective learning on moral, social and ethical issues can be transformative (Brunstein *et al.*, 2018).

3.4.2 Critical Reflection and Pedagogies of Formation

Opportunities for reflection are an essential element of EL because "when we reflect, we give the learning a space to be processed, understood, and more likely integrated into further thoughts and actions" (Hedberg, 2008, p. 2). To enable the development of what Shulman calls pedagogies of formation, it is argued that EL approaches in business education must incorporate not just reflection but critical reflection (Gray, 2007; Jones, 2018). As described earlier, the form and level of reflection required in an EL activity may vary considerably, depending on the desired learning outcomes, and not all reflection is critical (Harvey *et al.,* 2016). However, EL that is designed with a critical reflection focus can help learners develop a greater sense of consciousness and personal responsibility (Gray, 2007), but such pedagogies need to be carefully designed to reinforce this learning (Holdsworth and Hegarty, 2016). According to Blasco (2012), critical reflection "is triggered by introducing disorienting dilemmas where students' existing assumptions, values, beliefs, feelings, or actions become inadequate to cope with the task or situation confronting them" (p. 370). Different types of EL activities can be used to stimulate critical reflection, including case studies that pose ethical dilemmas (Plewa and Quester, 2006), live case projects with social enterprises (Baden and Parkes, 2013), simulated games to teach business ethics (Jagger *et al.,* 2016) and projects on corporate social responsibility practices (Dean *et al.*, 2018). The type of critical reflection that may be engendered through these activities offers opportunities for pedagogies of formation, that is, "those experiences of teaching and learning that can influence the values, dispositions and characters of those who learn" (Shulman, 2005a, p. 57).

Chick (2009) states that "implicitly or explicitly, faculty want students to learn more than basic content; we want them to understand and practice disciplinary ways of thinking or habits of mind" (p. 2). Blasco (2012) poses a question as to the nature of the information students receive about what it means to be a good business student and/or professional and warns that "the odd course on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) or business ethics is unlikely to have much impact on the overall meta-messages that students take away from business school" (p. 380). This reinforces Shulman's contention on the importance of the routinization of pedagogical habits (2005a), in this case, the creation of critical reflective habits that are honed through repeated EL activities across subjects and courses. Critical reflection aims to encourage the learner to think about experiences in a wider moral, societal, and political context, and this necessitates a deeper confrontation of the influences and constraints behind the learner's beliefs and behaviour (Catterall *et al*., 2002; Akrivou and Bradbury-Huang, 2015; Brunstein *et al*., 2018). However, while active learning pedagogies such as EL can facilitate the development of critical inquiry (Catterall *et al.,* 2002), it is not a process that comes easily to students and requires deliberate facilitation and guidance (Gray, 2007; Perusso *et al.*, 2019).

To conclude this review of EL in business education, consideration was also given to the possibility of the existence of a shadow structure in EL pedagogy.

3.5 A Possible Shadow Structure In EL Pedagogy in Business Education

Shulman suggests that in addition to the surface, deep and implicit levels of a signature pedagogy, it may be possible to discern a shadow structure that reflects an absent pedagogy, that which is not imparted or exemplified in a teaching approach (2005a). Khoo and Kan (2020) contend that what is missing may be a strength and thus a positive shadow, or a weakness that creates a negative shadow.

In the first chapter of this thesis, both the role and treatment of reflection in EL were identified as possible areas of concern in business education. Firstly, it has been suggested that the practical implementation of EL in business education may not always facilitate opportunities for reflection. When the literature describes reflection as overlooked, neglected, or not widely used, it raises questions as to whether EL is being implemented only

partially or incompletely (Perusso *et al.,* 2019; Young, 2002; Kreber, 2001; Ferguson *et al.,* 2016). Secondly, where reflection is part of EL, questions have been raised about the type of reflection learners are asked to do and whether it contributes to deeper levels of learning. Critics are sceptical of the value of reflection when it is simply "unilateral feedback for [summative] assessment purposes" (Perusso *et al.,* 2019, p. 2) and instead advocate an emphasis on reflection as formative learning reinforced by feedback (Allal, 2019; Coulson and Harvey, 2013). It has also been suggested that reflection that does not incorporate a critical lens may be a missed opportunity for transformative learning and professional formation for business graduates.

In this chapter, reflection was discussed in its rightful place under the deep structure of EL. However, the extent to which reflection is being omitted or only partially implemented in business education is unknown. Therefore, it could be speculated below that reflection, which in theory should occupy a central role in EL, might in practice represent a shadow structure of the pedagogy as it is implemented in contemporary business education. Following a review of the study's findings, this question will be addressed in the conclusions in Chapter Six.

3.6 Conclusion

There is extensive literature on EL in business education, and as discussed in Chapter One, stakeholder, marketisation and accreditation pressures are converging in an endorsement of this pedagogy as a means of preparing business students for their future careers. Concerns have been raised, however, about the translation of EL theory into practice and the challenges educators face in implementing this teaching and learning approach. In this chapter, an in-depth exploration of EL as a teaching and learning approach was facilitated by framing the examination through the concept of signature pedagogies. The review focused primarily on the pedagogical structures of EL (surface, deep and implicit) but also examined particular features that Shulman identifies as characteristic of signature pedagogies, namely pedagogies of uncertainty, engagement and formation.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This research study adopted an exploratory case study design to explore how educators implement EL in business education. As outlined earlier, EL was examined through the lens of signature pedagogy, and semi-structured interviews with 36 academics from one business school were conducted to explore the structures and features of this pedagogy.

This chapter opens by detailing the research questions that emerged from the literature review. The discussion then moves to the research design that was used for this study, starting with an articulation of research paradigms and the researcher's ontological, epistemological and axiological position. The rationale for the chosen methodology is outlined, as are the approaches to data collection and analysis. As this research falls under the heading of insider research, the ethical implications are considered, and the researcher's position is explained. Finally, issues related to credibility, dependability and transferability are discussed.

4.2 Research Questions

From the review of EL in business education in Chapter Three, a series of questions emerged about the implementation of EL at its surface, deep and implicit levels. The interrogation of the surface structure of EL raised a number of questions, namely:

- What types of EL activities are used by business educators, and how pervasive is the use of EL?
- How does the learning environment impact educators' use of EL?
- What is the temporal pattern for EL in business education, and does it support routinization of learning?

In this review of EL, particular attention was paid to the deep structure, and consequently, a several questions emerged for investigation:

- What motivates educator adoption of EL?
- Through their use of this pedagogy, what competencies do educators seek to develop in their students?

- What are educators' beliefs about experiential content?
- What is the role and nature of reflection in the EL pedagogies in the study?
- What approaches to reflection are emphasised in EL in business education?
- How is reflection supported in business education?
- Are the features of pedagogies of uncertainty and engagement fostered in EL?

Two key questions emerged from the discussion of the implicit structure of EL:

- What professional values do educators deem to be important for business graduates?
- How are these values manifested in EL approaches?

The review of EL concluded by exploring the possibility of a shadow dimension, and one question arose:

- Does reflection represent a shadow structure in business education?

Finally, a number of challenges associated with EL were identified in the literature. These suggest that the implementation of EL can be expensive, time-consuming, ethically challenging, and particularly difficult to implement with large classes. The final question to be explored, therefore, is related to these apparent constraints on the implementation of EL.

- What are the challenges business educators associate with the use of EL?

4.3 Research Philosophy

When planning a research study, Sefotho (2015) sees the articulation of an espoused philosophical foundation as the key driving force, as it is a "roadmap for research without which one's investigation lacks illuminated direction" (p. 23). An important function of philosophy is that it helps the researcher "organise the content of his mind, and to attain a comprehensive worldview" (ibid, p. 29). Thus, comprehending one's philosophical assumptions enables the researcher to think through their worldviews and to understand how these relate to chosen research designs and specific research methods (Creswell, 2014). There is a diversity of opinions on the categorisation of research paradigms, but within educational research, there are a number of dominant research paradigms (Creswell, 2014).

Positivism is grounded in a scientific method of inquiry that seeks observable, measurable facts, uninfluenced by human interpretation or bias. Constructivism is an alternative worldview, and Van der Walt (2020) suggests that there are two types of constructivism: individual constructivism, where every individual constructs their own meaning from the experienced world, and social constructivism, where reality is constantly constructed and reconstructed through social interactions (p. 64). Constructivism as a term is often used interchangeably with interpretivism (Creswell, 2013).

The main tenet of social constructivism is that individuals create subjective meanings from their experiences, and so research cannot be objectively observed from the outside, but must be considered through the direct experience of participants (Mack, 2010). The role of the interpretivist researcher is to "understand, explain, and demystify social reality through the eyes of different participants" (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p. 19). Ontologically, this philosophy is explicitly subjectivist (Saunders *et al.,* 2016), and epistemology is based on the construction of inter-subjective knowledge (Taylor and Medina, 2013).

Within a research study, positionality reflects the researcher's worldview and the position adopted in relation to the research task, including the subject under investigation, the research participants, and the research context and process (Darwin Holmes, 2020). Positionality is informed by reflexivity, which, according to Cohen *et al.,* "suggests that researchers should acknowledge and disclose their own selves in the research, seeking to understand their part in, or influence on, the research" (2007, p. 171).

As an educational researcher, I realise that my ontological, epistemological and axiological perspectives influence how I approach and conduct all aspects of the research process. I subscribe to a subjectivist perspective of reality and a worldview that is rooted in constructivism. As described by Creswell, social constructivists:

> ....believe that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. Individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences…..[and] these meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas. (2007, p. 37)

By attempting to understand the experiences of educators who teach using EL strategies, this thesis is guided by the constructivist paradigm. In adopting this paradigm, it is acknowledged

that the findings of these teaching experiences are not generalizable to a larger population but may provide insights into approaches to EL that are of benefit to other educators.

My interest in researching EL developed from my personal experience using this approach with my own students. As a business discipline specialist with little formal pedagogical training, my early attempts to use EL at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels were experimental and indeed a case of 'learning by doing'. My experience triggered my interest in understanding other educators' experiences of teaching using this pedagogy. When I began to consider how I might go about researching EL in business education, I was not drawn to a research approach that quantified the use of the method or reported on the number of educators who use EL in their modules. Instead, my interest was more on why educators do what they do and how they do it, questions that place my research within a social constructivism paradigm (Darlaston-Jones, 2007). The constructivist researcher approaches research in a way that encourages participants to share, focusing on the "specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural setting of the participants" (Creswell, 2014, p. 8). As the research objective for this thesis was to explore faculty experiences of using EL, a constructivist approach was deemed to be the most appropriate paradigm for the study as it emphasises the individual's ability to construct meaning (Mack, 2010).

Darwin Holmes (2020) states that a statement of positionality in a thesis should include not only the philosophical lens but also an articulation of potential influences on the research, such as "the researcher's chosen or pre-determined position about the participants in the project" (p. 4). This relates to the researcher's position as an 'insider' or 'outsider' to the participants and the research setting, a factor that has a significant impact on data collection and the accurate and truthful interpretation of findings. Merton (1972) defines an insider as someone who has a priori and close knowledge of a community and its members. As a member of staff in the business school where this research took place, I was an insider researcher, and this necessitated careful consideration of the impact of this position on the conduct and output of the research process in this study. Being an insider brings several potential advantages to the research project. Access to participants is generally easier due to contacts within the social group, and familiarity with group members may make them "happy

to talk, often welcoming the opportunity to discuss issues with someone who understands" (Greene, 2014, p. 4). The researcher may be seen as trusted and credible and, therefore, may prompt greater candour in participant responses (Mercer, 2007). An insider researcher's knowledge of the research context is considered a possible advantage, as she understands the historical and practical background of the research setting and is able to ask more meaningful questions (Greene, 2014).

However, Mercer (2007) warns that insider status is a double-edged sword and highlights that there are drawbacks to 'insiderness'. Insider researchers are often accused of being too subjective and inherently biased, as their familiarity and closeness to the research participants and setting may result in a loss of objectivity (Greene, 2014). The ethical considerations of conducting research as an insider are discussed further in Section 4.9, but it is important to acknowledge my insider status as part of a process of reflexivity. Reflexivity requires the researcher to actively engage in questioning one's own assumptions, especially the relationship between the researcher and the context of the research. As a researcher in the social-constructivist tradition, I recognise that my values informed all stages of the research process, from my choice of topic to my methods of data collection and analysis.

I have been a lecturer in a business school for over twenty years. I came to this research after years of involvement in teaching and learning initiatives, including long-standing membership of the school's teaching and learning committee. I have served as a school representative in quality assurance groups, programme reviews and accreditation assessments, and I am a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. In conducting a research study that involves the participation of my colleagues, many of whom I have known for several years, it was important that I understood the implications of researching in a situation where I have both social and professional ties. Hence, I had been greatly influenced by the advice of Merriam and Tisdell, who advise researchers to have "concern for the participants and their voices, the power dynamics inherent in the interviews, the construction of the "story," and forms of representation to other audiences" (2016, p. 130). Heeding this advice, I endeavoured to be non-judgmental and respectful of my respondents throughout the research process.

Following the articulation of the ontological and epistemological foundations for the study, the next section details the research methodology used to answer the research questions.

4.4 Research Methodology

When researchers align themselves to a particular paradigm, Sefotho (2015) advises that "they must do so conscious that they are aligning themselves to the precepts, principles and methodologies of that particular paradigm" (p. 26). Methodology refers to specific choices (Crotty, 1998, p. 3), and qualitative methodologies are strongly associated with constructivist and interpretivist philosophies. Qualitative researchers seek to understand how people interpret and attribute meaning to their experiences (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016), and qualitative methodologies can be used to examine relationships, processes and phenomena through an exploration of "meanings, motives, aspirations, beliefs, values and attitudes" (Queiros *et al*., 2017, p.370). As this research was undertaken to explore educators' experiences of using EL teaching approaches and the researcher assumed a social-constructivist stance, a qualitative research approach was deemed most appropriate for this study.

Subjectivist researchers may use theory in one of three ways (Varpio *et al.,* 2020): theory is not used to inform the study design but to generate data, thus becoming the product of the research; theory can be articulated at the start of the study and used to inform the entire research process; and finally, as applied in this study, theory can be used as an interpretive tool, where the theories informing the final interpretation of the data are finalised through data collection and analysis. As outlined in Chapter Two, this study was informed by an examination of the concepts and theories of experiential learning and signature pedagogies. This theory provided an initial framework, which was expanded on with the insights derived from the analysis of the data.

4.5 Case Study Research

This study employed a single exploratory case study design. The fundamental goal of case study research is "to conduct an in-depth analysis of an issue within its context with a view to understand the issues from the perspective of participants" (Harrison *et al*., 2017, p. x). The real-life setting or context is a factor that distinguishes this research approach from others (Saunders *et al*., 2016).

When choosing a case study methodology, it is important that the researcher attempts to ensure coherence between his or her philosophical position and the research objectives and

questions. Key theorists in case study research, such as Yin, Merriam and Stake, differ in their philosophical orientations and in their emphasis on particular aspects of using the methodology (Harrison *et al*., 2017). The approach taken in this thesis adheres most closely to that of Stake (1995), who is associated with a constructivist and interpretivist orientation. His approach to case study research seeks to discover meaning and understand experiences in context, and he places particular emphasis on the critical interpretive role of the researcher as a partner in discovering and producing knowledge (Harrison *et al.,* 2017).

Creswell's definition of case study research is quoted frequently in the literature and he describes it as:

> ...a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems [cases] over time, through detailed, in depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case based themes. (2013, p. 97)

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), it is the unit of analysis (the case, not the topic under investigation) that characterises an investigation as a case study.

Case study research may be structured in different ways, and Yin distinguishes approaches based on whether the researcher is using a single case or multiple cases, and a holistic case or an embedded case (2014). In this thesis, a single case with embedded cases was used. The business school was the case, and the academic faculty members who use EL pedagogies were the sub-cases of analysis. According to Yin, a single case study can be justified based on it being a critical case, an extreme case, a revelatory case, a longitudinal case, or a typical case. In this research study, the business school under examination is assumed to be a representative example of a business school and, therefore, a typical case. The use of a single case in this way has been described by Yin (2014) as a particularly challenging task for a researcher, but Ozcan *et al.* (2017) identify a number of advantages with this choice. Firstly, a single case allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of a complex issue from a variety of perspectives. By taking a cross-disciplinary focus, the case study in this thesis provides a novel insight into the meaning ascribed to EL and the associated implementation practices of academics in different business disciplines. Secondly, a single case may be chosen because the researcher has access to a phenomenon that may be difficult for others to

observe. Seawright and Gerring (2008) observe that pragmatic considerations such as time, expertise and access are legitimate factors in case selection, and in a doctoral thesis such as this, the "expediency of access" (Chavez, 2008, p. 482) was considered to be one of the benefits of being an insider researcher.

Within qualitative research, case studies can be categorised according to whether they are exploratory, explanatory, descriptive or evaluative (Yin, 2012). The case study in this thesis is exploratory in nature. Exploratory case studies are sometimes considered only as a prelude to other research methods, such as a survey or experiment. However, Yin is critical of what he calls this "outdated hierarchy of research methods" (2012, p. 143) and advises that exploratory case studies are appropriate when the researcher wishes to gain an extensive and in-depth understanding of a phenomenon.

As the research aim of this study is to provide insight into EL practices, the case can be described as an instrumental case according to Stake's typology of case study designs (1995). An instrumental case has the goal of better understanding a question or problem, and "the researcher focuses on an issue or concern and then selects one bounded case to illustrate the issue" (Creswell, 2007, p. 74).

4.6 Sampling

Qualitative research approaches typically employ non-random sampling techniques, and the most common methods used in case studies are purposive, convenience or snowball sampling. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) claim that some form of convenience is almost always part of sample selection, and this was reflected in the researcher's decision to base the case within the business school where she works and to invite all staff members to take part in the study if they used EL as part of their teaching and learning approaches.

In this study, the population consists of the academic faculty of one business school. Within the school, the academic structure is organised around three groups:

- Work, Psychology and Strategy: The discipline areas in this group are Human Resource Management and Organisational Psychology, International Business, Strategy and Aviation Management.

- Enterprise and Innovation: The discipline areas are Economics, Entrepreneurship, Marketing, Technology and Data Analytics.
- Financial and Operational Performance: The discipline areas are Accounting, Finance, Operations Management and Business and Society

At the time of the study, 79 academics were listed as full-time members of the business school teaching staff on the faculty website, and this was cross-checked with the contact information on the internal phone list (updated regularly). The breakdown of academic staff between groups was as follows:

- Work, Psychology and Strategy: 23 academic staff members
- Enterprise and Innovation: 28 academic staff members
- Financial and Operational Performance: 28 academic staff members

As per the ethics approval for the study, participants were recruited by an email sent to all full-time academic staff in the school who were invited to take part in the study if they used EL as part of their pedagogy. A copy of the email is in Appendix B. For clarity, the email provided a working definition of EL, which stated it to be "an active learning pedagogy where students learn through reflective problem-solving by connecting theories and knowledge to real-world situations." The email also listed examples of typical EL activities such as case studies, consulting projects, practicums, simulations, role plays and applied projects. This information allowed staff members to decide for themselves if their teaching approach was compatible with the study objectives.

Academics working in non-teaching roles (e.g., management posts) and staff members who were on leave during the participant recruitment process were omitted from the email request. In total, 74 members of staff were emailed and invited to participate in the study. Replies to the research request came in over a two-week period following the initial email. The response to the research request was very positive, with 57 members of staff replying, mostly by return email, but some responses were received in person and by phone. 11 of the respondents indicated that they did not use EL in their teaching approach. 46 members of staff indicated that they used EL and were invited to choose a date for an interview on Zoom. 11 of these invitees did not respond to this request or were unable to schedule an interview

due to other commitments. In total, 35 semi-structured interviews were conducted between November 12th and December 16th, 2021, and the average interview time was 35 minutes. All interviews were scheduled to suit respondents' convenience and availability.

Advice on how many interviews to conduct in a qualitative study varies considerably (Baker and Edwards, 2012), but it is commonly advised to continue interviewing until data saturation is reached (Creswell, 2014). In this study, I considered two factors when deciding how many interviews to conduct. Firstly, I noted the advice of Quinney *et al.* (2016), who state that qualitative researchers should be careful not to narrow the selection criteria of participants too much, as it may constrain or oversimplify the phenomenon under investigation. They recommend that selection should be based on the participant having experience with the research topic and being willing to share their experience within the research timeline. Participation in this study was voluntary, and it was deemed appropriate to include all those who stated they used EL in their module. Secondly, as one of the research objectives is to gain a cross-disciplinary perspective on educators' experiences with EL, representation across all three academic groups was a consideration. This was attained without difficulty, and the breakdown of participants across academic groups was as follows:

- Work, Psychology and Strategy: 12 participants
- Enterprise and Innovation: 15 participants
- Financial and Operational Performance: 8 participants

Following agreement to take part in a scheduled semi-structured interview, all participants were sent a plain language statement, an informed consent form and a guide to the interview topics (see Appendices C, D and E). Using pseudonyms assigned to participants, Table 4.1 provides an overview of the participants showing their discipline group, years of teaching experience and the module level of their EL activities.

Table 4.1: Overview of Respondents

Participant pseudonym	Discipline Group			Teaching Experience (in years)	Module level of EL activities reported in the interviews		
	Work, Psychology and Strategy	Financial and Operational Performance	Enterprise and Innovation		UG	PG, *pre-experience	PG, *post-experience
WPS1	✓			16+			✓
WPS2	✓			11 - 15	✓(final year)		✓
WPS3	✓			16+			✓
WPS4	✓			16+		✓	✓
WPS5	✓			6-10		✓	
WPS6	✓			16+		✓	✓
WPS7	✓			16+	✓(final year)	✓	
WPS8	✓			16+			✓
WPS9	✓			11-15	✓(final year)		✓
WPS10	✓			11-15			✓
WPS11	✓			6-10	✓ (final year)		
WPS12	✓			6-10	✓ (2nd year)		
FOP1		✓		16+	✓ (1st year)	✓	
FOP2		✓		11-15	✓ (1st year)	✓	
FOP3		✓		16+	✓ (1st year)	✓	
FOP4		✓		16+	✓ (final year)		
FOP5		✓		11-15		✓	
FOP6		✓		16+	✓ (2nd year)		
FOP7		✓		16+		✓	✓
FOP8		✓		16+		✓	✓
EI1			✓	16+	✓ (1st year)		
EI2			✓	11-15	✓(1st and final year)		
EI3			✓	11-15	✓(final year)		
EI4			✓	6-10	✓(final year)		
EI5			✓	6-10		✓	✓
EI6			✓	16+	✓ (1st year)		✓
EI7			✓	16+	✓ (final year)		
EI8			✓	0-5		✓	
EI9			✓	16+	✓ (first and final year)		
EI10			✓	16+		✓	
EI11			✓	11-15	✓ (final year)		
EI12			✓	0-5		✓	
EI13			✓	16+		✓	
EI14			✓	6-10		✓	✓
EI15			✓	16+		✓	
EI16			✓	16+	✓ (2nd year)		

*Pre and post-experience refer to the prior work experience of programme applicants. Pre-experience programmes typically recruit recent undergraduates with no/limited professional work experience. Post-experience programmes require applicants to have professional work experience prior to enrolment.

4.7 Data Collection

When collecting data for a case study, Yin (2014) advises researchers to adhere to three key principles. Firstly, he advocates the use of multiple sources of evidence, as this is an important contributor to data triangulation and the establishment of construct validity. In this research study, semi-structured interviews were the primary method of data collection. According to Natow (2020), researchers can triangulate data in a number of ways. The use of multiple methodologies (as advocated by Yin, 2014) is a common approach, but data can also be triangulated by using multiple data analysis techniques, multiple researchers or multiple data sources. Natow states that an example of this latter method includes conducting interviews with "different categories of respondents who hold diverse perspectives" (2020, p. 162). The cross-disciplinary approach to this study met this criterion by exploring the EL teaching and learning experiences of individuals representing a wide variety of business disciplines, including accounting, HRM, marketing, management, finance, data analytics and entrepreneurship.

Yin's second principle relates to documenting and organising case study data, and he recommends the maintenance of a case study database which would contain notes, interview transcripts, researcher memos, etc. The digital records maintained for this study include audio recordings, transcriptions and the researcher's field notes, which were all clearly labelled, filed, and stored on a protected device, either in designated folders or in the NVivo database. Apart from helping the researcher keep track and organise the data, the maintenance of a data base contributes to the dependability of the study by demonstrating rigour in data collection (Verleye, 2019).

Finally, Yin also advises researchers to maintain a chain of evidence so that an external observer can follow the trail of evidence from questions to conclusions. The chain of evidence in this study is supported by the existence of a case study database which includes the

schedule of interviews and an approach to citation that clearly indicates if the source is from the literature, interview transcripts or other documents.

4.7.1 Interviews

The purpose of interviewing "is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective" (Patton, 2015, p. 426). In qualitative research in education, interviewing is the most common method used, and in some cases, it is the only data source (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). The interview approach used in this study was a semi-structured format that was guided by a list of topics to be explored, a method that allowed for flexibility in question order and format (Walliman, 2010). The advantage of this interview type is that it allows the researcher "to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic" (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 111). A disadvantage of this method of data collection is that the lack of standardisation in semi- and unstructured interviews can raise questions about the dependability and credibility of the data (Saunders *et al*., 2016).

This research project took place during the COVID-19 pandemic which imposed social distancing and other health protection measures in workplaces, including at the university where the research took place. Consequently, I made the decision to conduct all interviews using the Zoom videoconferencing platform, and permission for this was granted as part of my ethics approval. Prior to the pandemic, such platforms had been increasingly used in qualitative studies with Gray *et al.* (2020) citing convenience and ease of use as a particular benefit. Nehls *et al.* (2015) suggest that the quality of responses in face-to-face and online interviews is similar and conclude that this interview format "expands the boundaries of rich, descriptive qualitative research in a manner that is both convenient and accessible" (p. 154).

Prior to commencing interviews with all respondents, a pilot interview was conducted in September 2021 with a staff member with experience using EL in their modules. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) advise that a pilot interview is a crucial step in the research process as it allows the researcher to quickly understand any questions that are confusing and need rewording, as well as those that produce useless data (p. 117). For this study, the pilot interview was used to explore the respondent's understanding of the questions and the fitness for purpose of the research instrument based on the signature pedagogies framework.

The approach to interviewing adopted in this study was influenced by Quinney *et al.* (2016), who warn that "interviewing peers is fraught with complexity… [as these]… interviews can involve the spectrum of collegial relationships from close friend to unknown fellow professionals" (p. 1). They advise initiating short social conversations at the start of each interview as it helps to create an environment of authenticity and trust, which enables "the interview relationship to move quickly from a tentative introduction into a phase of immersion in rich data" (p. 5). This advice was heeded, and following a brief conversation at the start of each interview, I explained the motivation for the research and the purpose of the study, and respondents were reminded that the project assured their anonymity and confidentiality. All interviewees were asked if they were willing for their interview to be recorded, and all agreed to this request.

4.7.2 The Development of the Research Questions

The data collection approach in this thesis was designed to obtain in-depth, rich data on educators' experiences of using EL in business education and to allow the research participants to share as much of their experiences as they were willing.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the approach taken in this thesis was to examine EL through the lens of signature pedagogies. This was reflected in the approach to the development of the interview questions, which were grouped under the headings of surface, deep and implicit structures of EL pedagogy. The hypothesised relationships between the structures and particular features were reflected in the prompts for the interview questions. Learning from the pilot interview resulted in changes to the question grouping and sequencing. In the pilot interview, the questions were asked in a 'surface-deep-implicit' order. However, following the evaluation of this interview, some difficulties with this approach were identified. The main issue was a lack of flow in terms of topics, which resulted in an overly long interview (67 minutes) that was somewhat disjointed in parts. For example, separating questions about the EL method (surface structure) from questions about experiential content and reflection (deep structure) felt incongruous to both the interviewer and the interviewee and resulted in some repetition of responses. In addition, by finishing the interview with the implicit structure questions, it was felt that these responses were somewhat disconnected from the respondent's discussion of their actual EL practice. Overall, I felt that adhering strictly to a

'surface-deep-implicit' format did not allow for a natural flow in terms of questions and topics.

Therefore, I made the decision to adhere less strictly to grouping questions under the structural categories and instead to ask the questions in the order in which they facilitated a more fluid conversation. For example, rather than asking respondents about experiential content and reflection as abstract topics, I decided that it was more appropriate to discuss them in the context of the respondents' specific EL activities. So, having asked the interviewee to describe a particular EL activity they used (e.g., a case study), I then asked questions about the role of ambiguity, complexity, realism and reflection in that particular EL method. I believe this approach yielded more useful insights into how respondents actually enacted EL in their modules. Table 4.2 shows the pre- and post-pilot arrangement of questions.

Table 4.2 Pre- and Post-Pilot Interview Questions

Question Order (pre-pilot)	Question order (post-pilot)
1. General questions Discipline area, Teaching experience (years), use of EL in one or more modules, module titles and year	**1. General questions** Discipline area, Teaching experience (years), use of EL in one or more modules, module titles and year
2. Surface structure • Description of EL activity • Learning environment for EL • Challenges and enablers of EL	**2. Implicit/Deep structure** • Values for business graduates (pedagogies of formation) • Competencies for business graduates • Rationale for EL

3. Deep structure
• Competencies for business graduates
• Rationale for EL
• Experiential content (realism, ambiguity, complexity)
• Reflection (focus, method, support)
• Features (pedagogies of uncertainty and engagement)
	3. Deep/Surface structure
	• Description of EL activity
	  ○ Experiential content (realism, ambiguity, complexity)
	  ○ Reflection (focus, method, support)
	  ○ Features (pedagogies of uncertainty and engagement)
	• Learning environment for EL

4. Implicit structure • Values for business graduates (pedagogies of formation)	**4. Challenges of EL and facilitating factors**

The post-pilot research instrument started with a small number of classification questions to clarify the interviewee's discipline area and teaching experience and to identify the modules and programmes in which the EL activities took place. Following this, I asked interviewees to talk about the professional values and competencies that they believed were necessary for business graduates and their rationale for adopting an EL pedagogy. Respondents were then asked to describe how the activity was operationalised including methods of instruction, assessment and resources used. To understand respondents' beliefs about the core tenets of EL (experience and reflection), probes were used to ask educators how they constructed their EL experiences, including links to real-world activities, the structure, complexity, and ambiguity inherent in EL tasks, and perceptions of student engagement. Questions were posed about the role and nature of reflection in the EL activities described, educator evaluations of students' reflective capacities, and support (if provided) for reflective learning. As the interviews were taking place at a time of considerable upheaval in HE education due to the COVID-19 pandemic, respondents were asked about their experience of teaching using EL in an online environment. The interviews concluded with questions on possible challenges associated with EL as a teaching and learning method and factors that might enable or enhance the use of the approach. Overall, I was satisfied that the revised instrument was robust and suitable for the research purpose of the study. A copy of the interview guide is in Appendix F.

4.7.3 *Additional Sources of Evidence*

During the interviews, ten participants offered to make additional sources of information available to the researcher, including journal articles they had written, their course outlines, access to their virtual learning environment (VLE) pages and written descriptions of EL activities. These additional materials were critically reviewed as desk-based sources, but when compared to the interview data, they did not yield any further insights into the educator's thinking about EL and reflection or how they were translated into their classroom practice. Therefore, a decision was made to focus exclusively on the rich interview data provided.

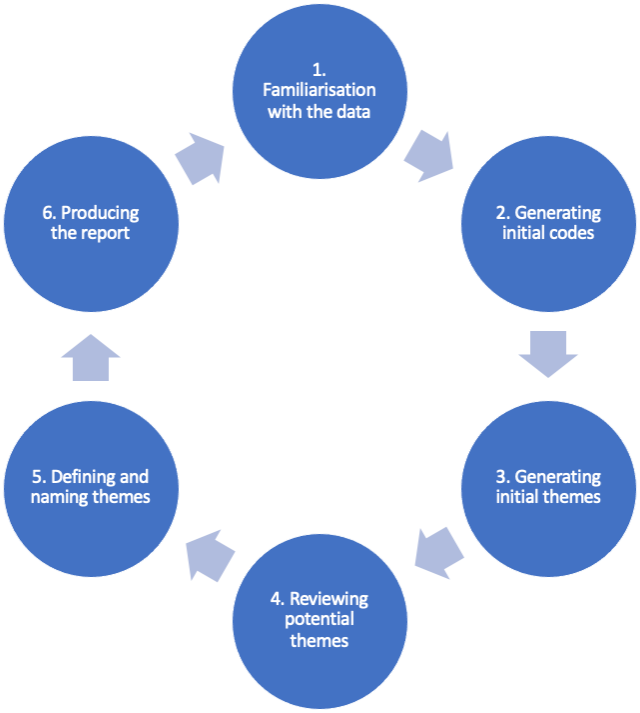
4.8 Data Analysis

Data analysis has been described as the most difficult and "intellectually challenging" (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 114) part of qualitative research. Unlike researchers who use quantitative methods involving statistical tests that help to identify significant patterns, the qualitative analyst must rely on his or her "own sensemaking, understandings, intelligence, experience, and judgment" (Patton, 2015, p. 572). At its most basic level, the goal of data analysis is to answer the research question(s) by making sense and meaning out of the data (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016).

The method chosen for this study was thematic analysis (TA), an approach that is widely used for analysing qualitative data in the social and health sciences, health, and education research and is, according to Terry *et al*. (2017), suited to "any subdiscipline and area where general qualitative research questions about experience, understanding, social processes, and human practices and behaviour make sense" (p. 27). Thematic analysis is characterised by its flexibility, as it can be conducted within various ontological and epistemological frameworks (Terry *et al.,* 2017).

Thematic analysis has been defined as "a search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon" (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p. 82). Among the most influential writers on this method are Braun and Clarke (2020; 2021), who provide a six-phase guide to conducting thematic analysis which is followed here. Figure 4.1 depicts the phases in a manner that reflects Braun and Clarke's view that it is a recursive and iterative process which allows for movement back and forth through the phases as required (Byrne, 2021).

Figure 4.1 Stages in Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006)



4.8.1 Phase one: Familiarisation with the Data

During this phase, the researcher immersed herself in the data so that she was very familiar with "the depth and breadth of the content" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 87). The primary form of data for this thesis was the interviews, all of which went through two stages of transcription. Software that transcribes audio to text was used to generate an initial verbatim transcript. The use of automated transcription has been shown to be of benefit to qualitative researchers in producing a 'first pass' transcript (Da Silva, 2021). Each transcript was then checked by the researcher against the original audio recording to ensure accuracy and read thoroughly before being returned to participants for member checking. Each transcript was reviewed again before being imported as a text file into the NVivo database. This process of listening to the audio recordings, reading and rereading ensured an appropriate level of familiarity and closeness with the interview data.

4.8.2 Phase Two: Generating Initial Codes

The approach to coding used in this thesis incorporated both deductive, top-down and inductive, bottom-up coding. The former approach is theory-driven, while the latter represents codes that emerge from an examination of the data itself (Swain, 2018). This

hybrid method of coding reflects a perspective that recognises that "deductive approaches ensure structure and theoretical relevance from the start while still enabling a closer inductive exploration of the deductive codes in later coding cycles" (Skjott Linneberg and Korsgaard, 2019, p. 264). Using this strategy means that theory is "both a precursor to, and an outcome of, the data analysis" (Swain, 2018, p.5). Recognising the iterative nature of thematic analysis, the approach to coding was provisional (Saldana, 2013), and the codes were revised and modified during the process of data analysis.

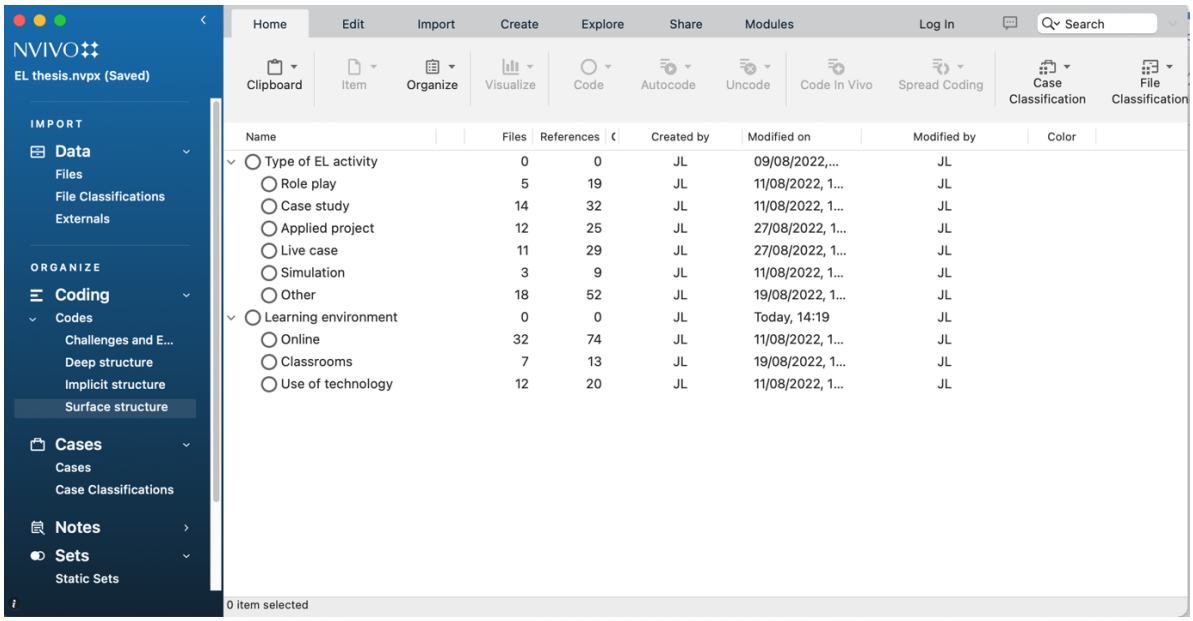
As a theory-informed study, an initial set of *a priori* codes was developed first, based on the study's research questions and the theoretical lens of signature pedagogies. In taking this approach, the comments by Braun and Clark on codes and themes are worth noting, as they state that "there is no absolute distinction between codes and themes across TA methods. In many TA approaches, these terms are used interchangeably, or coding is conceptualised as a process of allocating data to predetermined themes" (2020, p. 340).

The initial *a priori* codes were broadly categorised to explore educators' practices for evidence of the surface structure, deep structure, and implicit structures of EL. This decision to use this approach was informed by extant research utilising the signature pedagogies concept (Seouw *et al.,* 2019). As the interview transcripts were examined, sub-codes for each of these main codes emerged as a result of reading the text line by line and assigning codes to text that was relevant to each structural dimension. In some instances, these additional codes expanded on the main code categories, and these were assigned as sub-codes.

To facilitate coding, I used NVivo, a software programme designed to perform Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS). NVivo is described as "an all-encompassing data management system" (Mortelmans, p. 436), and it is particularly useful as a tool to help researchers who are using large quantities of data such as interview transcripts. All transcripts were imported as text files into the NVivo database. Using software like NVivo provides the researcher with a number of advantages, including the ability to organise, store and retrieve large volumes of data. However, García-Horta and Guerra-Ramos (2009, p. 163) remind us that no computer package will do the researcher's job, and the 'real hard work' of looking for meanings, synthesising data and theorising, remains the duty of the researcher.

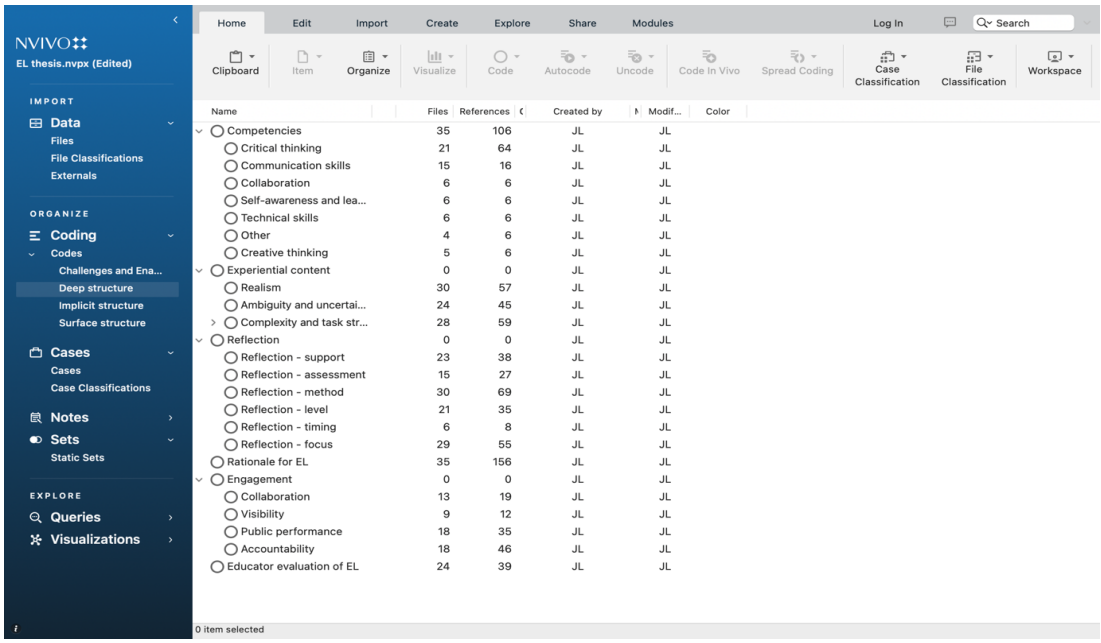
Examples of the approach to coding are shown in the following screenshots. For example, under the surface structure *a priori* code (Figure 4.2), material from the interview transcripts was allocated to the sub-codes 'Type of EL Activity' and 'Learning Environment'. These were further divided, and codes were created for the different EL methods and aspects of the learning environment.

Figure 4.2: Screenshot showing Surface Structure Codes



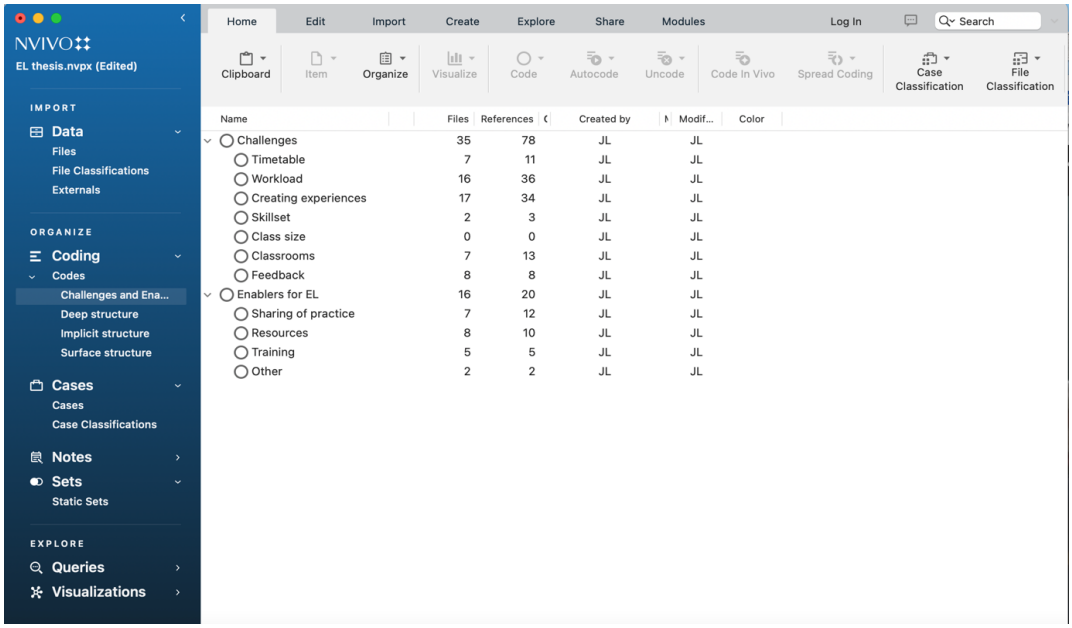
Coding for the surface and implicit structures was relatively straightforward. Coding for transcript items that related to the deep structure was more complicated due to the wide range of factors that are encompassed in educators' assumptions and beliefs about their EL pedagogical practices. The final codes only emerged after a prolonged process of line-by-line examination of text and an iterative process of coding, recoding and merging codes.

Figure 4.3: Screenshot Showing Deep Structure Codes



The conceptual framework of signature pedagogies (surface, deep and implicit structures and features) provided a basis for the coding of much of the data. However, during the interviews, respondents described the challenges they had encountered with the use of EL and they also outlined possible solutions or factors that would enable their future use of the pedagogy. The codes generated from this discussion are shown in Figure 4.4 below.

Figure 4.4: Screenshot showing Coding for EL Challenges



4.8.3 Phase Three: Generating Initial Themes

According to Braun and Clark (2020), what exactly constitutes a theme is one of the most common areas of confusion in thematic analysis discourse, and they contend that the conceptualisation of a theme differs between approaches to thematic analysis. In the reflexive approach, themes can be considered "patterns of shared meaning underpinned by a central concept" (p. 342). However, in coding reliability and codebook approaches, themes may consist of summaries of data domains or topics (p. 341) and may be partly or fully developed in advance based on existing theory (Braun and Clark, 2020).

Signature pedagogies have been the subject of considerable attention in education research, but existing empirical studies reflect different approaches to thematic conceptualisation. For example, Alshurafat *et al.* (2020) focus on the features of forensic accounting education and use an inductive approach to identify four themes (experiential learning, hands-on experience, pedagogical tools and traditional learning) that characterise a signature pedagogy for their discipline. In contrast, in Moozeh *et al*.'s research on engineering education (2021) and Seouw *et al*.'s study of geography education (2019), coding and theme development follow a deductive process, and the themes identified relate specifically to Shulman's surface, deep and implicit structural dimensions. This latter method is much more common in signature pedagogy research and this informed the decision to use this approach for this study of EL in business education.

Another question researchers need to consider in this phase relates to the level at which themes are to be identified, largely a choice between semantic and latent themes (Braun and Clark, 2006). Semantic codes are based on an explicit or surface meaning of the data, and the researcher does not look beyond what the participant has said. Latent codes try to identify underlying meanings or assumptions that may shape the descriptions provided by participants. In this thesis, while I looked at the semantic meanings when developing codes and themes, when interpreting the data, I considered the latent meanings.

4.8.4 *Phase Four: Reviewing Potential Themes*

During this stage, the aim was to review initial themes by examining the data categorised under each theme and considering its relevance to that theme (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017).

Braun and Clark (2006) advise an initial review to identify 'candidate' themes and sub-themes (themes with a theme) based on their significance to the research question. The identified themes and sub-themes for this study are shown in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3. Themes and Sub-themes

Theme	Sub-themes
Surface structure	Types of EL activities Learning environment Features – pervasive, routinized, temporal pattern
Deep structure	Motivation for adoption for EL Rationale and type of knowledge sought Method of knowledge construction Experiential content Reflection Features – pedagogies of engagement and uncertainty
Implicit structure	Professional values for business graduates Features – pedagogies of formation
Challenges	Challenges associated with the use of EL

4.8.5 Phase Five: Defining and Naming Themes

Braun and Clark describe the task in this phase as "identifying the essence of what each theme is about" (2006, p. 92) and advise testing for this criterion through the provision of a few sentences that describe the scope and content of each theme.

In this thesis, the surface structure theme provides an overview of the concrete, operational aspects of EL by describing the types of EL activities used in one business school and the learning environment in which EL takes place. The deep structure describes educators' rationale for using EL, the type of knowledge sought, and gives an insight into educators assumptions on experiential content and the role of reflection in EL. The implicit structure of EL is explored through an examination of the professional values that are emphasised by instructors using this pedagogy. The final theme identifies the challenges experienced in using EL and possible enabling solutions that might address constraints.

4.8.6 Phase Six: Producing the Report

The final stage of thematic analysis was to write up the findings to tell the story, within and across themes, in a "concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting" manner (Braun and Clarke, p. 93). Chapter Five presents the findings from the thematic analysis. Relevant literature is used throughout the chapter to evaluate and compare the evidence against published research. In this chapter, I followed Braun and Clark's advice that the write-up needs to include vivid examples to illustrate the themes, but I also endeavoured to ensure that the account moved beyond description and contributed to an argument that is relevant to the research questions.

4.9 Ethical Considerations

It is essential that any research project maintains ethical integrity, and Creswell (2014) proposes a series of ethical guidelines for researchers to consider at each stage of the research process. Prior to conducting the study, he advises that all necessary permissions are obtained. Approval for this research study was obtained from the DCU Research Ethics Committee and permission to conduct research among staff members of the business school was obtained in writing from the acting Dean.

To ensure ethical behaviour during the data collection process, Creswell makes several recommendations that were followed in this study. Participation in the research was completely voluntary, and all academic faculty members were invited to take part in the study. The invitation email provided a working definition of EL and examples of typical activities (e.g., case studies, role-plays, consulting projects). This ensured participants understood the researcher's definition of EL and could decide for themselves if it aligned with their teaching approach. Participants were also provided with a guide to the interview topics prior to the interview taking place (see Appendix B). As per DCU Ethics Committee requirements, all research participants in this study signed informed consent forms and were assured that their confidentiality and anonymity would be respected. Copies of the plain language statement and informed consent documents are in Appendices C and D.

Further advice provided by Creswell on data collection concerned the need to acknowledge and respect potential power imbalances. I sought to address this by ensuring that

respondents had a say in how their statements were recorded in the research, and I utilised member checking (also known as respondent validation) as part of my research protocol. Birt *et al.* (2016) report that member checking "covers a range of activities including returning the interview transcript to participants, a member check interview using the interview transcript data or interpreted data, a member check focus group, or returning analysed synthesized data" (p. 1803). In this study, each transcribed interview was sent back to the participant with an invitation to check the file for any inaccuracies in the data. This decision was informed by debate within the research literature regarding member checking and its role in the research process. Mercer warns that it opens the possibility for the informants to change their answers, thus introducing subjective bias into the record of the interview (2007, p. 12). It could also result in the loss of possibly valuable data if the interviewee requests that it be deleted (Mero-Jaffe, 2011). In this study, out of 35 interviews, five were returned to the researcher with requests for minor amendments or clarifications. On balance, I agree with Tong *et al*.'s contention that respondent validation helps to ensure that "the participants' own meanings and perspectives are represented and not curtailed by the researchers' own agenda and knowledge" (2007, p. 356), and therefore, I believe it was an appropriate step in the research process.

All researchers face ethical dilemmas, but as an insider researcher, I was cognisant of additional ethical considerations during the data collection process, particularly around the management of bias where my previous experience, relationships and personal values could influence the research process. In particular, Fleming advises insider researchers to be aware of the potential for 'informant bias' during data collection when "what participants share in an interview may be influenced by how the researcher is perceived and their relationship with the researcher outside the research context" (2018, p. 313). Creating distance is difficult when the researcher has social or collegiate relationships with the participants outside of the research project. However, following Greene's advice (2014), I endeavoured to maintain a neutral position during the interviews and used reflexive practices to try to maintain an appropriate level of social and emotional distance from the research participants.

During the data analysis stage of the research process, Creswell reminds us to respect the privacy of participants, avoid 'going native' and not to disclose only positive results (2014, p.

138). To ensure privacy in this study, following transcription of the interview data, all participants were assigned pseudonyms that were used in all subsequent stages of the research. Other advice that I found helpful was to keep field notes (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and from Fleming (2018), the advice to make use of a 'critical friend', a third-party who can challenge your perceptions and assumptions. Finally, I found Galdas's perspective particularly helpful in terms of reminding me of my positionality in the research process and the need to acknowledge the potential for bias. He says:

> Those carrying out qualitative research are an integral part of the process and final product, and separation from this is neither possible nor desirable. The concern instead should be whether the researcher has been transparent and reflexive (i.e., critically self-reflective about their own preconceptions, relationship dynamics, and analytic focus) about the processes by which data have been collected, analysed, and presented. (2017, p. 2)

Creswell's advice on managing ethical concerns in a research study also includes the need to ensure appropriate reporting, sharing, and storing of data (2014). In reporting data in this thesis, all procedures to comply with DCU ethical requirements on storage and disclosure were followed.

4.10 Dependability, Credibility and Transferability

As a methodological approach, case study research has been the subject of considerable debate. Tight (2009) states that the approach has desirable qualities, the main one being that cases allow for an in-depth and particular focus on a topic. The bounded nature of a case study also facilitates small-scale research and may represent a more feasible and pragmatic approach for researchers. However, there are limitations associated with the method, which Flyvbjerg (2006) summarises as 'misunderstandings' about case-study research, largely related to issues of reliability and validity. These two "scientific canons of inquiry" (Saunders *et al.,* 2016, p. 202) have long been considered central to judgements about the quality of research. In quantitative research, reliability refers to the replication and consistency of findings, while validity denotes the appropriateness of measurement methods and the accuracy and generalizability of the research outcomes. All researchers are required to consider research quality seriously, but as the concepts of reliability and validity are rooted in a positivist tradition, their interpretation needs to be redefined in relation to qualitative research (Golafshani, 2003). In an effort to recognise the nature of qualitative research based

on interpretive assumptions, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest redefining reliability as 'dependability', internal validity as 'credibility' and generalizability as 'transferability', and this is the approach adopted for this study.

Dependability is associated with the notion of trustworthiness, and in qualitative research, it requires the researcher to document the details of the research process so that it is clear and transparent (Noble and Smith, 2015). This chapter outlined the approach to data collection and analysis used in this study, and the information has been presented in a way to facilitate understanding and evaluation by other researchers. The audit trail (interview data, field and theoretical notes) kept by the researcher allows others to interrogate the logic and support for the methodological choices, findings, and conclusions (Lub, 2015).

To ensure credibility in this study, I first adopted a reflexive approach, a stance that is particularly important given the insider nature of this research. Secondly, I undertook member checking, which allowed each respondent the opportunity to confirm the accuracy of their interview transcript and to make corrections where necessary. A third strategy advised by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) is adequate engagement in data collection. In this study, data was collected from 36 cases (including the pilot interview), representing a wide range of business disciplines and educator experiences.

Finally, to enhance the possibility of transferring this study's findings to other settings, I have endeavoured to include "rich, thick descriptions" (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 257) and to include evidence in the form of quotes from participants to provide a thorough understanding of their experiences of teaching using EL.

4.11 Conclusion

In this chapter, the research design for this study is outlined. Reflecting the researcher's positionality within the qualitative paradigm, a single case study with 36 embedded cases was used to explore business educators' experiences of teaching with EL. The chapter contains a detailed description of the approach to data collection and analysis. As the study falls within the remit of insider research, particular attention was paid to the ethical implications of this stance to ensure that the findings reported in the following chapter are trustworthy and robust.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this research study was to explore how EL is implemented by business educators. As outlined in Chapter Two, a conceptual framework based on Shulman's concept of signature pedagogies was used as a lens to examine this teaching and learning approach. To achieve the research aim, 36 educators in one business school were interviewed to gain insights into their EL practices, resulting in 50 examples of EL. The findings from these interviews are reported in this chapter, which is arranged in four sections to mirror the themes identified in Chapter Four. The findings from Theme One focus on the surface structure of EL and identify the main EL methods used by respondents in the study. Educator views on the learning environment for EL are reported in this section, as are findings related to signature pedagogy features relating to pervasiveness, routinization and temporal pattern.

In Chapter Three, it was stated that the deep structure warranted particular focus in the research study, as this is critical to understanding the practical implementation of a signature pedagogy. Therefore, the findings from Theme Two focus on educators' motivation for adopting EL, the nature of professional knowledge sought, and the methods of constructing EL. This latter section sheds light on how educators implement key elements of EL pedagogy, namely, the management of experience and reflection. As part of the discourse on this theme, educators' perspectives on the features of pedagogies of uncertainty and engagement are included in this discussion.

The findings on Theme Three relate to the implicit structure of EL, and this section details educators' beliefs about professional values in business education. This chapter concludes with the findings from the final theme, where the perceived challenges of using EL are reviewed. The possibility of a shadow structure is not discussed here but is addressed in Chapter Six.

Following Merriam and Tisdell's advice that qualitative research should include "rich, thick descriptions" (2016, p. 257), the educators' accounts of their EL practices that follow include

verbatim quotes. All quotes were attributed to the pseudonym attached to each respondent pseudonym (see Table 4.1 in Chapter Four), and where it was necessary to provide additional context, quotes were also denoted by the module level of the EL activities (undergraduate (UG) or postgraduate (PG), pre- or postexperience), the class size of the particular module, and the EL method used. While there is no universal agreement as to what constitutes a 'large class', empirical studies tend to use the designation for classes of more than 100 students (e.g., Maringe and Sing, 2014; Lyons and Buckley, 2021), and this convention was followed here.

5.2 Findings on Theme One: The Surface Structure Of EL

The surface structure of a pedagogy reflects what educators do and refers to the visible, operational aspects of teaching and learning. This section is divided into three main areas: an account of the EL methods used by the educators in the study; the learning environment in which EL was practiced; and an evaluation of the features that were hypothesised to pertain most closely to the surface structure (pervasiveness, routinization and temporal pattern).

5.2.1 EL Methods

Thirty-six educators took part in the research study and provided 50 descriptions of EL practices. 13 respondents provided two examples of different EL activities, some within the same module, while others described EL in two different modules. The literature on EL identifies a number of approaches that are commonly utilised in business education (Farashahi and Tajeddin, 2018; Perusso and Baaken, 2020), and the findings indicated that just over half of EL activities in this case study could be classified into these previously identified categories, namely, case studies, live cases, role plays and simulations. Analysis of the interview data provided evidence of use of additional techniques, which respondents categorised as EL, including applied projects and learning from guest speakers.

Table 5.1 below provides an overview of the findings in relation to the EL methods used by respondents.

Table 5.1 Methods of Experiential Learning

	Number of examples reported	Education level		Class size		Discipline areas where method is most used
		UG	PG	Large	Small	
Case studies	12	4	8	1	11	Marketing, Management/ Strategy, HRM
Live cases	9	3	6	3	6	Entrepreneurship, Marketing, Management/ Strategy
Simulations	2	1	1	1	1	Accounting, Strategy
Role Plays	4	3	1	2	2	HRM, Management/ Strategy
Applied projects	18	10	8	7	11	All discipline areas
Guest speakers	5	2	3	2	3	Accounting, HRM, Management/ Strategy

The data shows that most EL activities in this business school fell into three categories: case studies; live cases; and applied projects. Case studies and live cases were used more with postgraduates, while the results showed almost equal use of applied projects between levels. There is some evidence to suggest that some methods were associated more with particular business disciplines. For example, all of the live case examples came from educators in the marketing, entrepreneurship and management/strategy disciplines. Role plays were only used by respondents teaching HRM or business strategy. Accounting educators were the only respondents who reported use of the simulations, and they also featured strongly under guest speakers. In the following sections, findings on the main methods of EL reported are discussed.

5.2.1.1 Case Studies

The use of case studies in business education goes back over 100 years, but Hodge *et al.* (2013) suggest that use of this method may have peaked due to the adoption of more hands-on EL approaches. The demise of case studies was not reflected in this study, where 12 respondents cited using various forms of case teaching in their classes. The use of case studies was much more common in small classes, and while respondents across the three academic groups used cases, educators in the marketing, management/strategy and HRM areas appeared to use this method most frequently.

With postgraduates, Harvard-style case studies were frequently employed but used less at the undergraduate level, with educators here demonstrating a preference for shorter, less complex cases. Respondents reported that they sourced short cases from the library databases, "*two minute reads*" (EI1, UG, small class), or cases derived from newspaper articles, "*a quick one pager...maybe from the Financial Times*." (WPS9, UG, large class)

From the interviews, the format of a case session in a class room was usually discussion-based, with the students expected to have read the case and perhaps supplementary reading material in advance. In some formats, student groups present their analysis and solutions to the case issues, and this presentation forms the basis of the class discussion. Case discussion classes provide an example of Shulman's notions of visibility and accountability, where students are expected to demonstrate a level of engagement and willingness to learn by visibly sharing their learning with peers and instructors (Shulman, 2005c). However, participation was not always forthcoming:

> *If the class hasn't read the material around it, it can really flop. It's quite a risk. When the students don't engage and haven't read the material, and it just all falls flat, that's kind of heartbreaking. It's really hard to deal with that. (WPS4, PG, pre-experience, small class)*

Respondents in this study reported good levels of engagement when using cases with post-experience postgraduates, but it was more challenging to help undergraduate or pre-experience postgraduates understand their role in this type of EL environment:

> *Sometimes it's much more comfortable for students to just sit and watch lectures. That's okay. I don't have to do anything. And if I don't want to engage with the lecturer, that's okay...but I when I have to move to this hands-on experience, I have to do something, I have to work.... and this can be quite uncomfortable. (EI13, PG, pre-experience, small class)*

Sanderson (2021) observes that the use of EL approaches like case discussions entails a reconceptualization of classroom roles, processes and expectations, requiring students to be actively engaged in the learning process. Shulman notes that education settings where students are accountable and required to share their learning publicly may be uncertain and uncomfortable, but he argues that there is an intellectual and formational yield through this type of pedagogy (2005a, p.57). Classroom case discussions offer an opportunity for knowledge that is jointly produced by the educator and the learners, but encouragement of

shared reflection needs to be a deliberate part of the EL design, as explained by this respondent:

> *I call upon a random group for each question each week, and they get the discussion going. And then ....I would pause them and say, Okay, does anyone else have anything different? Or does anyone else want to challenge them on that? And actually try and make a point of developing a bit of tension in terms of discussions to get them a bit more invested in it, to challenge them... and then, I suppose, the challenge is also getting them to link some of the theoretical stuff that I've been giving them with the case study. (EI4, UG, small class)*

From the findings, the management of a case class can be challenging. While "it is often assumed that as subject matter experts, educators are naturally equipped to manage EL" (Sanderson, 2021, p. 652), educators using methods like case teaching reported additional demands on their pedagogical competence when operating in EL settings, as explained by one respondent:

> *I sometimes liken the class, these kind of experiential classes, it's like running The Late Late Show for the two hours, except there's no support. As in, you're trying to prompt the audience, the students as the audience. You're trying to link between one comment and another; you're trying to allow people to get in or not get in or stop people talking too much. There's all of that class management that goes on that doesn't arise if you're just simply giving a lecture. It's a two-hour performance, and you have to be alert to all the material and kind of have it all in your head at the same time. But having said that, it does make it quite exciting. (WPS4, PG, pre-experience, small class)*

This respondent observed that choosing to use this EL method involved a level of risk, and similar sentiments about managing the unpredictable nature of case classes were raised by other respondents. One expressed concern about a responsibility to ensure that case discussions did not go "*out of bounds*" (EI12, PG, pre-experience, small class), while another was mindful of the need to ensure students' psychological safety in case classes.

> *I find it very difficult, as I'm very conscious that they're kids, and kids today are just so much more vulnerable even than we were at that age. That when I'm asking them to stand up and do a presentation, even if they've done a terrible job, I find it really difficult to point that out to them in the room. You want to set a standard. And yet, there's a set of learnings that you wanted to come from the case. (EI1, UG, small class)*

The issue of safeguarding students has been noted by researchers who argue that business schools' advocacy of EL needs to be accompanied by a greater acknowledgement of the wider set of skills required by educators using EL in their classes (Dean *et al.*, 2020). The importance

of educator confidence in using EL (Sanderson, 2021) was evidenced in the study when two respondents commented they did not use case studies due to a perceived lack of procedural knowledge on using this pedagogy.

5.2.1.2 Live Cases

Live cases involve direct student interaction with a real company, and nine of the thirty-six respondents described types of live EL projects where students completed various tasks (e.g., business plans, market research, feasibility studies, data analytics) for real organisations. The findings indicated that live cases were used predominantly by educators in the marketing, entrepreneurship and management/strategy discipline areas and were used at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels and with different class sizes.

In the live case examples cited in this study, the EL activity tended to follow a similar format, namely, the activity takes place in groups; the students engage with the client in the classroom, at the client's premises, or online; there is an exchange of information about the client organisation and project goals; and groups are required to record the outcomes from the activity in a written format that is submitted to the module coordinator. In the majority of the examples reported in the study (eight out of nine cases), the students were also required to report their findings directly back to the client, typically in a formal presentation. With this method of EL, educators typically asked students to submit a personal reflection on their learning following the activity (six out of nine examples). By including a presentation to clients and peers, students demonstrate their learning publicly, an activity that correlates with Shulman's pedagogies of engagement and the notions of public performance and accountability (2008). For one respondent, this requirement gave students an added incentive to improve the quality of their work:

> *And then we all feed [the strategies] back [to the client], so it makes the learning very real for them. And because it's an external party, they tend to up their game a little bit. Not that they're necessarily lazy, but they're not trying to impress me; they're actually trying to deliver value for this organization. (WPS6, PG, post-experience, small class)*

One respondent believed that a public presentation would enable a more robust completion of "*the student-business collaboration loop*" (EI7) but cited difficulties facilitating this with a large class (over 200 students).

From the findings, the live case projects predominantly involved Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) as clients, with just two examples of live cases involving larger organisations. Research on SMEs and their involvement with universities suggests that many SMEs and microenterprises in particular find navigating the HE environment challenging (Pereira and Franco, 2022). Studies on SME involvement with universities in the form of live cases show that these projects generate benefits for all stakeholders, including educators, companies and students (Fletcher-Brown *et al.,* 2015; Solan and Shtub, 2023). This was evident in the study findings, with one respondent explaining the benefits of the activity that extended beyond the students and clients to include the local community:

> *Students are collaborating with businesses to conduct a full marketing research project. So they can identify any local shops, any charities, any local businesses because the motivation for them is to help those local businesses, to help the communities. So they can use their knowledge and then contribute their knowledge to the survival of SMEs, into the development of their local communities. (EI7, UG, large class)*

For most respondents, the rationale for choosing the live case approach was that it provided a more realistic experience for students. One respondent commented on the significance of this form of EL within the entrepreneurship discipline:

> *The idea that you would do an entrepreneurship module, a practice-based module, and not have students working with live business plans, either their own or working with companies...I just don't think it works. (EI10, PG pre-experience, small class)*

However, the genuine nature of the involvement between students and client companies in live cases has been questioned (Perusso and Baaken, 2020). Most of the examples from this study indicated that student-client contact was largely limited to one or two meetings (e.g., at the start and end of the project), thus suggesting that real student insight into these businesses was limited. As an exception, one live case project took place over the course of a two-year postgraduate programme and involved multiple student-client interactions. The level of interaction was extensive and provides an exception to Young's (2002) contention

that learners who work on a live case rarely see any outcomes from their reported recommendations or actions:

> *The client organisations are getting a group of experienced managers who are going to come in and look at a particular strategic project for them over two years...and [the students] would stay with the client company as they go through this implementation. They would sit in on the meetings with them; they have access to the senior managers as they're going in trying to encourage people to buy into it. (WPS9, PG, post-experience, small class)*

5.2.1.3 Simulations

Only two of the 36 respondents cited the use of simulations in their teaching. This was somewhat surprising, as the business education literature suggests that simulations are an established EL technique in HE and, in one study, were deemed a more effective teaching method than either lectures or case studies (Farashahi and Tajeddin, 2018). In this study, one respondent explained that they chose the method to stimulate critical thinking and enhance students' abilities to apply theory in a simulated setting:

> *They have to make lots of different strategic decisions every single week.....they have to make decisions that relate back exactly to what they're learning in class. (FOP2, UG, large class)*

For this respondent, an additional benefit was that the simulation also provided a facility for recording student reflections, which were submitted weekly over the course of the activity.

While just two respondents in this study used simulations at the time of the study, another respondent indicated that a simulation had been part of their module design but was removed during the COVID pandemic because of concerns about managing it in an online environment. Two other respondents expressed an interest in this EL technique but also a reluctance to try it due to perceived higher demands on their technical knowledge. Using an EL technique like a simulation requires the facilitator to have a degree of competence and skill in running the activity, and one respondent warned that compared to other approaches, *"there are a lot more questions"* (FOP2, UG, large class). Wright and Dean (2021) argue that "educators' specialized knowledge and skill in facilitating experiential activities are often the make-or-break factor for learning from activities" (p. 990), and the need for technical support to improve educator competence on simulation functionality was raised by one respondent:

So the use of multimedia cases and simulations in the classroom - I would love to do that, but I'm inhibited because there isn't an obvious technical support for that. And the truth is, I'm sure that if I were to ask [education technologist name], because he's so fantastic, he would come into the classroom. But you shouldn't have to look for that. It should be a standard available service because once you take away that fear of the bloody thing collapsing, you know yourself, that anything that can go wrong, will go wrong. And I'm thinking, right, that's a great simulation, but it could be a disaster. (WPS3, PG, small class)

5.2.1.4 Role-Plays

Barnabé *et al.* describe role-plays as well established in business education, with a body of literature supporting "several decades of application" (2013, p. 329). However, in this study, the evidence supporting the use of this EL method was not strong, with just four respondents citing the use of role-plays in their teaching approaches. Three teach in the same discipline area (HRM), and they reported using role plays with both undergraduate and postgraduate cohorts.

For one study participant, the main benefit of this approach was that it facilitated learning that might not be obvious through lectures or other methods:

I think students think that HR is all pink and fluffy and nice and singing Kumbaya. And actually, there's some really difficult things that they have to do. [The role-play] is, in some ways, like a case study, problem solving. And it just really picks up on things that can be really difficult to teach. And it is things around communication, listening skills, how you talk to people, and tone. (WPS7,UG, small class)

The respondents described utilising a mix of private role-plays, conducted in a break-out room or outside the classroom, and public role-plays where students acted out parts in front of the educator and peers. In the public application of the method, the class was typically provided with the background to the business situation; students volunteered for the roles; they enacted the scenario; and then there was a class discussion. Taylor (2018) advises that educators using role-plays in this way need to select and manage the simulated situation carefully and must be alert to the potential emotionality of the learning environment. They emphasise the importance of reflection after the role-play experience to help students "reflect on their emotions and re-engage with the learning process" (p. 776). All respondents using this method in the study referred to reflective discussions and debriefings held

immediately after the role-plays, where students had an opportunity to describe their experience, ask questions and provide observations.

Finally, one respondent (FOP1, UG, large class) reported an interesting development in the classroom role-play with the use of professional actors to enact scenes that have been developed by the educator to illustrate particular module content. In this approach, the actors played out the scene, which was stopped at points to allow for class discussion, and following the activity, students completed personal reflections on their learning.

5.2.1.5 Applied Projects

The variety of approaches used by EL business educators was reflected in the large number of activities described in this study (18 examples), which did not fit any of the previously identified EL categories. All represented various forms of applied learning and hence, were classified as applied projects. Within this category, a range of methods were reported and these are summarised in Table 5.2 below.

Table 5.2 Overview of Applied Projects

	Number of examples reported	**Education level**		**Class size**		**Discipline area where most used**
		UG	PG	Large	Small	
Projects using data supplied by educator	5	3	2	2	3	Finance, Data Analytics, Accounting
Field research projects	5	5	0	4	1	Accounting, Entrepreneurship, Operations, Strategy
Projects based on learners' work experience	5	0	5	0	5	HRM, Management/Strategy
Other forms of applied EL	3	1	2	1	2	Management/Strategy, HRM

Five respondents reported on EL practices where students completed projects using real-world data supplied by the educator, e.g., data analysis using a data set from a government

body or international organisation. These were a mix of group and individual projects, and only one respondent in this category reported using reflection as part of the EL activity.

Another five respondents provided descriptions of field-based EL projects where students were tasked with conducting research in a real-world setting, e.g., interviewing business executives about their approach to management or mapping process improvement in a supply chain. In one large module (approximately 300 students), undergraduate learners worked in groups in a yearlong module to research new entrepreneurial products and services. Students were tasked with ideating new business opportunities, conducting a feasibility study, creating a digital marketing plan, and then pitching their ideas to business professionals in a boardroom setting. The educator using this approach explained why it was preferred to other EL methods, saying that "*the experiential aspect to it, the dynamism, the kind of heartbeat of it, you don't get from a case study*." (EI11, UG, large class)

Shulman asserts that a signature pedagogy should be "designed to transform knowledge attained to knowledge in use, and to create the basis for new kinds of understanding that can only be realised experientially and reflectively" (2005a, p. 18). Four out of the five respondents in this category required students to submit reflections on their learning from the EL experience. In the large class example described above, students completed several reflections over the course of the module where they were asked to articulate their learning from the project and from the process of working in a team. In the fifth case, the respondent explained why an individual reflection was not included:

> *So I have 20% for the group project, which when you think about it, is not a lot of marks given that they have to do a written submission and prepare a poster. What I liked about the poster day when we have such an event, if [industry executives] are walking around talking to the groups, in a way the students were articulating some of their reflections. (FOP3, UG, large class)*

Interestingly, one respondent in this category described using a video reflection, one of only two participants in the study who reported using this technique. The students involved were second-years, most of whom would be completing a yearlong work placement in their third year. The EL activity in the module was designed to give students practical experience using a particular business process, and the reflection (a three-minute video) was designed to help

students prepare for their placement interviews by providing an opportunity for them to reflect on the relationship between theory and practice in their EL project:

> *If you haven't reflected on it, then you've got nothing there, and if you haven't practiced talking about it, well, it's meaningless. So writing a reflective piece doesn't help you with the interview. The experience of vocalising it and presenting it back, as if presenting it to somebody, a talking head, is a safe space, but they now have that; they can refer back to it and they can use it [in the interview]. (FOP6, UG, large class)*

The category of applied projects included examples of EL based on the students' own work experience. This approach was only used with small, postgraduate, post-experience classes, mainly in the HRM and management/strategy disciplines. Where course participants possessed business experience, five educators reported that they harnessed this expertise and designed their EL activities around their students' experiences:

> *It would be a complete waste not to leverage the students' experience…[as] we don't really have anyone in the classroom that's not working, and the vast majority of them have quite a number of years of experience. (WPS8, PG, postexperience, small class)*

With these students, educators typically adopted approaches where students shared their personal and organisational experiences in a group or class format and then reflected on how their experiences related to academic theory and learning from class discussions. Another respondent in this category described using a mix of classroom discussions and online forums in the design of their applied project:

> *I go through a number of different discussion forums...and what I've asked them to do is to bring their real-world experience to those discussion forums. They link it back to their own organizations, their own experiences, and their own dynamics in their own organizations. So they're taking the experience of what they already have done in their organisations and bringing that into discussions, basically to educate the rest of the class. (FOP7, PG, postexperience, small class)*

Two respondents chose to base their EL activities on the critical incident technique, an approach advanced by Flanagan (1954) and commonly used in organisational studies where participants are asked to make observations around a behaviour, action or incident with the intention of gaining new perspectives on practical problems and ways of acting (Cope, 2003). For respondents in this category, the benefits of shared reflection were as much about learning from each other as from the educator:

> *They have to use [the class learning] to do something that they can bring back to their own workplaces and apply. But actually, where they get the ideas for that, how they*

> *know what will work and what won't, is them kind of tick tacking off each other as they generate more ideas. They generate the applications by asking questions of each other, and seeing things from a different perspective, and just being inspired by other people in their classroom. (WPS8, PG, postexperience, small class)*

Using students' own experiences as the basis for EL is not without its challenges. Three respondents expressed the same concern that students may think that reflecting on their own experience is sufficient for learning and that perhaps not enough attention was paid to developing a theoretical base for reflection.

> *I think what can happen...with experiential learning is that kind of sense of one person's experience being it. One person's experience is their story. It doesn't invalidate it. But it's little more than an anecdote with respect to robustness of evidence. And that's something that I think is a possible issue: if people think their own experience is all that counts and fail to recognise that's the teeny, tiniest little slice of data and that it has to be put in context, and you've got to inform yourself as to the hard science, and how does that stack up to your experience? If people... attribute too much weight to just their experience, I think that's a problem. (WPS1, PG, postexperience, small class)*

Finally, another issue that was only reported in relation to this form of EL concerns the potential for 'oversharing' or providing very personal information. Boud and Walker (2006) highlight the possibility for inappropriate disclosure in personal reflections, which may be uncomfortable or confronting for educators. One educator expressed concern about the nature of the reflective learning in their module:

> *For the postexperience course, there were some very personal revelations. So some of the stuff that came out was really, really personal, and it took a lot of guts to share it, but I kind of wondered, my God, have I gone too far here? (FOP8, PG, postexperience, small class)*

Boud and Walker (2006) advise that careful advance planning and student guidance are necessary to manage what students reveal in this type of reflective exercise. One experienced educator described having to manage this type of reflection carefully, saying, "*You do have to manage the border; it's a very fine line between deep and too deep. But the vast majority of people have found it useful, cathartic, and helpful for themselves*" (WPS3, PG, postexperience, small class).

To conclude this section on applied projects, the 'other' category reflects Sanderson's contention that the growing adoption of EL in business education places pressure on

educators to adopt unfamiliar and less defined forms of class instruction (2021). Two of the examples focused on peer exercises: one was a peer interviewing approach used with undergraduates, and the other was a peer coaching activity that was used with a postgraduate HRM class. Finally, one postgraduate module provided a working example of self-directed learning where students were able to personalise their learning for the entire module and to choose the types of EL projects they engaged in according to their own interests and development needs. This was a large class of mostly pre-experience students who were given parameters for four themes (career, business and society, digital and research) and within these themes, the module facilitated a wide range of EL activities including, participation in hackathons and focus groups, attending academic and industry events, mentoring others in digital skills, conducting consulting projects for external companies and working for charities as well as university clubs and societies. In this module, students completed reflections on all of their learning activities:

> *I think the big thing is to get involved in their own learning. I think that choice is key, and reflection is key because with the choice, they get to pick something that they want to do, and so they have to think about that. And then, when they reflect on it, they have to say, Okay, what did I actually get from this? What did I learn about myself, and did I learn any managerial skills? (EI15, PG, pre-experience, large class)*

5.2.1.6 Guest Speakers

In this study, respondents were free to choose any EL approaches they wished to discuss, and an interesting finding was the categorisation by five respondents of guest speakers as a form of EL. EL theory posits that learning from the approach comes from direct experience (i.e., learning by doing), and therefore learning vicariously from guest speakers would not appear to fit with traditional interpretations of EL. For example, Rowland (2007) calls the practice of using guest speakers in business education a 'substitute' for EL that gives students a real-life picture of academic theory. However, Hoover and Giambatista (2009) argue that "virtually all learning phenomena resulting from direct experiences can occur on a vicarious basis through observation of other persons' behaviors and its consequences for them" (p. 33). The ultimate question they believe educators should be asking when selecting EL approaches is 'does it work?' and if it does, then they argue that it should not matter if EL is direct or vicarious.

The findings from this study provided five examples of vicarious EL through the medium of guest speakers. In business education, guest speakers are usually practitioners who are invited to talk to students (either in a classroom or online) and share their experience and industry expertise. This approach has been described as a ubiquitous element of entrepreneurship education (Duening and Markiewicz, 2013), but in this study, its use was also reported by educators in the HRM and accounting disciplines, where guest speakers provided insights on aspects of career development and professionalism:

> *I liked the idea of them seeing accounting in different contexts. So I brought in lots of speakers talking about their careers, how they developed, and the choices they made, and what mattered to them in terms of knowledge, skills and values, and what careers in the future looked like. (FOP3, PG, pre-experience, small class)*

Proponents of this type of EL state that guest speakers can be an effective pedagogy provided the experience is intentionally designed to be interactive and reflective (Paul and Mukhopadhyay, 2005). Four of the five educators described guest speaker activities that were linked to an assignment that was submitted after the guest lecture. The typical format of the assessment was a reflection on learning and how this related to course content:

> *It is a reflection on what they heard these people say and how that relates to what they heard in terms of organisational culture, and power and conflict and so on. (EI6, UG, large class)*

Finally, most reports on guest speakers described a classroom experience, but one respondent reported using a form of field EL where the student learning took place during an external 'site visit'. In this case, the students visited a state institution (the Labour Court), where they had a presentation and question-and-answer session with senior officials.

This discussion on EL methods highlighted the diverse and innovative nature of the approaches reported in the study. In the next section, the study's findings on the learning environment, a key aspect of the surface structure of a pedagogy, are considered.

5.2.2 The Learning Environment for EL

McLain observes that the concept of signature pedagogies "cannot be separated from the places where learning happens" (2022, p. 1673), and for the purpose of this thesis, the focus

of the learning environment was largely on the physical and distance learning spaces where EL activities took place.

Shulman is particularly critical of the design of physical learning environments, which he believes have been built without due consideration for how educators and students can engage with each other as a learning community (2005c). However, from the responses in this study, relatively few concerns were raised about the physical environment for EL, with only five respondents citing it as an impediment to EL facilitation. However, those who did mention it expressed strong opinions:

> *Most of our classrooms are hideously set up for any form of experiential learning. I think, there's one room in our entire university where you can use experiential learning with larger groups. So that's terrible. (EI1, UG, small class, case study)*

Dean and Wright (2017) suggest that the match between space and pedagogy can help or hinder the effectiveness of EL, and a particular concern of these five respondents was the difficulty in facilitating shared reflection on their EL activities in traditional classroom settings:

> *I think the major challenge [...] is the space. I don't think we have a decent teaching space. It's very primitive. I much prefer a more grown-up, exec. ed. feel to things than them sitting in tiered rows. I feel you can't really discuss anything there. (EI14, PG, pre-experience, small class, live case)*

> *Actually, there's a lot of small things I think are really important, especially when I'm putting so much emphasis on discussion. Like the actual classroom that you're in, the numbers, like the types of seats that they have, and the time of day when the class is on. All those things are really important. (EI4, UG, small class, case study)*

What was perhaps more relevant than the physical infrastructure were the findings on the class size and how that impacted the learning environment for EL. Nine of the 36 respondents raised class size as a challenge to implementing EL. Unsurprisingly, this was almost completely related to undergraduate classes, but one respondent expressed frustration with trying to use EL with a class of 85 postgraduates, describing it as "*way too large and quite challenging to manage*" (WPS10, PG, post-experience, small class, applied project).

While there is no universally agreed number for what exactly constitutes a large class (Cullen *et al.,* 2019), it is acknowledged that class size can impact the teaching and learning experience and educators' perceptions of the suitability and, indeed, feasibility, of particular

teaching approaches. Lyons and Buckley (2021) observe that educators may have to resort to "economy of scale" teaching models when operating in large class contexts. One respondent in this research study commented on the challenge posed to their EL teaching approach by a large class size (over 200 students):

> *With big classes…..you're just a talking head in front of the class, no matter how much you try to introduce things, quizzes or split people up, and so on. (WPS2, UG, large class, role play/guest speakers)*

For another, the decision to use EL with a large class entailed considerable effort in module design:

> *I mean, when you're at postgrad level and you've got 30 in a class, you break them into groups, you can do the facilitation. You can build in experiential learning, you still build in case studies outside and bring them back in [to the classroom] ….500, you can't do that. You have to put in more effort yourself to make sure that they're doing the work and that the work is being carried out. (FOP6, UG, large class, applied project).*

Overall, the nine respondents expressed a commitment to EL, but there was also a sense of frustration on this issue:

> *The class size is not going to change; it's a public university, but the big class is not conducive. I've done my best with the 330, but it would be an amazing experience at 30 but that's what it is. (EI11, UG, large class, applied project)*

> *Class size, of course, infringes....to some extent. There's no doubt with undergrad programmes, it's harder. That said, things like guest speakers, group projects and so on, we can manage that. But for deep, engaged in-class consideration of some of these matters, that's hard with undergrad class sizes. (FOP3, UG, large class, applied project)*

While Shulman focuses much of his attention in his writings on the physical environment for signature pedagogies, he also acknowledges that technology creates an opportunity to re-examine taken-for-granted pedagogies (2005a). In 2020, the move to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated the rapid adoption of new approaches to pedagogy, and educators using EL were forced to quickly innovate and adapt their teaching methods (Satyam and Aithal, 2022). The full extent of the changes wrought by this disruption is yet to be determined, but the findings from this study provided timely and useful insights into the educators perceptions of the operation and management of EL in an online environment.

From the study findings, it was clear that the pandemic prompted a level of engagement with technology that most had not experienced before, and for some educators, this necessitated a steep learning curve. Most engaged (for the first time) in pre-recording of lectures, hosting of webinars and online classes, using software like Zoom, Vevox, Jamboard and Kahoot and managing chats, breakout rooms and online discussions forums.

For a small number of respondents (three educators), their verdict on online EL was largely negative, citing "*disadvantages, overwhelmingly*" (EI6, UG, large class, applied project) and "*more difficult for the students....and a poorer service*" (EI5, PG, pre-experience, small class, applied project). At the opposite end of the spectrum, there was also a small number (five respondents) who described their experience as largely positive, with one saying that "*the online environment for that class has not knocked the reflection or the use of experiential learning back at all*" (WPS1, PG, postexperience, small class, applied project). Others expressed similar views stating that "*it didn't produce a vastly different experience*" (FOP4, UG, large class, applied project) and that *"....it worked well. I think there's an added dimension to being in person [but] the students last year, they did the same exercise, were given the same level of guidance*" (FOP8, PG, post-experience, small class, applied project).

In between these sentiments, respondents identified advantages and disadvantages to using EL in a remote environment. Three respondents identified a benefit from pre-recording lectures, which enabled classes to become more interactive. Another advantage cited was the ease with which guest speakers could be brought into the online classroom, with one saying, *"The positive of the COVID experience for me was a lot more high profile, influential people that didn't have to get a taxi to the airport, airport over to Ireland, stay in hotels, etc.*" (EI11, UG, large class, applied project). Another advantage identified was the ability to use breakout rooms in online classes to facilitate shared reflections:

> *I could take the classroom and, at the drop of a hat, put them into breakout rooms. Because if a discussion arose and you wanted to take it a bit further, but you wanted to give them five minutes to talk about it as a group, you could just click your fingers, and bang, they were in the group, whether they wanted to be or not. And typically, they come storming out of those with discussion points. (WPS3, PG, post-experience, small class, applied project/role play)*

While respondents identified benefits associated with online learning, they were also cognisant of aspects of their EL pedagogies that worked less well in this environment. One respondent who used cases "*didn't think that cases work very well in an online environment.... I think it works much better when students are in the same room"* (EI13, PG, pre-experience, small class). Another who used live cases with a large class felt that significant changes were required with the EL design due to the restrictions imposed by remote learning, and "*a lot of the elements of the [live case] actually disappeared in 2020. It became more of a dissertation than a [live case]."* (WPS5, PG, pre-experience, large class)

Hosting student presentations online emerged as an area of concern for four respondents. Oral presentations are a commonly used part of EL designs and correlate to Shulman's concept of public performance as an essential component for student engagement (2008). Class presentations also serve as a means of developing students' oral communication competencies, skills which are highly valued in business workplaces (Coffelt *et al.*, 2019). However, respondents did not find that this element of EL worked particularly well online.

> *For me, the day of the presentations worked far better in person than on Zoom, and the students themselves will even say that. It's one thing presenting to a screen where they have their post-its all over the screen; it's quite another standing up, not knowing what to do with your hands, not knowing who to look at, and the energy they got in the room by the physical thing was much better than on Zoom. (FOP8, PG, post-experience, small class, applied project)*

In one instance, an oral presentation was removed from an EL design because the educator did not want to hold presentations in an online environment:

> *...because there is something about it, them being in the room and having to communicate to the room. Even if the room wasn't listening to a huge extent, even if the room's engagement was variable, the students still had to stand up there as a group at the coalface and make sense of it in their minds and convey it to somebody. And that's an important activity too. (EI3, UG, small class, case study)*

Apart from concerns about the students' experience, views were also expressed that using EL in an online environment was more work-intensive and necessitated a greater investment of educators' time. Educator narratives about implementing EL support the view that it is an approach that places considerable demands on educators (McKeen *et al.,* 2018), and this

appeared to be exacerbated when it incorporated pre-recording of lectures and remote delivery:

> *It's more work again for me, of course, because that was 20 minutes I would have given in the classroom [in a lecture], so I have to do something else in the classroom for those 20 minutes. And I've done my work with the recording, so I'm putting more work on myself all the time. (WPS4, PG, pre-experience, small class, case study)*

5.2.3 Findings on Pervasiveness, Routinization and Temporal Pattern

In the conceptual framework in Chapter Two, it was hypothesised that some features identified by Shulman might be associated with the surface structure of EL pedagogy, namely, pervasiveness, routinization and the temporal pattern of EL.

Shulman argues that for a pedagogy to be signature, it should be pervasive and evident across topics, courses, and programmes (2005a). The findings in this study provided strong evidence of the extensive use of EL in the teaching practices of educators in this business school. From the interviews, 36 respondents provided 50 examples of EL, almost equally divided between undergraduate and postgraduate students. EL was used by educators from the three academic groups (Enterprise and Innovation; Work, Psychology and Strategy; and Financial and Operational Performance) and the findings included examples from all disciplines in this business school.

In his theory of signature pedagogies, Shulman suggests that pervasiveness leads to the routinization of learning, as the repetition of the signature pedagogy throughout a curriculum develops habits of mind:

> ....students learn as they go from course to course, there are certain continuities that thread through the program…..certain kinds of thinking that are called for in the rules of engagement of each course, even as you go from subject to subject. (Shulman, 2005c, p. 9)

He maintains that this routinization allows learners and educators to concentrate on subject knowledge rather than constantly changing pedagogical practices. While this study's findings demonstrated a variety of EL activities, in five of the six EL methods (case studies, live cases, role plays, simulations and guest speakers), there were discernible patterns in EL formats and practice. For example, respondents who used case studies reported a largely similar approach

where students prepared the case and reading materials in advance before taking part in a class-based discussion. Similarly, those using live cases operated under a broadly similar format, both in terms of client engagement and required student outputs. Based on the descriptions provided by educators, a degree of routinization could also be argued for role plays, simulations and guest speakers. Even in the category that displayed the greatest variation in EL methods (applied projects), some patterns were apparent, particularly in the approaches to field research projects and those based on learners' own work experience. It is therefore argued that the findings of this study present some evidence to support routinization of learning through the implementation of EL pedagogy.

Shulman identifies three typical temporal patterns in professional education: an initial pedagogy focusing on the early stages of a programme of study; a capstone apprenticeship where the pedagogy is concentrated in the last year of a programme; and a sequenced and balanced portfolio demonstrating use of the pedagogy throughout a degree (2005a, p. 55). At the undergraduate level, of the 23 examples of EL in the study, approximately half were with final-year students, with the remainder split between first and second years. This provides limited evidence of a clear temporal pattern for EL. In this business school, very large classes tend to be in the first and second years with class sizes reducing somewhat in the final year as students enter specialism streams. The concentration of EL in the final year may be linked to these smaller classes, but it is also worth noting that two of the examples of EL with final-years had very large enrolments (300+ and 400+). The notion of a temporal pattern does not really apply in the case of postgraduate programmes, which are usually one year in duration, with the exception of part-time programmes where the degree is over two years.

Finally, in the discussion of EL methods in this section, reference was made to additional features highlighted by Shulman, particularly around pedagogies of engagement. In some of the methods described by respondents, a focus on features such as learner visibility and accountability (e.g., in case study discussions) and public performance (e.g., in live cases and role plays) was evident. The presence or absence of these features in EL methods represents decisions that educators take based on their underlying assumptions about discipline knowledge and how best to impart knowledge. According to the concept of signature

pedagogies, such assumptions reside in the deep structure of a pedagogy, and the findings on EL in business education in relation to this structure are now discussed.

5.3 Findings on Theme Two: The Deep Structure Of EL

The deep structure of a signature pedagogy is, according to Shulman, "a set of assumptions about how best to impart a certain body of knowledge and know-how" (2005a, p. 55). Yendol-Hoppy and Franco (2014) expand on this definition by suggesting that the deep structure embodies two sets of assumptions, the first being the motivation for a pedagogical choice. Therefore, the analysis of the deep structure of EL in this business school begins by addressing some of the factors that influenced academics' choice of EL in their teaching approaches.

The second set of assumptions identified by Yendol-Hoppy and Franco concern "the nature, value, and development of professional knowledge (e.g., type of knowledge sought and method of constructing that knowledge)" (p. 19). The *type of knowledge sought* explains the rationale for the use of the pedagogy by business school educators, and this is explored largely through the lens of competencies, that is, the knowledge, skills and attributes that are considered to be important for professional formation and which are desired outcomes from educators' use of EL (Lozano *et al.,* 2017; Lambrechts *et al.,* 2013). Finally, the *method of constructing knowledge* is examined by exploring how educators interpreted and incorporated the two key constructs of EL, that is, experience and reflection, in their teaching approaches. The examination of the literature on EL in business education in Chapter Three suggested that the nature of experiential content (realism, complexity and ambiguity) is an important consideration if EL is to contribute to the development of higher-order cognitive skills (Hamilton and Klebba, 2011; Perusso and Baaken, 2020). The literature also indicates that educators' use of reflection is critical to the attainment of EL learning goals (Hedberg, 2009). From the findings, educator assumptions about experience and reflection also provided insight into the particular features of signature pedagogies that were hypothesised to relate most closely to the deep structure, namely, pedagogies of uncertainty and engagement. Discussion on these features is interspersed throughout the findings in this section.

5.3.1 Motivation for adopting EL

When making decisions on teaching approaches, HE educators make choices between instructional methods. While there may be a range of factors influencing pedagogical choices, it is frequently said that many academics teach the way they were taught (Oleson and Hora, 2014). Shulman (2005a) labels this an "apprenticeship of observation" and the influence of one's own experience as a student is probably most relevant in an educator's early years of teaching, with one respondent in this study commenting that "*like everybody, I would have started teaching the way I was taught and very much chalk and talk*." (EI1, UG, small class, case study)

Donnelly (2016) suggests that "lecturers learn by doing, reading and reflecting, collaborating with other lecturers, giving consideration to their students' learning, and discussing what they see" (p. 5). In this study, some of these factors emerge as more influential than others, and it is clear that, as hypothesised by Oleson and Hora (2014), HE teaching is influenced by a multiplicity of factors, and educators' practices evolve as a result of a "varied repertoire of knowledge and prior experience" (p. 29). From the literature, it is suggested that personal experience is a significant influencing factor in an educator's choice of pedagogical approach (Grunspan *et al.,* 2018). Personal experience is a wide term, but in the context of this study, it includes the educator's exposure to EL as a student, learning from colleagues, pedagogical training and learning from their own teaching experiences. An added factor discussed under this heading is the impact of the educators' discipline area on the adoption of EL.

5.3.1.1 Personal experience

Only three respondents specifically cited prior experience with EL in their own education as influential in their approach to teaching. Two had experience of learning through case study methodologies, while the third gained exposure through a graduate programme where EL was the main pedagogical approach. Therefore, out of thirty-six respondents, almost 90% had limited or no exposure to EL during their own education.

Academic colleagues can be an important source of teaching support, and for educators starting in academia, they may in fact "be the primary sources of information, educational materials, inspiration, and encouragement" (Andrews *et al.,* 2016, p. 2). Overall, in this study,

learning from colleagues did not emerge strongly as motivation for the adoption of EL. Respondents did namecheck colleagues with reference to their EL practices, so there was some awareness of colleagues' teaching approaches, but the sentiment was also expressed that sharing information about pedagogy was not common:

> *I sometimes think that we are possibly working in little Islands ourselves, especially when it comes to experiential learning, whereby we are doing some great things and developing some great things, however, there isn't a holistic approach. (WPS5, PG, large class, live case)*

Academics who are perceived as more experienced in a teaching method could be considered opinion leaders who may, through informal interactions, influence the behaviour or attitudes of others (Andrews *et al.,* 2016). For example, two respondents in this study, one relatively new to EL and one with considerable experience, cited the influence of the same third staff member in their use of EL. However, opinion leaders are not always easy to identify, with one respondent commenting that "*the problem is, sometimes the people who are doing the most interesting things are not the people that you would expect*."(EI1, UG, small class, case study)

Learning from colleagues appeared to be stronger in some discipline areas than others (e.g., Accounting, HRM), but sometimes guidance was not forthcoming, even with direct requests. One participant cited an example when they specifically sought advice on how to use reflection in EL from colleagues who were more experienced with the method:

> *To be honest, I went round and I tried to get guidance off other people to see what are the students in [module name] getting as guidance seeing as that's a core part of their module. I just never got the guidance documents from other modules, and there was no malice in that. After a while, I thought, just do your own thing, so I did. (FOP3, PG, small class, guest speaker)*

The limited sharing of information reported in this study appears to provide some support for Brookfield's contention about pedagogy operating in a "shroud of silence" in HE environments (2017, p. 71). Donnelly (2009) describes lecturer collaboration as an opportunity for educators to enlarge their horizons and to "lengthen and strengthen the levers of improvement" (p. x). The fact that students are the ultimate beneficiaries of greater sharing of pedagogical knowledge was pointed out by one respondent:

> *I know that many times...[educators] don't want to share what they're doing because they think that devalues them or they lose their competitive advantage. But I think if everybody starts sharing, everybody's improving, everybody is getting better, and at the end, the target is not a module to be excellent, it's a programme to be excellent. (WPS12, UG, small class, applied project)*

Shulman contends that the power of observation is a major influence on pedagogical decisions because "faculty members in higher education rarely receive direct preparation to teach" (p. 57). As observed by HE researchers (Donnelly, 2009; Yurekli Kaynardag, 2019), in many countries, there is no professional training requirement for third-level teaching, and most of the participants in this study reported that they had limited exposure to pedagogical training prior to beginning their academic careers. Respondents detailed a process of learning on the job, described by one as being "*given a course to teach, sent off to do it, and what they did and how they did it and everything else was their own responsibility*." (WPS11, UG, small class, applied project) Others cited similar experiences:

> *I think one big problem is that I was never taught how to teach. No lecturer is taught how to teach. I have just been winging it from day one. Totally winging it, and I remember in my early years being absolutely terrified. (WPS1, PG, small class, applied project)*

> *I was trained to be a researcher. I was not trained to be an instructor, and I think that I missed a lot. If you don't have the training skills, you'll miss lots of things in the process of educating, the process of teaching and learning. (EI13, PG, small class, case study)*

One respondent in this study had a formal teaching qualification, and only four others described having taken pedagogical courses at some stage in their careers. One respondent had taken part in a programme run by a network of leading business schools, an experience described as "*just amazing….I learned a great deal from that*" (WPS3, PG, small class, role play/applied project). More commonly, pedagogical training opportunities emanated from university teaching and learning departments. An example of this was provided by a respondent who described how their first teaching experience (in another university) was supported by participation in a course on how to teach large classes, which helped them in "*building a pedagogy, building an approach*" (WPS2, UG, large class, role play/guest speakers).

From the literature (e.g., Eraut, 2012; Nolan and Molla, 2017), there appears to be a relationship between pedagogical confidence and educators' willingness to experiment with new ideas and strategies in their teaching practices, and this was evident in a response from one study participant:

> *I think I've evolved from being a very kind of strict, rigid, nervous lecturer to a more relaxed, confident, interactive co-learner or facilitator. I don't see myself as a lecturer anymore. Therefore, I suppose it's very easy to bring in experiential learning, very easy to say every couple of minutes, so how does that work in your organization? What do you think about that? Or how would you be able to apply that? Or who do you know that's like that? (WPS1, PG, small class, applied project)*

Donnelly (2009) writes that HE educators are committed to supporting student learning "so that they can discharge their professionalism in the best possible ways" (p. 4). Some respondents expressed a degree of frustration due to gaps in their pedagogical knowledge and the potential consequences for student learning:

> *I have to say, I was doing a form of experiential learning in the early days without realising it was experiential learning, and I missed out sometimes on that reflective piece. (EI16, UG, large class, live case)*

> *So in the past, I was doing a number of things without putting a name on them because I didn't know…you are teaching based on your experience as a student. So I think that's a big mistake because sometimes when you are implementing some practices, you do make mistakes; you reinvent the wheel. You spend a lot of effort trying to figure out how to better support [students] in their learning. (WPS12, UG, small class, applied project)*

The COVID-19 pandemic and the move to remote learning in 2020 necessitated a very fast upskilling in new pedagogical approaches (Bartolic *et al*., 2021). For one respondent in the study, the changes wrought by the pandemic had a relatively profound impact on their assumptions around pedagogical competence:

> *During the last year, that's one thing I think I really learned, that as lecturers, we just teach because that's just our job. Certainly, for me, I never thought I needed to learn about pedagogy. I never thought I really had to do some research on pedagogy. But the whole online teaching certainly triggered that need for continuous development. I think the commitment to professional development has never been so important for me. (EI7, UG, large class, live case)*

Oleson and Hora (2014) state that through experimentation with different approaches, HE educators accrue a "catalogue of knowledge about what works and what does not work" (p.

31). For many respondents in this study, the decision to use EL appears to have emerged through personal teaching experience and their own journeys of 'learning by doing'. One respondent described how their motivation to use a particular form of EL had evolved over time: "*some of it...because of student feedback, some of it because I'm not happy*" (EI1, UG, case study/applied project). A similar sentiment was expressed by another study participant:

> *I'm of the opinion to test things out, throw them at the students, see what sort of reaction you get, and if it's good reaction, then develop it for the following year or further into the module. (WPS2, UG, large class, role play/applied project)*

In many HE disciplines, lecture-based instruction is the dominant pedagogy (Helms and Whitesell, 2017; Wurdinger and Allison, 2017), and in this study, all respondents confirmed that lectures did play some part in their teaching strategies. While lectures, a form of direct instruction, and EL, a student-centred approach, are opposing pedagogic paradigms, they are not mutually exclusive (Beck and Eno, 2012). Research suggests that lectures are, in fact, an integral component of EL as they provide a necessary theoretical base (e.g., Farashahi and Tajeddin, 2018; Bell and Bell, 2020). This was evident in the study when respondents talked about the need for learners to understand theory before engaging in EL activities where they applied that theory (Okoli *et al.*, 2019). This reflects research on how EL should be used in business education, with Paul and Mukhopadhyay (2005) advising that EL should be "part of the pedagogy and not a substitute for course content" (p. 20).

The 'straight lecture' approach described by Grunspan *et al.* (2018) as the perpetuation of a normative belief that "lecture is both the preferred and accepted way to teach" (p. 4) was questioned by respondents in this study. While lectures were cited as a part of most respondents' teaching repertoires, several participants pointed out that their use of lectures had evolved considerably since they started teaching. Traditional two-hour lectures were described as "*old school*" (EI14), "*too authoritative*" (WPS1), and "*an outdated mode...really, in a lot of ways, we were kind of throwing content at them*" (EI16). The findings suggest that increasingly, where lectures were used, they were for shorter durations and interspersed with other activities throughout a class session, such as video clips, polls and discussions. For one respondent, the decision to use EL came about through frustration with their existing teaching approach, which was primarily lecture-based, and growing doubts as to whether it was achieving learning outcomes:

> *The best bits of work I would have got before [adopting EL] were just people returning my notes with a bit of reading, but I'd have no idea whether they actually knew anything about it. So they'd just read this stuff, were really good communicators, and could write things down. (EI15, PG, large class, applied project)*

This educator adopted an EL approach where students performed tasks related to the module content, and "*the work they gave me back was just miles ahead of anything I'd ever got back before"* (EI15). This resonates with research from Burch *et al.* (2019), where a meta-analysis of studies of EL indicates that EL contributes to superior learning outcomes.

5.3.1.2 Impact of Discipline Area

From the findings, an educator's discipline area appeared to impact both the teaching approach adopted and how a particular EL approach was implemented. For example, three respondents in the study mentioned that accounting education is impacted by exemption requirements set by professional accounting bodies. For graduates to qualify for exemptions, university courses must be largely exam-based. For example, to qualify for exemptions from the Association for Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), a minimum of 50% of a module has to be assessed through an examination, and this rises to 70% for final-year modules (accaglobal.com, 2022). This means that in this discipline area, approaches like EL are typically formative, continuous assessments rather than summative assessments. However, in recent years, both employers and professional accounting bodies have called for accounting education to incorporate more transferable skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving (Gittings *et al*., 2019), and this has resulted in an uptake of interest in teaching approaches such as EL. This was reflected in the respondent profile of this study, where accounting educators were well represented (14 percent of respondents). They did, however, report that implementation of EL was more complicated in their discipline area due to the exemptions' requirements.

Other respondents also cited their discipline as an influencing factor in their teaching approach, most notably in the areas of economics and finance. For example, teaching economics was described by one respondent as "*inescapably maths and graphs heavy. So, there's a good hefty element of chalk and talk in what I do*" (EI2). However, it is worth noting that 14 percent of the respondents in this study were economics and finance educators, thus

demonstrating a role for EL activities such as case studies and applied projects in their disciplines.

For respondents in areas such as HRM, entrepreneurship and marketing, EL appears to have acquired a default methodology status:

> *I guess it's fundamental. I'd say it's the main approach I take. (EI11, UG, large class, case study)*

> *I'd say it's the number-one approach that I use. It's the sort of default approach because I think that the sage on the stage idea of just delivering lectures and models and frameworks and stuff, I just find that, personally, if I'm on the receiving end of it, I find that a little bit dry and anaemic. I love the idea that people take concepts and perspectives and they apply them to something. (EI14, PG, small class, live case)*

Overall, the findings in this study indicated a diverse range of personal and disciplinary factors that influenced the adoption of EL pedagogy. The evidence also suggests that for many educators, their EL journeys were often solo ones and largely unsupported by formal pedagogical training, two issues that are considered further in the final chapter of the thesis.

As part of the exploration of the deep structure of EL, the next section reports on the findings in relation to the type of knowledge sought by business school educators through their use of EL.

5.3.2 Rationale and Type of Knowledge Sought

In this study, the findings under the type of knowledge sought can be categorised under two headings. Firstly, as mentioned by 25 respondents in the interviews, a key outcome sought by business educators through their use of EL is to help students bridge the theory-practice gap. Secondly, educators indicated particular competencies they valued as necessary for professional development, and these were emphasised in their EL approaches.

5.3.2.1 Connecting Theory and Practice

For business graduates, the ability to apply knowledge and theories to solve real-world problems is considered a required skill and, increasingly, a prerequisite to employability (Fletcher-Brown *et al.,* 2014). Twenty-five of the 36 respondents specifically referred to the

application of knowledge in their interviews, a finding that indicates that the applied nature of EL strongly underpins their rationale for choosing it as a pedagogy. One respondent put it simply, saying "*the application is what it's all about*" (EI6), while others spoke of their desire for students to learn from experience through "hands-on' application of tools, frameworks and theories:

> *For me, in terms of the value for graduates, it's that they're absolutely able to execute real-world solutions when they leave...that they can actually understand the applicability of a particular topic and they can execute it in the real world in a thorough and comprehensive fashion. (FOP7, PG, pre-experience, small class, applied project)*

For educators teaching undergraduate or pre-experience postgraduates, a commonly cited reason for the adoption of EL was that it provided learners with exposure to real-world business practices, and thus the findings from this study correlate with previous research that emphasises this advantage (Amar *et al.,* 2018; Fletcher-Brown *et al.,* 2014). The real-world element is perceived to help learners in the application of theory to practice, and this was seen as an advantage even in discipline areas where the theory may not be particularly complex:

> *It's not rocket science…but that doesn't mean the application of theory is easy because the situations are quite complex and quite abstract, so it can be hard to apply a theory in practice. Hence, experiential learning allows students to apply a theory and realise that things are not as straightforward as you might have thought. And then, in the debate, other people have a different view, and that forces people to think a little bit. So I think the experiential learning is a greater learning experience than simply just reading the theory. (WPS4, PG, pre-experience, small class, case study)*

Using EL to bridge theory and practice was considered important, irrespective of student education level, but respondents also commented on the challenges inherent in this task with some undergraduate and pre-experience cohorts. Five respondents remarked on a problem with rote learning, which they surmised had carried over from second-level education:

> *So you're constantly trying to make sure the students are not just rote learning and rote memorising, but they're actually able to evaluate, problem-solve, discuss and take this back and critically reflect on it, and apply the issues to practice, which is pretty important. (WPS9, UG, large class, case study)*

5.3.2.2 Competencies Sought

There is considerable agreement in the literature that business graduates need key transferable skills and competencies to operate successfully within a global workplace (e.g., Andrews and Higson, 2014; Baird and Parayitam, 2019). However, researchers (e.g., Abraham and Karns, 2009; Farashahi and Tajeddin, 2018; Conlon, 2022) maintain that the necessary competencies are not developed sufficiently in business curricula. The findings in this study do not support this contention as, in addition to a focus on application of knowledge, the respondents were clear on the specific competencies they emphasised in their EL activities.

The business school in this case, as an AACSB member, has adopted a competency-based approach to measure assurance of learning (AOL) in all programmes. This approach has been described as a paradigm shift that is necessary for graduates who will be working in an increasingly volatile and complex business environment (Bratianu *et al.,* 2020). Competency-based education is not a new concept, but the adoption of the approach has accelerated in recent years as influential accreditation bodies such as AACSB endorse this type of learning. In the study's findings, the influence on educator thinking was apparent:

> *As I said, I'm not great on the whole kind of pedagogy stuff. I do what feels right. But I've been won over to the idea that we can push on these things like critical thinking skills. (EI2, UG, large class, applied project)*

> *So I have to say for the AOL competency material coming to light now, that's turning out to be much more helpful than I was expecting. And I think it's really putting to teaching staff, putting to us the question, what is the student getting out of a particular module or a particular degree? (WPS11, UG, small class, applied project)*

Table 5.3 provides an overview of the main competencies highlighted by respondents, along with a selection of respondent quotes. In line with evidence from previous research (e.g., Andrews and Higson, 2014), collaboration, critical thinking and communication skills were mentioned most frequently.

Table 5.3: Overview of Competencies sought by EL Educators

Competency	Number of respondents	Respondent quotes on role in EL activities
Collaboration	30	"*skills of teamworking, relationship building and collaboration, to be able to work effectively with people and to fit in"* (EI14, PG, live case) "*the ability to work with people of different values and cultures*" (EI11, UG, large class, applied project) "*the broad social and cultural awareness, [being able] a to work in multidisciplinary teams, multinational teams*" (EI15, PG, pre-experience, large class, applied project)
Critical thinking	19	"*to encourage students to actually break down a problem, assess it, and come up with a solution*" (FOP7, PG, small class, applied project) *"to present… a critical argument…… [to develop] the emotional intelligence to know when you apply it and when you don't"* (WPS2, UG, large class, role play) *"….the ability to ask good questions, to think about the answers, to investigate information and have the confidence to keep asking questions if you're not happy with and don't understand the answer"* (EI6, UG, large class, applied project)
Communication skills	18	General communication skills "*Written and oral communication. And in that, I don't mean only the presentations, more on being able to hold the discussion and argue their position and debate their views"* (WPS12, UG, small class, applied project) Negotiation skills "*to get the experience of preparing properly for a negotiation as opposed to running off to the boss and saying I want a day off. How you prepare and how you think about it"* (WPS2, UG, large class, role play) Story-telling "*the ability to frame a narrative that is aligned with the company's sense of itself and of its mission....because in the context that I would be operating in, people are trying to get ideas over the line, trying to win support for something. And in organizations where resources are*

		constrained, generally the best story is the one that wins" (EI14, PG, pre-experience, live case) Communicating technical information "*They need to be able to communicate results clearly and communicate technical concepts to a non- specialist audience"* (EI9, UG, live case)
Creativity	9	*"to be entrepreneurial, creative problem solvers, particularly in a business environment where jobs for life no longer exist"* (EI10, PG, small class, live case)
Self-awareness and leadership	6	"*It's important for us…..to not hold their hand through everything that they do... that they're actually making decisions. That they're actually taking on leadership roles themselves within groups and starting to, not dictate, but influence the types of discussions you have in class and challenge some of the material* (EI4, UG, small class, case study)

From the findings on competencies, a number of key insights are worth noting. In terms of critical thinking, the ability to ask questions emerged as a particular skill educators sought to cultivate. Research on critical thinking development in HE suggests that developing this competency is complicated by the fact that "thinking tends to be invisible, complex, abstract and implicit rather than explicitly articulated" (Golding, 2011, p. 359). To overcome this, Ritchhart and Perkins (2008) encourage educators to use pedagogies that make thinking visible and more overt, while Golding advocates a pedagogical approach where students are explicitly encouraged to ask and answer 'thought-encouraging' questions. In this study, it was noted by three respondents that this was particularly challenging with large classes, with one saying, "*It's not great, to be honest with you, when you have a class of over three hundred because they're intimidated to ask questions.*" (EI11, UG, large class, applied project)

It was unsurprising to see self-awareness and leadership as a desired competency in postgraduate education, with one respondent commenting that "*one of the things that I find very important, especially because we're working with existing leaders and future leaders, is self-awareness and leadership….so that students have an insight in terms of who they are,*

what their self-concept is" (WPS10, PG, small class, applied project). However, from the findings, it was interesting that three respondents spoke about this competency in the context of undergraduate education. In a foreword to Colby *et al*.'s (2011) book *Rethinking Undergraduate Education*, Shulman notes that a good education provides the necessary critical and analytical thinking skills needed by business students and integrates these with "a sense of self and of personal identity" (p. ix). The development of a professional identity is an important aspect of self-awareness. According to Blasco (2019), the foundation for professional identity begins in the undergraduate years, and identification with a disciplinary specialisation helps to craft students' perceptions of themselves as a particular type of professional. An interesting difference between disciplinary cohorts in terms of self-awareness and professionalization was noted by one respondent:

> *I often say to students in first year, you don't think you learn much in marketing because marketing is so pervasive, but you use a different language and you think about the world in a different way when you've got a marketing background. Accountants are great at talking about professional development and professional associations. But as marketers, we tend to think about the champagne lunches, but that's what the accountants call professional networking events. We even class our own behaviour differently.* (EI1, UG, small class, case study/applied project)

5.3.3 Method of Constructing EL

As discussed in the opening paragraphs of this section, understanding the deep structure of a signature pedagogy requires consideration of the educators' rationale for the adoption of an educational approach, the type of knowledge sought, and the method of constructing that knowledge (Yendol-Hoppy and Franco, 2014). The findings discussed under rationale indicate that business school academics' use of EL is strongly motivated by a desire to prepare students for the realities of their future careers in business. From the discussion on the type of knowledge sought, it can be seen that educators place considerable value on workplace competencies and, in particular, the higher-order thinking skills deemed necessary for operating in complex and rapidly changing business environments. However, as identified in the literature review, adoption of EL *per se* does not necessarily produce higher-order thinking skills. Hamilton and Klebba (2011) contend that attention must be given to both the nature of the experience and the role of reflection in EL if educators are to really influence learning. Therefore, to complete this exploration of the deep structure of EL, the next sections

look at the method of constructing EL knowledge, that is, the consideration given by business educators to experiential content (realism, ambiguity and complexity) and reflection.

5.3.3.1 Experiential content

Hamilton and Klebba (2011) suggest that EL activities can be designed to reflect differing levels of realism, ambiguity and complexity and they contend that this experiential content can influence the development of higher-order cognitive skills for business students. EL activities can be viewed along a continuum from low to high levels of experiential content (see Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3 Experiential Content Spectrum (Hamilton and Klebba, 2011)

Experiential Format						
Content	Low ambiguity, realism, complexity →		Moderate ambiguity, realism, complexity →			High degree of Realism, complexity, Ambiguity
Task structure	Highly structured →		Moderately structured →			Loosely structured
Sample Experiential Techniques	Lecture, Discussion, Journaling, Speakers	In-class exercises; Structured Exercises, Problem Sets	Simulation; Structured Cases; Reality-Based cases	Comprehensive, Reality-Based cases; Simulation; live projects	Service-learning; Live projects; Live cases.	Client-Based Projects; Micro-business development

At the low end are highly structured, instructor-guided exercises using hypothetical information. Moving along the experiential continuum, simulations, role plays and case studies are semi-structured and higher in realism and ambiguity. At the far end of the continuum, Hamilton and Klebba state that EL activities like applied projects and live cases are typically less structured and involve higher levels of ambiguity, realism and complexity.

From the responses in this study, there was considerable agreement on the importance of one aspect of experiential content, realism, but there was less consensus on the role of ambiguity and complexity in EL activities.

5.3.3.1.1 Realism

In this study, all educators reported a belief that it was important to employ EL techniques that allowed students to mirror real-world business practices, with one saying, "*I think none of it really makes a huge amount of sense without that real-world piece, to be honest with*

you" (EI3, UG, applied project). The world of real business is messy, complex, and uncertain (Kang *et al.,* 2010), and using real-world data or requiring students to engage with real clients and their problems helps students relate the theory of business education to the reality of authentic business situations.

The importance of realism is particularly marked in responses from those teaching at the undergraduate level, some of whom noted that students do not always fully appreciate the real-life nature of their EL activities. In some cases, students may have "*non-realistic perceptions of what is the reality*" of the workplace (EI5, PG, small class, applied project). Others commented on the life lessons that are gained through the realism of their EL activities:

> *For the pre-experience cohort, I think it was really good for them to see, this is the reality of the profession they're going into, these are the risks. The right answer concept has to go out the window. They have to get away from that. It's all judgement calls, and those judgement calls can be wrong, and there's serious consequences to them being wrong. (FOP8, PG, pre-experience, applied project)*

> *Often, when you're working with students, they seem to see deadlines as inconvenient, at best irrelevant, at worst, they allow things slip. I love them to get some exposure to where if something doesn't happen on a Thursday, then nobody gets paid on a Friday. (EI14, PG, pre-experience, live case)*

Overall, by applying Hamilton and Klebba's framework (Figure 5.3) to the responses in this study, approximately a third of the EL activities could be classified as highly realistic (i.e., live cases, field research and other types of applied projects). According to the framework, live cases represent particularly high levels of realism in EL activities, and for educators who used this method, they believed it provided inherent advantages over less realistic EL approaches, with one saying, "*You're just not going to get the same level of that experience that you would in an ordinary case study"* (EI10, PG, pre-experience, small class). According to Grassberger and Wilder (2015), the real-life nature of a live case improves student interest and promotes greater personal responsibility for learning, points that were echoed in the study responses:

> *I think to connect the learning to a real-world experience or a business problem, it just appears to give the students that drive, that incentive to learn that this is worthwhile. (EI15, PG, pre-experience, large class)*

> *The advantage of it for the students was typically that, with some ownership of the data, they were more engaged. Having that kind of ownership and input into it, just increased the engagement, and I think they got more out of it. (EI9, UG, large class)*

The realism in this EL method provides strong evidence for features that Shulman categorises as pedagogies of engagement (2008). Educators reported that the real-life nature of the method rendered students more accountable, as they were not just completing assignments for a grade but were engaging with real companies, thus giving their work a greater impetus. In one example, the educator explained that the module had not originally been designed for EL and had focused on the theory of research methods and hypothetical projects. The decision to use EL came from the educator's adoption of the Citizen Scholar framework (Arvanitakis and Hornby, 2016) as a way to redesign the module and to incorporate a live case with local businesses:

> *The change was driven by the fact that students tend to treat it more genuinely if they are working with real businesses....[and] students were given a purpose....a real, true purpose for doing this research. (EI7, UG, large class)*

Shulman describes signature pedagogies as "pedagogies of public performance" where "students perform, they speak, they act, they get feedback" (2008, p. 17). In seven out of the nine live cases reported in this study, the students were also required to report their findings directly back to the client, typically in a formal presentation, thus exemplifying this feature of signature pedagogies. Shulman notes that in this type of pedagogy, there is "something at stake" (p. 18), and this can engender a degree of anxiety in learners. This was observed by the users of live cases in this study, who recognised that the realism of the project could also be intimidating, particularly in the early stages of the EL experience:

> *The vast majority of students absolutely appreciate the fact that it's a real-world situation and experiential learning. Some students find that very daunting, but they're in the minority. But what I would say is that they find it daunting initially, but going forward, they learn and they learn from being within the team environment, looking at other students and how they deal with things. (WPS5, PG, pre-experience, live case)*

> *I think at the beginning, they're intimidated and they're stressed. Because it's a real situation, it's a different form of stress and assignment, and maybe something they have less control over as well. (WPS6, PG, postexperience, live case)*

Shulman argues that students "don't learn much if there's nothing at stake" (p. 18), but research suggests that high levels of realism could result in student disengagement. Hunter-Jones (2012) identified a formulaic learner type for whom EL represents a threat to their academic success, and she notes that this learner type may avoid or opt out of EL activities, where possible. A similar situation was observed by one respondent in a module where students had a choice between doing a live case or a dissertation:

> *I know from my experience in the past working with the [live case] that there are a small number of students who just can't deal with the situation and that they eventually opt out of the [live case] and into the dissertation. That's okay. But I'm just wondering sometimes: are they just putting off the day where they have to deal with this in their actual working environment, and maybe they're just not willing to face it as part of the experiential learning process within the university? (WPS5, PG, pre-experience, live case)*

One educator provided an extreme example of student resistance to the realism of an EL activity. He recounted an experience with an EL project at a former university that involved students observing and collecting data on consumers' shopping habits in a public space. The intention behind the exercise was to "*make the whole thing real*", but the students did not appreciate the level of realism involved:

> *They all came back and complained to the Dean about paying this guy to teach us, and all he did was send us out into the cold with flip charts. So they weren't really open to that experience. (EI14, PG, live case)*

5.3.3.1.2 Complexity

EL tasks that are high in complexity require learners to demonstrate greater levels of analysis, critical thinking and decision-making than less complex tasks (Hamilton and Klebba, 2011). Without access to the specific details of EL methods and assignments, it was difficult to ascertain the exact levels of complexity within the EL activities in the study. From the educator responses on the types of case studies used, it could be surmised that much less complex cases were used with undergraduates, as only postgraduate educators cited the use of Harvard-style cases. Similarly, from the descriptions of the live cases and the field-based applied projects, most of these could be considered to be complex forms of EL. However, it is more difficult to conjecture the number and variety of variables that might contribute to complexity in other EL activities.

It is less difficult to examine the role of task structure in the EL activities reported in the study.

Hamer (2000) suggests that EL in business education can be categorised into two groups: semi-structured and loosely structured techniques. These two approaches differ in terms of scope, completion time and degree of control by the educator. Semi-structured techniques are typically shorter, more focused problem-solving activities that often take place in a group format within a classroom. For example, an instructor may intersperse several short EL exercises into a classroom session to allow students to work on a particular task. Both undergraduate and postgraduate educators reported using this type of EL. For example, one respondent described using this approach every week, where groups do short presentations in class based on three structured questions (EI1, UG, small class, case study).

Hamer describes loosely structured approaches as taking place over a longer timeframe, involving more variables, and entailing deep and independent learning over which the student has some control (2000). Many of the applied projects and live cases described by respondents would fit this description of complexity. Differences in task structure were more evident in the level of scaffolding provided to different learning cohorts. While all educators reported that there was some degree of structure in their EL activities, respondents teaching postgraduates described tasks that were more loosely structured and designed to offer students considerable choice in how they interpreted and approached the EL activity:

> *I think they have a great amount of flexibility in the way they approach it. They obviously have to draw on the theory to show the use of theory in the presentation. But other than that, I leave it to themselves to choose what theories are relevant to this particular case. (WPS4, PG, pre-experience, case study)*

> *Basically, requirement A is prepare and present a presentation. In terms of the areas, I just tell them to focus on professional, ethical, and any other person that matters, so it's literally a one-liner. I don't give them tips on what I expect to see. (FOP8, PG, postexperience, applied projects)*

From the responses of educators using EL with undergraduate students, the descriptions evidenced more structured tasks and greater levels of scaffolding, including the provision of templates, exemplars, marking schemes, Q&A banks, and rubrics:

> *For the final years, I think it's fairly scaffolded, I think, where they know that there are deliverables. And I give them reminders. And I have a template for how they actually set up their assignment. (WPS7, UG, small class, applied project)*
>
> *Because they are final years, I try to reduce their stress as much as possible, and I try to avoid any confusion. So, from week one, on Loop, we have this course information folder. I have the template for the report; what needs to be written in every section is clearly laid out. The marking scheme for the report is there. So they know exactly which element accounts for how much marks and also how each element will be evaluated. Even the table of contents is made available for the students, so they know exactly what to expect. (EI7, UG, large class, live case)*

The amount of structure that should be provided in an EL learning environment is open to debate. Wilkinson and Jones (2017) say that every HE institution seeks to develop "rounded, independent learners" (p. 41), capable of negotiating the challenges of employment or further education. Similarly, Zhoc *et al*. (2018) express the view that a key goal for HE is the development of self-directed learners, those who can take ownership of their own learning process. However, they describe the process of becoming a self-directed learner as "a painful one, as students have to experience negativity, confusion, frustration and dissatisfaction with their learning experience when they enter a new learning experience" (p. 983). In this study, one experienced educator described anticipating this frustration as part of the learning process.

> *There's a huge learning curve, and I kind of stay back. I don't tell them this. So I wait for them to feel it and experience it. It's fascinating to see because you see the frustration, and you're almost going to say 'it's okay, you'll get this'. But you can't go in too early...and different groups will get to that space at a different time. (EI10, PG, pre-experience, small class, live case)*

EL has been criticised as a "minimal guidance" learning approach, that according to Kirschner *et al.* (2006), is less effective than teaching approaches that place a strong emphasis on guidance. From the evidence in this study, educators using EL with undergraduate classes do not follow a minimal guidance approach. Instead, for this cohort, the descriptions of the EL activities suggested educators used more scaffolded approaches to EL, whereby learners are guided and supported through the learning experience. Kang *et al.* (2010) contend that scaffolding is particularly important in EL at the undergraduate level as these students do not have either the working experience or mental frameworks to make the necessary connections between theory and practice. The study's findings suggest that respondents adhered to the

advice of Kang *et al.* and attempted to bring some structure into the "messiness and chaos" of EL with their undergraduate classes.

It was interesting to note the comments of one respondent who teaches undergraduates but sought to achieve a balanced approach whereby learning was facilitated and supported, but students were also encouraged to develop competencies in self-directed learning:

> *I think to let them off on their own, you're going to probably end up losing a certain amount of people. They do need guidance, and that's the role of the methodology in a way. But ultimately, it goes back to what we're talking about with values and competencies of business students. Self-directed leadership is pretty important, and they're going to end up working in companies where they're going to be given projects themselves to go and take up and run with. So, I think the educational environment needs to reflect that, and it's important that they can take the ownership of these sort of projects and work their way through it. (WPS9, UG, large class, case study)*

5.3.3.1.3 Ambiguity

The ability to operate under conditions of uncertainty and ambiguity is considered a key competency for business graduates (Longmore *et al.,* 2018; Mandel and Noyes, 2014). The findings from this study suggest that business educators recognise that a tolerance for ambiguity is a necessary component in professional formation:

> *I do think it's quite important for them, even if they are at the very beginning of their training as managers or future professionals. I think it's part of the process to come into contact with ambiguity.... because it's part of the real world. (EI13, PG, pre-experience, small class, case study)*

By definition, EL is a more ambiguous form of pedagogy than other learning approaches due to the inherent unpredictability of dealing with real-world situations and problems. However, as shown in Hamilton and Klebba's (2011) continuum of experiential learning, different EL activities contribute to higher levels of ambiguity (Figure 5.3). From the interview findings, ambiguity as a deliberate component in EL design was more evident in responses from postgraduate than undergraduate educators.

> *I usually start my class, the year, talking about the environment being full of ambiguity and full of complexity and uncertainty, so part of dealing with a subject like strategy is you're dealing with that kind of environment. So there has to be some kind of ambiguity. (WPS4, PG, pre-experience, small class, case study)*

I think it's absolutely essential. It's my big one, I love the ambiguity in the module. They hate it for the first few months, but I'll take that as a badge of honour for the course because I think if it's making them feel uncomfortable and they find it difficult, then it's obviously achieving something. (EI15, PG, pre-experience, large class, applied project)

I will have an underlying skeletal structure where I can give the students full autonomy, with maybe the mandate to call in case of emergency. I like to give them full autonomy because what I'm asking them to do is quite creative, to generate novel, original ideas. Some people are so deeply uncomfortable with that, that I know that they need structure, and therefore I think it's sort of case-specific. (EI14, PG, pre-experience, small class, live case)

At the undergraduate level, only one respondent spoke about intentionally incorporating ambiguity into their EL activity and expressed a strong opinion that students should expect less hand-holding at third-level:

I often start things by saying this is a university, and I expect more, I demand more from you. So, I'm happy to answer any questions that they have, but...I'm expecting that they will be confused. I'm expecting that this is going to be complex because it's not a matter of five things that Henri Fayol said. Yes, it is that and a whole bunch more. And what did you learn from that? (EI6, UG, large class, applied project)

However, it is more revealing to look at the actual EL activities that educators used with different student levels. As shown in Table 5.1, live cases (considered highest in ambiguity) are used more with postgraduates than undergraduates (six and three examples, respectively). Postgraduate educators also use more case studies (eight examples vs. four at undergraduate level). The cases used in postgraduate EL are typically complex Harvard-style cases, and from the continuum, this method is also considered higher in ambiguity. On the other hand, role-plays were used more with undergraduates (three examples vs. one postgraduate example), and the inherent unpredictable scenarios and complex interpersonal dynamics in this EL method all contribute to at least moderate levels of ambiguity. Similarly, all of the field-based applied projects (again, moderately high in ambiguity) were with undergraduate students.

Business education has been criticised for a failure to adequately incorporate learning opportunities that mimic the volatility, uncertainty, and ambiguity of real-world business

environments (Thomas and Cornuel, 2016). From the evidence in this study, this criticism is not fully justified, as over half of the EL activities (e.g., live cases, complex case studies, some applied projects) could be considered high in ambiguity, thus providing some support for EL as a pedagogy of uncertainty. However, in some of the EL approaches used at the undergraduate level, there appeared to be a hesitancy to intentionally build in ambiguity. This could be attributed to a lack of understanding by these educators about the role of ambiguity in experiential content, but it could also be a deliberate choice based on concerns about students' maturity and capacity to deal with ambiguity. Two respondents specifically mentioned maturity as a factor they considered in their EL designs, with one saying that "*the year of the class definitely matters...[as it impacts]...their maturity level, their experiences"* (WPS12, UG, small class, applied project).

One educator explained how they used an incremental approach to complexity and ambiguity in EL. The respondent used case studies and started off the semester with less complex cases with clearly identified theories. As the module progressed, the approach incorporated elements of "*colourful context just to provoke them a little bit...that element of just trying to keep them on their toes...and trying to surprise them every now and then with the context*" (EI4, UG, small class, case study). This approach resonates with Shulman's notion of surprise and unpredictability as prerequisites for student engagement (2005a), a point that has been noted by other researchers (e.g., Fisher, 2023).

Finally, Shulman noted that pedagogies of uncertainty can cause anxiety, even for educators, and this was commented on by one respondent who said, "*There is that ambiguity and that uncertainty...that's there, and you have to be prepared for that, so it's not all fun and games. I'm on my toes more, and I'm more nervous before a class.*" *(WPS4, PG, small class, case study)*

This discussion of the experiential content of EL provided insight into business educators' approaches to constructing EL activities and the inherent decisions about realism, complexity and ambiguity. The findings provided good evidence at all teaching levels for the real-life nature of EL, and it is unsurprising that educators who use live cases perceive particular benefits from this aspect of their EL activities. Educators perceptions of the experiential components of complexity and ambiguity were less clear-cut. Educators teaching

undergraduates reported higher levels of structure and EL activities that were lower in ambiguity than those teaching postgraduate students. While student level would be expected to play a part in EL design, the difference in approaches does raise questions as to how effective these types of EL are in preparing students for the nature of situations they will encounter in their business lives after university. This question is revisited in the conclusions in Chapter Six.

McKeen *et al.* (2018) state that "reflection must be a key component to students' experiential, project-based learning work" (p. 161). Accordingly, in the next section, educators' responses on their approaches to reflection in EL are reported and analysed.

5.3.4. Reflection

EL in business education has been criticised on the basis that reflection is not given sufficient attention and, indeed, may be absent completely from some EL designs (Perusso and Baaken, 2020; Kreber, 2001). The findings of this study did not provide strong support for neglect or omission of reflection, as the majority of respondents indicated that they provided opportunities for reflection as part of their EL designs. Overall, out of the examples of EL described in this study, over 80 percent of these activities provided some opportunity for student reflection on their learning.

Out of 36 respondents, six stated that reflection was not a part of their EL activities. In one case, the educator expressed the view that "*maybe there's scope for it, but it doesn't fit so well with the discipline aspect...and it wouldn't fit with the assignment to ask them to reflect, say, on their experiences as a group or how this worked out for them*" (EI3, UG, case study). Another cited that the constraints imposed by a professional body made inclusion of this element difficult (FOP3, UG, applied project). For another respondent who used a simulation, the decision not to include a reflection was based largely on their own perceived lack of expertise in supporting this form of learning:

> *I'd love to do reflections, but there is part of me that's nervous with them because I don't feel I know enough about them. And I feel I could do with more training on how to teach them. (FOP1, PG, simulation)*

Two respondents did not currently use reflection in their EL activities (case study and applied project) but indicated that they were considering doing so in the future. Finally, one respondent was unequivocal in their rationale for omitting reflection:

> *No, it's not in the module. For me, I'm just someone bringing the student from the start point to an endpoint. And I just want to ensure that the students, they have the knowledge, they have the skill, and are prepared to apply to job positions and to do the job. (EI5, PG, pre-experience, applied project)*

For the 30 educators who confirmed that reflection was part of their EL strategies, categorisation of approaches was difficult due to the wide variation in the ways in which respondents interpreted reflection. This is unsurprising as there is little agreement by academics on how to define reflection, with Van Beveran *et al.* (2018) describing the literature on reflection as a "messy and complex field" (p. 2). In the interviews, respondents were not asked to define reflection but were asked to describe how reflection took place in their EL activity. This allowed the study participants to describe their approach to reflection in the context of EL and to do so without preconceived expectations of how the researcher might define reflection.

Moon (2001) proposes a broad definition of academic reflection, stating that "it is likely to have a conscious and stated purpose" and that the "process and outcome of the reflective work are most likely to be in a represented (e.g. written) form, to be seen by others and to be assessed" (2001, p. 83). Moon's use of the word 'likely' is indicative of the broad nature of approaches to reflection, and this is supported by the findings from this study:

> *The reflection element can take place, in my view, in a number of different ways. It can be in class, but it can be in those follow-up conversations that will take place in December and in a more natural academic setting that would take place maybe in the office or over in the canteen with groups of students as well. (FOP5, PG, pre-experience, applied project)*

> *Well, in the module, asking people what they think and why they think that, is reflection, if you ask me. And that's like an integral feature of every class*. (*WPS1, PG, postexperience, applied project)*

While there is considerable variation in approaches to reflection described by respondents, the study provides evidence that reflection as the "bridge between experience and learning" (Gray, 2007, p. 496) is present in EL in business education in this school. However, researchers

have advised that reflection needs to be carefully designed and supported in order to achieve the full learning effects of EL (Perusso *et al.*, 2019; Coulson and Harvey, 2013). The next sections address these concerns through an exploration of the study's findings on the focus, methods, and support for reflection provided by business educators.

5.3.4.1 Reflective Learning Focus

From the literature review, it was observed that the type of reflection in EL activities could differ substantially based on whether students were asked to engage in academic, personal or critical reflection (Hedberg, 2011). The findings in this study indicated that some educators required only one form of reflection (e.g., a personal reflection), while others used a mix of methods (e.g., a personal and critical reflection).

Academic reflective learning is about deepening students' insights into disciplinary concepts and theories, and it may require the learner to connect their reflections from the EL experience to academic literature. Ten respondents reported requiring academic references in reflective submissions, with the benefit of this being that "*it forces them to synthesise theory, practice self-reflection"* (WPS3, PG, postexperience, case study). Another respondent who used role plays as their main form of EL described their required reflection as "*an academic piece of writing. Even though it's talking about your experience, it is academic as well. So I would expect to have concepts in there, references supporting it and so on."* (WPS7, UG, role play)

According to Hedberg (2011), the purpose of personal reflection is to "understand what the learning means to the learner", and she hypothesises that this type of reflection "may be what makes learning come alive for our students" (p. 15). Twenty respondents in this study indicated that they used some form of personal reflection in their EL designs. Four of these reported that the personal reflection in their modules required students to focus mainly on their learning from the EL process, particularly around the collaborative element of the EL activity. In one case, students working in groups on an applied project complete a number of individual reflective submissions "*where they rate or grade the other members, but they also write a piece on their individual contribution to the assignment"* (EI11, UG, applied project).

However, one respondent expressed dissatisfaction with the type of reflection based on learning from group work:

> *I have found that sometimes with the team working thing, when people put in a reflective diary, it can often read as Joanne as hero and everybody else screwed up. Or it can be a kiss and tell thing, and maybe less a kiss and more of a blame game thing. So the younger the students, the more that seems to be in evidence, so the more structure I have to give them because I'm not really that interested in who didn't answer the WhatsApp at what time and all that kind of stuff. (EI14, PG, pre-experience, live case)*

More typically, personal reflections invited students to consider the insights gained from their participation in the EL activity and to reflect on any impact or relevance this may have for their own professional or personal development. In one module where reflection is a major component, the educator described the overall goal of the reflective learning component of EL as focused on "*how they developed as a person, particularly what type of learner have they become"* (EI15, PG, pre-experience, applied project). With postexperience, postgraduate students, students were frequently encouraged to relate their personal reflections to their work experience:

> *They reflect on something that happened to them in their business life, in their present company or previous organisation. And it can be an organisational issue they observed or could be a personal one they experienced themselves, basically where things were not handled very well. And the purpose of the exercise is to reflect on that and to think, well, how much was I a part of the problem? If I had to rerun that again with the knowledge that I've gained from this particular course and the frameworks, how would I approach it and would the outcome be different? (WPS3, PG, applied project)*

Some respondents described reflective learning exercises that specifically incorporated critical as well as personal reflection. According to Catterall *et al.* (2002), critical reflection encourages the learner to consider their learning experience in a wider moral, societal and political context. In the interviews, eleven respondents specifically referenced reflective learning approaches, where, as part of the EL activity, students were directed to reflect not just on their personal learning but also on the societal meaning they attached to their learning (Hedberg, 2011). Examples of critical reflection were evident in both undergraduate and postgraduate modules. Educators described reflective exercises where students were asked to consider *"implications on not just marketplaces, but...society in general"* (EI4, UG, case study); *"what they heard in terms of organisational culture and power and conflict"* (EI6, UG,

applied project); and *"their position in society and the opportunities that they get"* (FOP2, PG, guest speaker).

5.3.4.2 Methods of Reflection

When designing reflective learning activities as part of EL, educators make decisions on the method of reflection and whether they want students to reflect individually or collectively. Hedberg states that students benefit from both types of reflection, and the method chosen should reflect the educators' learning goals from the EL experience (2011). The strong focus in this study on personal reflection indicates that educators placed considerable emphasis on learning that was pertinent to students' personal and professional development.

However, contemporary conceptualisations of reflection highlight the importance of social interactions to enhance reflective learning in EL (Perusso *et al.,* 2019; Cajiao and Burke, 2016). Through dialogue and questioning with peers, collaborative reflection allows students to understand different perspectives and challenge their assumptions. From the findings, shared reflection during class sessions was a common feature in almost all of the postgraduate EL activities described in this study, possibly facilitated by the small class sizes associated with this education level:

> *So they had to kind of think about the concepts that I was talking about and reflect on their experiences of that in their workplace. And then, when they came into the live class, I would put them into groups where they had to interrogate the concepts from their own experiences. (WPS8, PG, post experience, applied project)*

While postgraduate educators reported positive experiences from collective classroom reflection, sharing reflection in larger undergraduate classes was seen as more challenging. At the undergraduate level, in EL activities involving group work such as live cases, applied projects and cases studies, opportunities for shared discussions took place largely outside of the classroom as students worked in teams on EL projects. Ferguson (2016) warns that leaving reflection up to students in this way may not result in learning success. This was in contrast to other forms of EL, such as role plays and guest speakers, where respondents at undergraduate and postgraduate levels reported shared reflection taking place in the classroom after the experience. One respondent provided an example of this where students

conducted an employer-employee role-play privately and then returned to the class where experiences were shared:

> *I often get someone who says it went really well. And someone else says, 'Oh God, we had a great argument, but I lost the argument because I didn't think about this' and all the people are sharing their experiences openly in the class with people. (WPS2, UG, large class)*

A solution devised by one respondent involved dividing an undergraduate class into two and doing a case study with half the class for an hour a week (instead of having the full class for two hours per week). This smaller size facilitated discussions that incorporated group and class reflections and worked well, in the educator's opinion:

> *… I can see the improvements in the students each week. So they relish that challenge of trying to think through those issues in that class. (EI4, UG, case study)*

While the class size in this case (70) facilitated this arrangement, it may be more difficult to operationalise with larger student cohorts, and it may also be unfeasible from a faculty workload perspective. Shulman highlighted student invisibility, passivity and lack of accountability as major impediments to student engagement (2008), and therefore, the challenges identified with shared reflection are a concern, particularly for educators teaching at the undergraduate level.

One approach to collective reflection that emerged from the research was educators' use of online discussion forums. Although discussion forums in business education are not a new phenomenon (e.g., Garrison and Kanuka, 2004), three respondents indicated that they used this method for the first time during the COVID pandemic and saw particular benefits from incorporating this type of platform into their EL designs. For one, the main advantage was that it enabled greater levels of participation as well as facilitating students' diverse learning preferences:

> *No matter how friendly the classroom environment is, there's always a few that are a bit shy, or they're just a bit reluctant to share their views. So they're actually more comfortable sharing it in an online forum, and that builds confidence as well. So when they start to share in the forums, then you notice that they actually start to be more comfortable sharing in the class. And not just because they're called upon, but just because they actually are motivated to do it. (EI4, UG, case study)*

Han and Ellis (2019) observe that asynchronous discussion forums are particularly useful in EL pedagogies as they allow students more time to read and reflect on topics, thus providing more opportunities for critical thinking. The benefits of this increased time for reflection were noted by two respondents who used case studies in their approach to EL:

> *[The asynchronous discussion] was giving people time at home to read a paper on a topic area and then to actually discuss or add to the discussion. So what it did was, it gave them time to reflect. So the discussion activity lasted for seven days versus a two hour slot in the classroom where they only just know what they have with them. (FOP7, PG, pre-and postexperience, case study)*

> *The responses from the [online] boards are very good. They've read the article, and they have something solid to say...it's not just, 'a great article, delighted'. It's something insightful, or linking with their own organisation or whatever. So they are thinking about the material more. (WPS4, PG pre-experience, case study)*

This discussion on the use of online forums highlights the important role of timing in reflective learning in EL. The findings from this study indicated that the main method of capturing reflection was through individual written reflections. Twenty-six respondents reported requiring students to submit a reflection, usually in the form of a reflective essay, learning log or journal at the end of the EL activity or module. Two respondents used both group and individual reflections, and one reported using an oral video reflection. From the literature, this type of summative reflection is not uncommon in business education, and it represents a form of reflection-on-action, an opportunity for students to return to the experience and to construct a deeper meaning from it (Boud and Walker, 2006).

However, this one-way approach to reflection has been criticised by Perusso *et al.,* who describe it as "unilateral feedback for assessment purposes...that once completed are rarely discussed by students or teachers" (2019, p. 2). Two respondents teaching at postgraduate level reported using a 'revise and resubmit' approach to reflection, whereby students submitted drafts and were provided with feedback. In one case, a draft submission was voluntary:

> *I allowed them submit a couple of reflections around Christmas time so I could see what they were doing, if they wanted it. And so they could come and get some feedback because as you'd expect, they were good on description and poor on reflection. So I was able to illustrate to them, you're describing this, but you're not saying about what did that experience mean in terms of your understanding or your*

> *perception or your feeling about yourself. Then some of them just got it, they then started to think. (FOP3, PG, guest speakers)*

In one postgraduate applied EL project, submission of draft reflections was compulsory, and feedback was provided in both one-on-one meetings and in group sessions. While this process was resource-intensive and time-consuming, the benefits were perceived to be worthwhile, with the educator reporting that "*the quality goes up exponentially, hugely...and once they've done one, they get comfortable with it."* (EI15, PG, applied project)

It was also noted in the literature review in Chapter Three that written reflections are not without complications. MacFarlane and Tomlinson (2017) criticise this form of learning, claiming that students learn not so much how to reflect but how to play the 'reflection game'. None of the respondents in this study raised concerns about a lack of authenticity in student submissions, although a small number raised concerns about a lack of depth and the use of 'formulaic' approaches to reflection, particularly at undergraduate level. One respondent's experience of first-year reflective writing resonated with Trelfa's contention that students, in some cases, used a 'plug and chug' method of reflective writing (2020):

> *I think [students' reflective capacity] is very mixed. I think their understanding of what reflection means can be quite mixed as well. So sometimes what you get back is almost secondary-school trite, [such as] 'I'm going to be a better person having understood that Instagram influencers are evil' or 'I'm going to be a better person and think more about what I do or whatever.' So, you do get that stuff. But actually, it's like a lot of assessment. I think good students who engage with it, do well. I think weaker students reflect more poorly. But having said that, I still think their work is better for reflecting. (EI1, UG, case study)*

Within the education literature, the grading of student reflections is a matter of debate (e.g., Chan *et al.,* 2020; MacFarlane and Goulay, 2009), and in this study, the responses indicated a wide variation in views on the grading of reflections. Where reflection was included as part of an EL activity (30 respondents), there was an approximate 50:50 split between those who assessed reflection and those who did not. Respondents who used reflection typically employed a form of rubric to assign grades, while two indicated that the reflective component was treated as pass/fail. The respondents who did not assess reflection provided differing reasons for their stance. Some expressed the view that grading this element could result in

inauthentic reflection, while others preferred students to "*just reflect without having any pressure in terms of how they're going to be marked on it"* (WPS4, PG, pre-experience, case study). Finally, for two respondents, reluctance to grade reflection was based on the perceived personal nature of reflection and students' differing capacities to express this:

> *Reflections [are] highly personal, and some people don't have much insight and don't engage in personal reflection. But also a person's capacity for reflection - that's kind of innate to the individual. And so I don't think you can penalise somebody who hasn't done it, and people don't reflect for lots of reasons. Overall, I feel really uncomfortable grading reflections. (WPS1, PG, postexperience, applied project)*

> *How can I say that someone gets 100% and someone else gets 50% when that's their reflection? I think for reflections, I love the idea of it, and I think it's a great thing to have, but then there's the part of me that's nervous about it because to do it properly, and even to teach it properly... I think [we need] more resources and guidance on that if we were going that way. (FOP1, PG, pre-experience, case study)*

5.3.4.3 Supporting Reflection

Of the respondents in this study who used written reflections, ten reported that they provided limited or no guidance on written reflection to students. For some, the rationale appeared to be linked to attempts to counter formulaic reflective writing, with comments such as *"they have to find their own style*" (EI16, UG, live case) and "*it's them reflecting in the way that they want to reflect"* (FOP7, PG, applied project). Others expressed concern that if students were given too much guidance, "*they'll all repeat the same thing back to me, and then they're not learning anything"* (FOP6, UG, applied project). And one respondent's response was based on the education level of the students, saying, *"I just like a reflection. I give you no guidelines. You're level nine. Go figure it out"* (EI6, PG, applied project).

Research on reflection suggests that it is not an innate skill, and therefore, learners may need guidance on reflective writing to obtain the optimal learning benefits (Ryan, 2013; Lundmark *et al.,* 2019). Twenty respondents indicated that they supported student reflective learning by providing some guidance, either through classroom instruction or by directing students to online resources. From the findings, asking students to use models of reflection appeared to be uncommon, with just four participants reporting that they recommended models such as Gibbs' reflective cycle. The level and amount of guidance provided also ranged considerably. One respondent reported doing "*a whole session on reflection and what reflection is and what*

it's not" (WPS1, PG, applied project). Other responses suggested a light-touch approach to guiding reflective writing:

> *In the marking scheme guideline, I have this document, and there are explanations for each element and reflection. There are some explanations about how to and what they can reflect. But I think it was a quite general description; I tended to leave it to students to decide which elements really triggered their own thoughts. (EI7, UG, live case)*

Peltier *et al.* (2005) state that critical reflection in business education requires learners to challenge and rethink assumptions about themselves, about business and about their actions in society. Such levels of critical inquiry are not easy to master and necessitate deliberate provocation and guidance (Perusso *et al.,* 2019), and one respondent described taking this approach:

> *So, then I will ask them to reflect on their own perceptions, their own behaviours while they're students, their own sustainability that has nothing to do with [discipline area]. So, I'm trying to think of them as persons and how they can be more sustainable and start developing their environmental literacy and changing behaviour,and how training can change the behaviour. (WPS12, UG, applied project)*

Having reviewed the interview findings on the surface and the deep structure, the third theme now addresses the implicit structure of EL in business education.

5.4 Findings on Theme Three: The Implicit Structure Of EL

As discussed in Chapter Two, the implicit structure of a pedagogy is described by Shulman as a moral dimension encompassing the beliefs, values and behaviours that influence the formation of professional identity (2005a). There are three main areas of discussion in this section: professional and ethical values in business education; the role of the educator; and EL and professional values development.

5.4.1 Professional and Ethical Values in Business Education

Writing on signature pedagogies and management education, Schmidt-Wilk (2010) ponders what might be a signature pedagogy for management. She concludes that EL approaches such as case studies and client projects give students the opportunity to think and act like managers, thus meeting two of Shulman's professional habits. She is less sure, however, whether management education delivers on the moral apprenticeship, saying, "The signature pedagogy framework leaves us with a question for our profession, one that has been and can

be asked in many ways: are we underemphasizing the third dimension—teaching future managers to act with integrity?" (p. 494)

To explore the implicit structure of EL, respondents were asked to comment on the professional values that they considered to be important for business graduates. From the literature, reviews on how well business schools are preparing graduates in this dimension are mixed. Concerns have been expressed that core societal concerns such as ethics and corporate social responsibility are not adequately addressed in business education and, in fact, are simply "window-dressing in the marketing of the business school" (Parker, 2018). Overall, this criticism is not supported by the responses in this study. One study participant put it simply: "*For all students, you want them to be good citizens and to be aware of social issues and how they might be addressed*" (EI9, UG, live case). More typically, responses centred strongly on three sets of values that were deemed important: ethics, sustainability, and equality, diversity and inclusion.

5.4.1.1 Ethics

In this study, when asked which values they considered to be important for the professional formation of business graduates, over 60 percent of respondents mentioned ethics, honesty and integrity.

> *You have to act not just as a moral person but also as a moral leader, and you have to instil that confidence and those kinds of standards also in other people. (WPS10, PG, applied project)*

> *Obviously, the key value is ethical leaders. So, this is something that is pretty important in final-year undergraduates. You want people who are clearly going to move into managerial positions in time and to display ethical leadership within the business community and within society in general. (WPS9, UG, case study)*

Criticism of business education has been amplified in recent years in the wake of financial crises, corporate scandals and leadership failures (Friedland and Jain, 2022; Kaufman and Stedman, 2022). In business disciplines such as accounting, professional bodies have placed increased emphasis on ethical behaviour, and this is reflected in a heightened focus on this area in accounting education. In this study, the importance of ethical and professional behaviour was noted by all respondents from the accounting discipline, with one describing

it as "*the big, big issue that's out there at the moment*" (FOP5, PG, guest speakers). The importance of ethics was noted by respondents from all disciplines, with one commenting that in the future "*a moral compass or ethical awareness will be more important because decisions are becoming more difficult as they take in factors...such as artificial intelligence...and big data...that we didn't have to take into account in the past.*" (WPS4, PG, case study)

5.4.1.2 Sustainability

When asked about professional values, one-third of respondents specifically cited sustainability and the importance of educating students in sustainable business practices and corporate social responsibility. In several studies (e.g., Brunstein *et al.,* 2018; Fang and O'Toole, 2023), it is argued that this focus is a necessary component in contemporary business education so that students learn how economic and socio-environmental resources must be balanced to meet both business and societal needs. All discipline areas were represented in the responses on sustainability, but it appeared to be of particular importance to those teaching in the entrepreneurship and marketing areas:

> *This notion that forever growing, forever profitable, is not sustainable, is hugely important in terms of entrepreneurship now. (EI10, PG, pre-experience, small class, live case)*

> *Sustainability and the sense of duty we have to leave the planet in the same state or better state than the way in which we found it, that impacts everything. Every idea about a new product or a new service or a new experience really has to be torture tested through its impact on the environment. (EI14, PG, pre-experience, small class, live case)*

> *So, I do a lot of work around [consumption], building values around ethics and around sustainability, but beyond the surface level, tick the box CSR view of it. In a meaningful way, where they're actually challenging some of the ways that businesses, both big and small, try to address the idea of ethical or sustainable consumption in particular. (EI4, UG, small class, case study)*

5.4.1.3 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

In this study, professional values around ethics and sustainability predominated in the educator responses, but five study participants indicated that they believed values around equality, diversity and inclusion were important for business graduates. Of these, diversity

was mentioned most often and typically in the context of cross-cultural work environments, with one emphasising that "*the ability to work with people of different values, cultures, diversity is really important"* (EI11, UG, applied project). The value of cognitive as well as demographic diversity was remarked on by one respondent, who described it as important for "*getting a rich palate of perspectives, diversity of perspectives into ideas"* (EI14, PG, live case).

5.4.2 Professional Values and the Role of the Educator

From the literature, there are differing perspectives as to how business schools can instil a sense of social purpose and morality in their students. Blasco stresses that business schools have a duty to educate professionals who are ethically responsible and suggests that students' ethical attitudes and values can be significantly influenced over the course of third-level studies (2022, p. 294). On the institutional level, business schools can reorient their curricula through a stronger focus on critical thinking and ethical reasoning. Recent curriculum changes at the business school in this study were referred to by respondents who noted the addition of modules on business and professional ethics, critical thinking and sustainable business practices.

As well as curriculum modifications, researchers highlight the importance of individual educators in influencing students' acquisition of professional values. For example, business educators can make choices around the inclusion of ethical curriculum content, but Hernández-Lopéz *et al*. (2020) also suggest that academics, through their ethical leadership and personal values, play a role in students' informal socialisation processes. In this study, this was most evident when respondents spoke about values such as diversity, equality and inclusion and it was notable how closely the responses reflected Moosmayer's contention that individual academics act as role models for students "with their own values, which they cannot shake off just by entering a classroom" (2012, p. 155).

> *With this cohort, I started emphasising from September, that the value of equality is very important, [and] it is my firm belief that everybody should be treated equally. Everybody deserves the same equal respect. (EI7, UG, live case)*

> *I suppose some of my teaching is actually influenced by my values, and I think those values are important in terms of being a HR professional. So, for me, it's very clearly around issues of transparency and fairness in terms of how you treat people, how you*

make decisions, how you communicate, how you explain things. So, I suppose those values are important for me in terms of how I deal with students and also for, I think, somebody who's going to be a HR professional in terms of how they deal with their co-workers, but also the employees in the organisation. (WPS7, UG, role play).

One of the things that I aim to inculcate... is teaching people respect for other people, irrespective of the level and position that they are in the organisation. The other values I think that are really, really important in a workplace setting are tolerance for each other and recognising the ability of others in the organisation that they can bring if they're given the opportunity. In terms of teaching, those values would definitely imbue what I do. (WPS3, PG, case study)

Hernández-Lopéz *et al*. (2020) state that in any organisation, leaders have an influential role in shaping their followers' ethical conduct, and in education, they suggest that teachers assume this role due to their proximity to students. However, four respondents in this study expressed concern about enacting this role or rejected it completely:

So, I'm not trying to teach them; look, this is the set of rules you follow. I'm trying to say, look, here is a set of guidelines that you can play with, but ultimately, it's your responsibility. And that personal responsibility, I think, is a big key thing. I think we don't push that enough with students. (FOP6, UG, applied project)

I'm not sure if we can deliver values. I suppose we can certainly show them in our own teaching...whether we can actually or even should try to kind of impose our own values, I think we need to be very careful about that in some ways. (EI15, PG, applied project)

Values, no, zero values. What's important is skill, how to do things. After, if you believe in ethics or sustainability....companies say it doesn't matter at all. They just want the job to be done and as efficiently as it can be. (EI5, PG, applied project)

I see very little value or merit in putting those into the educational scheme of things, partly because those are reverting to the generalities that we're trying to get away from with competencies. It doesn't seem to me at all likely that we can make a difference really, convey it to students, cause them to shift in values. I'm not sure it's teachable at all. (WPS11, UG, applied project)

5.4.3 EL and Pedagogies of Formation

These opinions notwithstanding, the findings in this study appear to indicate support for the contention that business education should promote the development of professional values. However, it does not necessarily follow that educators' espoused opinions on professional values are translated into practice through their pedagogies. Shulman states that a signature

pedagogy should be a pedagogy of formation, whereby learners' values, dispositions and characters are formed through teaching and learning experiences (2005, p. 57). According to Moosmayer (2012), individual educators may exert value-related influence through their teaching content, espousal of certain value positions, as well as through the adoption of particular teaching styles and forms. Brunstein *et al.* (2018) state that pedagogies that engage students in reflective practice on moral, social and ethical issues can be transformative. Thus, it is necessary to explore not just educator opinions on professional values, but to also examine how reported EL teaching practices enact those values and encourage critical reflection.

A small number of respondents (three educators) spoke about professional values as central to their teaching, with one saying that *"a societal focus...is embedded in my modules to ensure that we are actually getting students to be reflective on their role in society as well as being a business professional"* (FOP2, PG, pre-experience, guest speakers). Another stated that they tried to instil business ethics into every course they taught (WPS2, UG, role plays/ guest speakers). More typically, respondents provided examples of where professional values might be specifically addressed in their EL methods. Two respondents reported using case studies that posed ethical dilemmas, an approach advocated by Plewa and Quester (2006) to stimulate critical reflection:

> *I bring in one case that has a very clear-cut ethical dimension to it, to allow me to bring in the ethical decision-making. (WPS4, PG, case study)*

> *I have one case which focuses on white collar crime...and you can see how a simple white-collar couple, highly educated like themselves, can nevertheless go down that slippery slope. So, I think that's a great insight, and I like using those kinds of cases. (WPS10, PG, case study)*

Baden and Parkes (2013) advocate the use of live case projects with social enterprises as a means of embedding the challenges of sustainable development into business education. One respondent explained that an applied project had traditionally been deliberately focused on social enterprises (FOP3, UG, applied project) but reported changing the emphasis due to concerns about students accessing information from previous students. While nine of the thirty-six respondents reported using live cases, only one (EI7) intentionally designed the project for societal impact with a particular focus on helping local businesses and

communities. In another module where live cases involved multiple client companies, a mix of non-profit and for-profit organisations could be involved (WPS5) but this differed from year to year. Similarly, in some of the applied projects reported in the study, students were encouraged to focus on projects that addressed societal as well as business problems.

> *I don't really mind where they get ideas as long as they're passionate about it... if your brother has a visual impairment or if you have an elderly grandparent and you see an opportunity in a nursing home to develop a product or service, I don't really mind. (EI11, UG, applied project)*

The deliberate incorporation of an ethical dimension into an applied project was described by one respondent, providing an example of what Blasco (2012) calls a "disorienting dilemma" that causes learners to question their existing assumptions and beliefs (p. 370).

> *So, it gets them thinking in a way outside tax being a number crunching exercise, rather to be in a much wider kind of social discussion that's taking place, an ethical discussion that's taking place. And I would say initially, they're quite uncomfortable with it. (FOP5, PG, pre-experience, applied project)*

Other respondents reported using class debates, discussion forums and reflective assignments to specifically encourage critical reflection. As discussed in Chapter Two, critical reflection encourages learners to questions their assumptions and beliefs and consider experiences in a broader moral, societal, and political context (Catterall *et al*., 2002). Research suggests that EL that is designed with a critical reflection focus engenders a greater sense of consciousness and personal responsibility in learners (Gray, 2007). While none of the respondents in this study used the term 'critical reflection', some evidence of this practice emerged from the interview data. One respondent spoke of the importance of ethical leadership and described using reflection with students *"in terms of how they engage in decision-making, especially with regards to ethical issues"* (WPS10, PG, case study/applied project). Another reported using online reflection forums where students "*look at all sorts of sustainability, they look at ethics"* (FOP7, PG, applied project). Two respondents described EL practices where students were intentionally directed towards critical reflection:

> *It's a big challenge to get them to take a wider view outside of businesses, like outside the immediate functional profit/loss lens that a lot of them have when you challenge them on the implications [of a strategy] or on certain businesses' goals and objectives. (EI4, UG, case study)*

Another respondent described their approach in terms of “theory, practice, reflection”:

> *So, examine the theoretical framework, show this in practice in an industry, in a company, or in a social practice. So, if it is about, for example, influencers, you might want to think about the impact influencers have on teenage girls. Show me that you've read the marketing theory on influencers, then show me the societal impacts. And then the final piece is a short reflection that thinks about, having done this, what do you now know that you didn't know before? Or how might this change how you'll approach something, maybe in a future employment? (EI1, UG, case study)*

The use of guest speakers as a form of EL has not received much attention in the academic literature, but according to Moosmayer (2012), as a practice, it can demonstrate role modelling and demonstration of professional values in the classroom. For example, one respondent described the intentional choice of guest speakers to encourage student engagement with UN Sustainable Development Goals (FOP2, PG, pre-experience, guest speaker). Another respondent chose different guest speakers to give students alternative views on accounting as a profession:

> *I liked the idea of them seeing accounting in different contexts. I brought in predominantly people who weren't working in profit-making multinationals. I would have had people who are working in charities and the public sector...all of whom are accountants, just to open up their minds. I wanted the students to realise that while you might be going to train with the ‘Big 4’, that's only the first bit of your career and what happens next? Now, of course, I had some Big 4 people but I made a real effort to have diversity of role types - it's this societal impact that I was trying to get at. (FOP3, PG, pre-experience, guest speakers)*

While there has been considerable criticism of business education for failing to embed responsible management practices in their curricula, Moosmayer (2012) contends that not enough credit is given to the role of individual educators and their influence in shaping learners into future ethical business practitioners. The findings from this study indicated that in their EL pedagogies, many business educators are actively attempting to incorporate professional values and are encouraging students to reflect on issues related to ethical and social responsibility. The type of professional formation advocated by Shulman was exemplified by one respondent, who described the educational goal of developing learners with very particular skillsets:

> *The sort of finance person of the future who would be digitally active but equally would have a good understanding of sustainability and would have, at their core, an understanding of corporate social responsibility.* (EI10, PG, live case)

Finally, one study participant ventured the opinion that when professional values were emphasised in business education, this was reflected in students' professional identity formation:

> *Obviously, ethics...has become much more to the forefront of the messaging we're giving out at the moment. I do think students are putting more value on that area in terms of where they're selecting their jobs. Okay, salary is a big thing, and qualification, and all of that sort of stuff. But there is a different cohort of students out there now who are shaping things a bit differently in terms of where they see themselves going in the future. (FOP5, PG, guest speaker)*

Having outlined the findings related to the surface, deep, and implicit structure of EL, the question of the possibility of a shadow structure in EL is considered in Chapter Six. The final theme in this chapter reports on the challenges identified by educators in their use of EL in business education.

5.5 Findings on Theme Four: EL Implementation Challenges

In the interviews, respondents were asked to comment on the challenges they had encountered in their EL practice. There was considerable agreement in the responses provided and these centred largely around issues of class size, workload and resources. Educator competence and a lack of sharing of knowledge were also identified as areas of concern. An overview of the main challenges, along with respondent quotes, are shown in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4: Overview of EL Implementation Challenges

Challenge identified	No. of respondents	Sample respondent quotes
Class size	14	"*With the number of students I'm dealing with, [EL] is difficult to do. [In the future] I don't know if I'll have the resources, the classrooms in which we'll be able to do the amount of tutorials, or the skill levels of the teaching assistants and things like that. So it might be just a position then where I'm forced to go back to just the traditional lecture with them".* (EI4, UG, applied project)
Workload	14	Role plays *"It takes a lot of time to set it up, particularly when you're bringing in other people."*

		(WPS7, UG, small class) Case studies *" It puts more work on the lecturer."* (WPS4, PG, small class) Live cases *"There's definitely a huge investment in time."* (WPS6, PG, small class) Applied projects *"Absolutely, my life would be a lot easier if I didn't do this."* (FOP5, PG, small class).
Resources	8	*"There's definitely a huge investment in time and that period when we are trying to [recruit] companies is always stressful because the students can be saying, 'do we have our companies yet? and you might have five and you're still waiting for the sixth to confirm and you don't want to leave one out. You have to be consistent in terms of the information as well. So I suppose you're leveraging your personal network and I've been lucky, I've been able to leverage [an Irish enterprise body] clients as well, but even at that, there's no guarantee the companies will come back and latch on. So I think that part of it is very, very difficult."* (WPS6, PG, post-experience, small class, live case).
Sharing of Knowledge	9	*"I think that learning from each other is really important...and I don't think that happens enough in terms of staff sharing all the different things that they're doing*." (FOP2, PG, guest speaker/simulation).
Educator competence	5	*"I worry about my own skillset for delivering experiential learning."* (EI1, UG, small class, case study) "*If I was doing reflection again, [I'd like] training for myself....to make me feel comfortable*." (FOP1, UG, role play)

From the responses on the challenges in implementing EL, there are a number of points worth noting. Firstly, the issue of using EL with large classes has already been discussed under the surface structure in section 5.2 but the impact of high-enrolment classes is certainly

concerning. Respondents described difficulties in staging EL and the impact large numbers had on hosting presentations and encouraging discussion, thus limiting key signature pedagogy features of public performance, visibility and accountability. Equally concerning is the view expressed in Table 5.4 that increasing class sizes could force educators to revaluate their use of EL.

This second issue of note relates to the workload associated with EL, a topic that has been documented in the literature (e.g., Clancy *et al.*, 2021). In particular, there was evidence of educator disquiet that investments in teaching approaches like EL may not always be recognised within institutions and also that the extra time given to resource-intensive teaching like EL may actually hinder opportunities for advancement, particularly if done at the expense of research (Elam and Spotts, 2004). In this study, two respondents made comments that echoed this view.

> *Honestly, the biggest challenge is time, and I have invested a lot of time in this over the years, but there is no doubt that has been taken away from research. It's that juggling as to where do you invest your time? I find that juggling, that is the biggest thing that will take away from your ability to invest in experiential learning because it does take time to set it up, especially if you're doing anything new. Sometimes you have to decide what are your priorities and as we know, research is so important. (FOP2, PG, simulation/guest speaker)*

> *The other thing [is that] nobody knows about this. I do this in the classroom. Nobody knows, and frankly, I don't know if anyone really cares, as in, no one's trying to know either. So you sometimes wonder, does it matter if I put all this effort in? I do it for myself, and I think it's a good way of teaching, and if it takes a bit more effort on my part, so be it. But if you were really weighing up your time...this is probably not where you'd put the time. I'd say most academics are not looking for their name in lights or anything like that, but some kind of recognition would probably be a good thing. The general realisation that academics put a lot of effort into this side of their work, or many do, and that's not generally noted, I don't think. In fact, sometimes it can even be seen as a stupid thing to do. (WPS4, PG, case study)*

In relation to resources, educators who used live cases and guest speakers described the sourcing of appropriate clients and speakers as a significant challenge. The respondents' experiences resonate with the observation made by McKeen *et al.* (2018) that educators using this type of EL face high expectations. Not only must they source a sufficient number of clients, but also the kind of project must appeal to students and deliver value to the client.

While educator competence was only cited as a challenge by five respondents, from the literature on EL in business education, it is recognised that the educator's role is critical in facilitating and supporting learning in an EL environment (Dean *et al.,* 2020). Given the low levels of pedagogic training reported in this study, there is a danger that some educators may not be achieving the full learning effects of their EL activities due to a lack of exposure to best practices and insufficient knowledge of the "underlying pedagogic learning theories and practice" (Bell and Bell, 2020, p. 987).

Finally, Okoli *et al.* (2019) warn that "finding the right pedagogic approaches is undoubtedly a daunting task that could add multiple hours to a faculty member's workload" (p. 220). In the absence of sharing of knowledge, educators risk reinventing the wheel as they attempt to design and implement EL pedagogies on their own. The challenge raised by insufficient sharing of practice is one that is addressed in the recommendations in Chapter Six.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings from the interviews with EL educators in one business school. Theme One focused on the surface structure of EL and reported on the EL methods used, the impact of the learning environment and the relevance of the signature pedagogies features of pervasiveness, routinization and temporal pattern to this structure. Findings in relation to the deep structure of EL were reviewed in Theme Two with a particular focus on the central elements of experiential content and reflection in this pedagogy. Pedagogies of engagement and uncertainty were found to be relevant to this structural dimension, and features such as visibility, accountability, collaboration and uncertainty were discussed in relation to the findings. Theme Three explored the interview data in relation to the implicit structure of EL, and identified the professional values deemed important by respondents. Finally, Theme Four addressed the challenges EL educators experienced in implementing EL, and this discussion focused strongly on concerns around large classes, workload, resources and sharing of practice amongst EL educators.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This research study aimed to explore how educators implemented EL in one business school and to understand the challenges they identified in their use of this pedagogy. EL was examined through the lens of signature pedagogies with the goal of obtaining a deeper insight into educators' practices and their assumptions and beliefs about using EL in business education.

The picture that emerges from this study of EL is largely a positive one, with evidence to suggest that in this business school, educators across all disciplines see value in EL as a pedagogy that bridges the theory-practice gap, and considerable effort is expended in designing and delivering creative and realistic learning situations for their students. However, a number of areas of concern have emerged around the implementation of EL and the challenges faced by EL educators, which may inhibit the professional formation of business graduates.

The chapter opens by returning to the research questions that were posed in Chapter Four and presenting the conclusions reached as a result of the findings. The question of a possible shadow structure in EL in business education is then addressed. The use of signature pedagogies as a conceptual framework for this study is revisited, and conclusions are presented on the utility of this framework for pedagogic research. Following these conclusions, the limitations of the study are outlined. The recommendations that follow address ways to improve EL in business education as well as a potential role for signature pedagogies in module and curricular design. Finally, suggestions for further research on EL and signature pedagogies are provided.

6.2 Conclusions on EL in Business Education

The overall research aim for this study was to explore how educators in one business school implemented EL and the challenges that were associated with the use of this pedagogy. In the following sections, the specific research questions posed in Chapter Four are answered, and conclusions are presented.

6.2.1 Conclusions on the Surface Structure of EL

The questions posed in Chapter Four that related to the surface structure were:

- What types of EL activities are used by business educators, and how pervasive is the use of EL?
- How does the learning environment impact educators' use of EL?
- What is the temporal pattern for EL in business education, and does it support routinization of learning?

6.2.1.1 Types of EL and Pervasiveness of the Pedagogy

From an exploration of the surface structure of EL in this business school, it is evident that EL is delivered through a variety of methods and is prevalent at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The main approaches to EL favoured by educators in this study were case studies, live cases, and applied projects. Simulations and role plays were also employed, but to a much lesser extent. It was of interest to note the categorisation of guest speakers as a method of EL by some study participants, which could denote a misconception in how EL is comprehended by some respondents. However, it could also represent an understanding of EL that has been noted in the literature that encompasses both direct and vicarious experience (Hoover and Giambatista, 2009).

The fifty examples of EL from this case study provide support for the claim that EL is a pervasive pedagogy in both undergraduate and postgraduate business education, and the examples of EL were almost equally divided between these levels. The examples showed EL occurring in six out of seven undergraduate programmes in the school and in fifteen of the twenty postgraduate programmes. The cross-disciplinary nature of the participants in this study demonstrated that EL is applied in all business sub-disciplines, including management, marketing, HRM, finance, accounting, economics, and data analytics.

6.2.1.2 The impact of the Learning Environment

The learning environment for EL was considered from the perspective of the physical and distance learning spaces where EL activities take place. From the findings, the pedagogy was usually implemented in a face-to-face teaching environment, but educators gained experience in online delivery when remote learning was required during the COVID pandemic in 2020. Overall, educators expressed a preference for EL in a physical format but also recognised areas where aspects of technology could enhance its implementation, e.g., pre-recording of lecture content and the use of online forums. Some educators reported dissatisfaction with the physical constraints imposed by traditional lecture rooms. However, large class sizes emerged as a more serious constraint on the learning environment, and this was an issue of particular concern for undergraduate educators.

6.2.1.3 Temporal pattern and Routinization of Learning

Shulman's concept of a temporal pattern posits that a discernible pattern is visible in the timing and occurrence of a signature pedagogy within a curriculum (2005a). In this study, EL at the undergraduate level occurs most often in the final year, suggesting that if a temporal pattern does exist, it is most akin to Shulman's notion of a capstone apprenticeship. However, examples of EL with first- and second-year students were also evidenced, but the study did not provide enough examples to determine if the temporal pattern was actually closer to that of a "sequenced and balanced portfolio" (Shulman, 2005a, p. 55). Overall, a clearly distinct pattern for the occurrence of EL at the undergraduate level was not obvious, and it could be argued that EL in this business school reflects what Hodge *et al.* (2014) decry as an irregular and intermittent approach to the use of this pedagogy.

Shulman (2005c) maintains that the benefit of a pervasive pedagogy is that it facilitates consistent student learning, thus enabling students to think in the ways of their future profession, i.e., to think like a HRM manager, an accountant, or a marketer. An additional outcome of pervasiveness and a clear temporal pattern is that it leads to routinization of learning where students understand the 'rules of engagement' of a pedagogy, i.e., how the teaching and learning method works and what is expected from them in the learning environment. The study's findings showed that, irrespective of discipline, there were considerable similarities in the way in which many EL methods (e.g., case studies, live cases)

were designed and implemented. Therefore, through repeated exposure to EL over the course of a degree, students come to understand their roles as case study protagonists, as strategy consultants in a live case, as field researchers in an applied project, or as participants in simulations and role plays. The routinization of EL pedagogy in this way should, in theory, allow educators to spend less time explaining the operational 'rules' of activities (e.g., how to analyse a case study, how to write an academic reflection, how to work in a group for an EL project) and more time "on increasingly complex subject matter" (Shulman, 2005a, p. 56).

However, there is a danger that the benefits of routinization are not being fully realised in teaching and learning environments where educators do not regularly share their teaching practices with colleagues and where there may be little collective knowledge of what is being taught to whom, when and how. In this study, there was limited evidence of learning from colleagues, and respondents noted a general lack of sharing of pedagogical approaches within the school. This "shroud of silence" (Brookfield, 2017, p. 71) inhibits routinization as educators may inadvertently be duplicating pedagogic information and guidance provided to students or omitting it completely. Recommendations to address the issues of an ad hoc temporal pattern and missed opportunities for routinization are addressed later in this chapter.

6.2.2 Conclusions on the Deep Structure of EL

Arising from the literature review, a number of questions were posed relating to the deep structure of EL:

- What motivates educator adoption of EL?
- Through their use of this pedagogy, what competencies do educators seek to develop in their students?
- What are educators' assumptions about experiential content?
- What is the role and nature of reflection in the EL pedagogies in the study?
- What approaches to reflection are emphasised in EL in business education?
- How is reflection supported in business education?
- Are the features of pedagogies of uncertainty and engagement fostered in EL?

6.2.2.1 Educator Motivation for EL Adoption

The examination of the deep structure revealed insights into educators' motivations for choosing EL and their rationale for this pedagogy. The literature suggests that educators' pedagogical choices may be influenced by a wide range of factors (Gregory and Jones, 2009). However, in this study, exposure to EL as students, learning from colleagues, and pedagogical training did not emerge as significant influencing factors in educators' decisions to use EL. For many, the decision to use this approach developed from their own personal teaching experiences and learning by doing through repeated trial and error with pedagogical approaches.

6.2.2.2. Rationale for EL and Competencies Sought

The rationale for EL appears to be strongly based on educators' desire for learners to not just understand the theory of their discipline but to be able to apply this knowledge in practice. Across all business discipline areas in this study, EL was viewed as a means of bridging theory and practice, a finding that is well documented in the literature (e.g., Young *et al.,* 2008; Okoli *et al.,* 2019). In addition to a focus on the practical application of knowledge, the respondents identified particular competencies that they sought to develop in their students through their EL activities. Critical thinking, communication and collaboration skills were rated highly, while self-awareness, leadership and creative thinking were ranked lower.

6.2.2.3 Educators' Assumptions on Experiential Content

Unpacking the deep structure of EL facilitated an in-depth exploration into how educators constructed EL in terms of the components of experiential content (realism, complexity and ambiguity). In this study, it was evident that, irrespective of degree level, educators placed considerable emphasis on the real-world nature of their EL pedagogies and expended considerable efforts in choosing authentic case studies and data sets, sourcing real companies to act as live cases, and inviting the business community into classrooms as guest speakers and as part of applied projects. The study's findings showed less consensus on the roles of complexity and ambiguity in EL content. For these elements, differences emerged between the practices of undergraduate and postgraduate educators. While EL, by its nature is ambiguous, EL designs at the undergraduate level tended to be more structured and scaffolded in terms of guidance and direction. In teaching at this level, educators appeared to

be hesitant to intentionally adopt EL approaches that were higher in ambiguity. At postgraduate level, there was more evidence of deliberate inclusion of higher levels of complexity and ambiguity in EL activities. Cavagnaro and Fasihuddin (2016) insist that business graduates need to be comfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity and that "we need to allow students to get to the edge of the cliff, instead of keeping them away, because it's at the edge where the learning happens" (p. 8). While students' ability to cope with complexity and uncertainty may be related to their educational level and maturity, the difference in approaches in this study raises questions about the preparedness of business undergraduates for the realities of unpredictable and dynamic workplaces.

6.2.2.4 Role and Approaches to Reflection

The importance of reflection in EL is highlighted extensively in the literature, and contrary to reports that reflection is neglected in EL in business education, opportunities for reflection were reported in over 80% of the EL activities discussed in this study. Educator interpretations of reflection varied considerably, and this was evident in the approaches to reflection in the study. For most respondents, the reflective learning focus was principally on personal reflections, and at the undergraduate level, reflection was usually an individual activity and typically used for summative purposes. Guided, shared reflection was much more common with postgraduates, and this was facilitated by the smaller class sizes at this level.

Overall, the findings in this study on reflection in EL show that business educators see value in reflection but employ differing methods in the way in which they operationalise reflective learning. A wide range of approaches was reported, from structured, written and assessed reflections to less formal group and class discussions where students shared their learning on experience. There was some evidence of reflective learning with a critical focus, but evoking this level of reflection may require educators to employ an intentional intervention. This issue is discussed further in Section 6.3 where it is argued that the lack of opportunities for shared reflection with undergraduate students represents a shadow structure in EL in business education.

6.2.2.5 Supporting Reflective Learning in EL

A third of respondents who used reflection did not provide any specific guidance on reflection to students, and the amount and type of support provided by the remaining study participants varied considerably. Some educators conducted entire class sessions on reflection, while others sufficed with the provision of online links on the university's virtual learning platform, links that were often to other universities' more comprehensive resources on reflection. Some study participants expressed concern that too much support would result in formulaic reflective writing, while others did not provide support due to their own perceived lack of knowledge on teaching reflection.

6.2.2.6 Features of Pedagogies of Uncertainty and Engagement in EL

According to Shulman (2008), signature pedagogies are pedagogies of uncertainty which are characterised by unpredictable and surprising learning environments. The element of surprise helps to keep students interested and accountable for their learning. Such pedagogies teach students to think on their feet, and also to make judgements under conditions of uncertainty. In this study, the evidence to support EL as a pedagogy of uncertainty comes chiefly from the inherently ambiguous nature of this pedagogy and the methods of EL that are used. For example, respondents reported using case studies and simulations and in these EL methods, students have to deal with decision-making scenarios that may have limited information, multiple variables and uncertain outcomes. Respondents also provided examples of live cases and applied projects where learners have to resolve ambiguous problems that require creativity and critical thinking. In most of the EL examples cited, students worked in groups where they may have to deal with uncertainty in communication and collaboration. From the findings, the main issue in relation to uncertainty was around the difference in intensity of ambiguity between undergraduate and postgraduate learners.

To conclude this discussion of the findings related to the deep structure of EL, the findings on educators' assumptions about student engagement need to be considered. Shulman contends that it is essential to address "the most significant impediments to learning in higher education: passivity, invisibility, anonymity, and lack of accountability" (2005a, p. 57). Signature pedagogies should "make it hard to disappear and become anonymous" (2005b, p.

22) and therefore must be pedagogies that emphasise collaboration, visibility, public performance and accountability.

In this study, it was clear that collaboration featured prominently in EL designs, as, with the exception of two respondents, all others reported that group work was a feature of their EL activities. While the ability to work in groups has been identified as one of the most important soft skills for business graduates, the rationale for the widespread use of group work reported in this study may pertain to genuine pedagogies of engagement but could also be attributed to educators' strategies for managing EL with large classes.

Shulman's notion of public performance (2008) suggests that educators' EL designs should provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning to their lecturer, classmates and perhaps even to other stakeholders. From the findings, over half of the educators in the study (20 study participants) indicated that some form of public performance was part of their EL activity. While the evidence on public performance is encouraging in terms of communication skill development, the extent to which presentations actually contribute to engagement is open to debate. As a part of public performance, Shulman points out that not only do students perform, speak, and get feedback, but they are also "responsible for hearing, understanding and critiquing what their fellow students have said"(2008, p. 17). It is this extra layer of accountability, according to Shulman, which really drives learning. The findings indicate that attaining this type of engagement was relatively unproblematic in smaller, postexperience, postgraduate classes, where respondents reported high levels of what Shulman calls 'accountable talk' (2005c). In larger undergraduate classes and in some pre-experience modules, respondents' experiences of engagement from public performance were more mixed. High levels of engagement were reported from activities like role plays and discussion groups, but others found that students were reluctant to talk or ask questions in large classes, resulting in 'yawning silences' and an environment described by one respondent as "tumbleweed territory" (EI2, UG, applied project).

A surprising finding from the study in terms of engagement was the limited use of peer evaluations. Described as a critical component of EL pedagogy (VanSchenkhof *et al.,* 2018), yet only five respondents reported use of this approach. Perhaps of more value is what can

be learned from the postgraduate educators in this study who reported higher levels of engagement. What was notable from their interviews was that many of them described EL activities where their small class sizes facilitated opportunities not just for reflection on EL experiences but for *shared* reflection. Researchers of EL in business education (e.g., Perusso *et al*., 2019; Cajiao and Burke, 2016) emphasise the importance of reflexive dialogue and input from others if the benefits of learning from experience are to be realised.

This issue of shared reflection and class size demonstrates a disparity that may exist between educator assumptions about engagement and access to resources that would allow them to realise that engagement in their EL activities. While class size is an obvious constraint, the study identified other resource constraints that may be impediments to implementing EL as a pedagogy of engagement. For example, concerns about educator competence in using some types of EL (e.g., case studies, simulations) were disclosed. Other respondents expressed frustration with efforts to engage students in traditional tiered classrooms, and finally, those using EL where external engagement was required, expressed concerns about finding appropriate guest speakers and sourcing companies to act as live cases. While educators may be interested and willing to innovate in their EL methods, these constraints represent significant impediments to student engagement.

6.2.3 Conclusions on the Implicit Structure of EL

Two questions from the literature review related to the implicit structure of EL.

- What professional values do educators deem to be important for business graduates?
- How are these values manifested in EL approaches?

6.2.3.1 Ethical and Professional Values

Educators' views on the professional values regarded as important for business graduates were uncovered through an evaluation of the implicit structure of EL. Shulman (2005a) emphasises the importance of this dimension as it encompasses the beliefs, values and behaviours that contribute to the formation of professional identity. 90% of the respondents in this study identified professional values around ethics, sustainability, and equality, diversity and inclusion as important for business graduates.

6.2.3.2 Manifestation of Professional Values in EL Activities

While espoused values do not necessarily translate into EL practice, the findings suggest that in this business school, a limited number of EL activities (e.g., case studies, live cases) were deliberately chosen to encourage students to engage with the moral dimensions of business practice such as ethics, corporate governance, and corporate social responsibility. In addition, many educators do encourage students to reflect on issues related to ethical and social responsibility as part of their EL activities.

There has been criticism of business education where responsible management is taught in stand-alone modules effectively isolating it from mainstream business courses (Blasco, 2021). Therefore, the evidence from this study where professional values are emphasized in modules across a range of disciplines, including HRM, management, marketing and accounting, is encouraging. When students are exposed to these values through application of practice in EL activities, this helps to reinforce Shulman's contention that "a true professional does not merely practice: he or she performs with a sense of social and personal responsibility" (2005b, p. 18).

However, while some examples were provided of EL where the ethical or societal component comprised a large component of the EL activity (e.g., a live case with a social orientation, a series of guest speakers focusing on UN Sustainable Development Goals), in other examples, the focus appeared to be more compartmentalized (e.g., a single case study on ethics, a section on product sustainability as part of a marketing strategy project). EL methods where a focus on pedagogies of formation is firmly embedded, (e.g., where it comprises an entire EL project or is an integral part of every case study discussion), could instil graduates with a heightened awareness of the values and motives that will guide their professional work (Trank and Rynes, 2003).

Apart from the nature of the EL activity, there is an opportunity for the reflective component within EL to help shape students' attitudes and values, particularly if students are guided to reflect critically on the content and processes of their experiences. Schmidt-Wilk (2010) sees shared reflections of student learning as a valuable contribution towards influencing professional behaviour saying, "if students are required to defend their decisions, perform

their role plays, and describe their projects before peers, they may be more likely to act with integrity, believing that peers and teacher will not condone unethical decisions and behaviors" (p. 493). Business schools where pedagogies of formation are integral to both the EL experience and reflection could contribute towards a genuine professionalisation of management, which has been raised as a possible solution to the challenges facing business education (Bennis and O'Toole, 2005).

Finally, while the question on professional values in this study provoked mainly positive reactions, there were also those who expressed doubt as to whether it was the educator's job to teach morals. In response, it is worth noting the criticism that has been levelled at the business community in the wake of a series of financial crises, corporate scandals and leadership failures in recent years (Friedland and Jain, 2022). The importance of the role of business schools and their responsibility to educate ethically responsible professionals should not be underestimated (Klein *et al*., 2007). Those who demur this responsibility might be reminded to give some thought to Blasco's contention that "what currently passes for value-neutral "business as usual" at business schools is premised on a narrow view of human nature and society that has not served us well" (2012, p. 381).

6.2.4 Conclusions on EL Implementation Challenges

In Chapter Five, the study's findings on educators' perceived challenges with EL implementation, were reported. Some of the challenges highlighted in the literature, such as possible monetary costs of EL (de Pillis *et al.,* 2020) and ethical issues (Dean *et al.,* 2020), were not identified as concerns by respondents in this study. However, other challenges from the literature, such as large classes and the time required for EL, featured in the study responses.

Large class sizes were considered the biggest impediment to using this pedagogy. As there is no universal definition of what constitutes a large class, in this study the demarcation used to distinguish between class sizes was 100 students. However, this is a relatively crude distinction that does not really reflect the reality of class sizes at different educational levels. Some postgraduate classes have genuinely small enrolments (e.g., 30-40 students), while so-called 'small' undergraduate classes could have 80 or 90 students, and larger undergraduate classes could have up to 500 students. The challenge that large enrolments present for the

implementation of EL are significant and have implications for both the nature of the EL experience itself and, as discussed under the shadow structure, the quality of reflective learning that EL produces. Respondents reported difficulties in creating and staging EL experiences, managing feedback and limitations on both instructor-to-student and student-to-student interactions.

The outcome of the challenge posed by large class sizes is the evidence from this study that it can engender educator hesitancy in adopting EL as a teaching method. Educators reported beliefs that EL could deliver a rich learning experience for their students but also that it required ingenuity in its implementation, as well as access to appropriate resources. It is concerning when respondents describe EL at undergraduate level as "*really, really tough to do*" (EI1, UG, case study) or aspects of EL management such as finding clients for live case projects as "daunting" (EI16, UG) or that the provision of timely feedback to large classes during EL projects "*breaks my heart...it's really tough*" (EI11, applied project).

From the findings, EL in large classes necessitates compromises between educator assumptions about the nature of knowledge and how best to impart that knowledge (the deep structure) and the way in which EL is actually implemented in practice (the surface structure). These compromises (e.g., omission of public performances such as presentations, limited opportunities for shared reflection or the use of reflection for summative assessment only) can dilute the learning effects of EL for students and challenge educators' core pedagogical assumptions.

Related to this is the issue of the workload associated with EL and the perceptions from this study that EL entailed additional work and imposed particular demands on educators' time. Research conducted with Irish academics following the COVID pandemic reported high levels of work-related stress, unsustainable workloads and a belief that the quality of teaching and learning had been deteriorating in HE for some time (Shankar *et al.,* 2021). In this study of EL, there was evidence of educators' self-questioning of the time commitment EL demanded, particularly in the context of a HE environment where the value of some aspects of academic work (i.e., research) are perceived to be higher than others (teaching or service) (Alvesson and Spicer, 2016). Freeman (2022) asserts that the high rewards for measurable research

outputs have resulted in an environment where time spent on teaching and service is viewed negatively, despite what may be institutional protestations to the contrary:

> Because everyone's going to say, oh, yeah, undergraduate education is important to us, and teaching is part of our institutional mission. But when the rubber meets the road, who actually gets hired? Who actually gets promoted? Who actually gets the corner office, the awards on campus? Where does the prestige come from? It's still really about research. (Freeman, 2022)

While respondents in this study did not express particularly negative opinions about their teaching choices, some doubt as to the value of the time invested in EL and the related opportunity cost, was evident.

Access to resources to support EL initiatives was cited in this study as another challenge to implementation. The types of resources that educators identified that might improve implementation of EL were wide-ranging, including teaching assistance, access to particular classrooms (e.g. flat rooms), technical support and educator training for certain types of EL (e.g., simulations and case studies). Support provided by teaching assistants (TAs) was seen as particularly helpful in large class management, however, the value a teaching assistant would bring to an EL activity was questioned by some respondents, and concern was also expressed that having to train a TA in the management of a type of EL would, in fact, add to educator workload.

Fourteen respondents in this study reported using live cases and guest speakers, with both methods requiring external industry engagement to implement EL. Educators indicated a heavy reliance on their own contacts to source appropriate companies and speakers, and the extent to which all educators, particularly those new to the profession, have access to necessary industry networks, is questionable. This issue is particularly problematic for those using live cases with large undergraduate classes, where sourcing of several companies may be necessary.

The final challenge of note that emerged from the study was that of a perceived lack of sharing of knowledge and practice on EL within the business school. Respondents commented on the absence of forums that would enable learning about EL and also prevent those new to the pedagogy from having to 'reinvent the wheel'. Oliver (2007) points out that a reluctance

to share practice impacts both novice and experienced teachers saying, that "teachers who recognise that they may be using limited forms of learning activity have no easy way to discover alternative forms and teachers who have discovered effective and powerful ways to engage their learners are likewise, limited in their capacities to share their knowledge with other teachers" (p.8).

This discussion of the challenges educators associate with EL has implications for its current and future use in business education. If EL is perceived as a challenging, resource-intensive pedagogy necessitating greater time commitments with little concomitant reward, there is a danger that educators will opt out of using the pedagogy and revert to teaching strategies that are perceived to be less engaging but also less demanding. The examples of EL in this study demonstrated a breadth of teaching approaches designed to develop deep and active learning as well as contribute to learners' attainment of key transferable business skills. It would be unfortunate if opportunities for student learning through this pedagogy were diminished due to constraints around its implementation.

The discussion of EL in this research study is not complete without a conclusion on whether the findings indicated a possible shadow structure in EL in business education.

6.3 Reflection as a Shadow Structure in Undergraduate EL Education

A shadow structure has been described as an absent pedagogy, that which is not taught or only weakly exemplified in a teaching approach (Shulman, 2005a). The notion of a shadow structure has not received much attention in the literature, and yet, it is an important aspect to consider in this evaluation of EL. In Chapter Three, from the literature on reflection in contemporary business education, doubts emerged about the way in which reflection might be implemented in EL. Concerns around its partial implementation or even possible omission from EL led to the question being posed as to whether reflection, as enacted in contemporary EL, might represent a shadow structure. The interview data showed that reflection is a part of EL in over 80% of the activities described in this study, therefore refuting the suggestion that reflection is "not widely used" in business education (Ferguson *et al*., 2016, p. 2). The study findings do, however, beg the question as to why reflection was not a part of all EL activities. EL theory positions reflection as an integral component that is necessary to connect

learning to experience. Where reflection was omitted, responses suggest that educators were aware of its role in EL but chose not to include it (see Section 5.3.4. in Chapter Five). It could be argued that in some instances of EL in business education, the 'hands-on' experience aspect of EL is prioritised over the 'minds-on' reflection element (Young, 2002).

It is important to note that the presence of reflection alone does not mean that reflection, as currently implemented, is optimising student learning in EL. In considering the possibility of a shadow structure, it is necessary to look more closely at the way in which reflective learning is facilitated and supported in EL. Contemporary research on reflection indicates that while individual reflection can result in personal insights, the social interaction and dialogue of shared reflection can stimulate greater depth of learning (e.g., Miller and Maellero, 2016). In this study, those respondents teaching smaller classes (typically at postgraduate level) reported teaching and learning practices where in-class discussions, under the guidance of the educator, allowed students to share their understanding of the EL experience, ask questions and examine individual and collective assumptions. Facilitating this type of reflective learning was more difficult with larger classes (typically at undergraduate level) and in traditional lecture halls, despite evidence of efforts by educators to work around these constraints. The reality is, as noted by Hedberg, that the reinforcement of shared learning "takes meaningful class time" (2011, p. 18), and attempting to do this with large classes can impose "an impractical workload on lecturers" (Perusso *et al.*, 2019, p. 9).

The outcome of such constraints is demonstrated in this study in EL with undergraduate students, where it appears shared reflection occurs chiefly through student interactions in group EL projects, and which take place mostly outside the classroom. This type of interaction has a role in facilitating reflective thinking, but Peltier *et al*. point out that learning in EL also requires 'instructor-to-student' exchanges (2005, p. 255). The educator, as a knowledgeable expert, has a central role to perform in guiding and developing students' capacities to learn from experience.

The role of the educator is particularly important in the promotion of critical reflection, which, as Grey (2007) notes, must be "a social act of collective empowerment if it is to move beyond personal to social transformation" (p. 497). Viewing EL through the lens of signature

pedagogies, a lack of opportunities for collective reflection could make a substantial difference in the professional formation of business graduates. Shulman states that pedagogies of formation that influence the values and characters of learners are realised when "experiences are interactive rather than individual" (2005a, p. 58), and shared reflection allows for key features of engagement, such as visibility and accountability, to be enacted publicly. It could also be argued that greater levels of ambiguity could be incorporated into EL activities at undergraduate level if shared and guided reflection could be used to manage student processing of this aspect of experiential content. The management of anxiety caused by accountability and ambiguity is, according to Shulman, largely the responsibility of the educator but is "also a responsibility of the collective...[as] students must learn how to simultaneously challenge and support each other's thinking" (2005b, p. 22).

In learning situations where guided dialogic reflection is not feasible due to large class sizes, the EL experience may be suboptimal, and in the absence of the educator as a mediator, student learning from experience may be insubstantial, incorrect, or even misleading (Perusso *et al.,* 2019; Wright *et al.,* 2018). Therefore, the findings from this study suggest that in this business school, guided collective reflection is only weakly exemplified in EL at undergraduate level and therefore represents a shadow structure of the pedagogy. Suggestions for addressing this weakness are proposed in the recommendations.

In Chapter Two, an initial conceptual framework was proposed to facilitate the examination of EL through the lens of signature pedagogies. In Section 6.4 below, the adoption of this approach and the conclusions drawn from its use in this study are now evaluated.

6.4. Signature Pedagogies As A Framework For Exploring EL

6.4.1 Rationale for Adoption of the Signature Pedagogies Framework

A number of factors were influential in my adoption of signature pedagogies as a framework to examine EL. I wanted to conduct research that went beyond an audit of faculty awareness and use of EL, and I was interested in gaining a deeper understanding of how educators designed and delivered EL in their modules. I was influenced by Brown and Duguid's contention that in an organisation, "knowledge runs...on rails laid by practice" and that "tacit knowledge is required to make explicit knowledge usefully tradable or mobile" (2001, p. 204).

This influenced my decision to focus on the educator rather than the student experience of EL, and this was motivated further by Dean *et al*.'s contention that empirical research that described and shared educators "day-to-day enactment of experiential teaching practice" was needed to understand what was actually happening in EL in business education (2020, p. 580).

My first encounter with signature pedagogies came from an article by Arnold and Mundy (2020), which presented a praxis model of pedagogy in teacher education. Further reading of some of Shulman's key writings (2005a; 2005b; 2005c; 2008) and of research where the concept had been applied in diverse disciplines provided me with the impetus to investigate its suitability as a lens through which to explore EL. In reading about signature pedagogies, I was particularly interested in Shulman's notion that the goal of professional education was to develop habits of the head, hand and heart, a perspective that resonates with arguments for contemporary business education to adopt a more holistic approach that attempts to balance intellectual, technical, and moral dimensions (Kosnik *et al.,* 2013; Lock *et al*., 2018). Recent research by McLain (2021), where the signature pedagogies concept was used to explore design and technology education, was also influential, as he concluded that as a framework, the concept had the potential to give educators knowledge and insight that could be used "to engage with disciplinary pedagogical routines; to understand and promote, or to challenge and change them" (McLain, 2021, p. 1631).

6.4.2 Signature Pedagogies as a Framework for Pedagogical Research

McLain's assertion that signature pedagogies provide a "framework" that educators can use to examine pedagogy (2021, p. 1631) is somewhat misleading. As discussed in Chapter Two, Shulman's articulation of the concept of signature pedagogies (2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2008) is not easy for researchers to interpret. His philosophy is complex, multi-layered, and, at times, obtuse in the manner in which it is presented, and this is marked by the dizzying array of terms he uses to describe the concept. Most problematically, he provides little guidance on the relationship between the key elements of structures, features, and habits. Khoo and Kan (2020) attempt to synthesise what they describe as "the abstract and multifaceted nature of the concept" (p. 484), and, based on a conceptual analysis of journal papers, propose a signature pedagogy ontology. However, they admit that the "abstractness and ambiguity" (p.

484) in Shulman's writings renders comparison of signature pedagogies across professions challenging and also makes it difficult to use the concept as a framework for professional education programme design. It is therefore unsurprising that, despite over twenty years of research on signature pedagogies, no single framework or model of the concept has emerged in common usage.

On first reading, Shulman's concept appears relatively straight-forward, viz., signature pedagogies are the distinctive teaching approaches used in professional education, and they allow for examination of a pedagogy at three different levels or structures. Most researchers using signature pedagogies as a framework focus primarily on this structural dimension of the concept (e.g., Jones, 2018; Valley *et al.,* 2017; Varga-Atkins, 2020). However, Shulman also says that signature pedagogies are pedagogies of uncertainty, engagement and formation because they display key features such as uncertainty, surprise, emotion, visibility, accountability, and public performance. Shulman does not articulate a precise relationship between these features and structures, instead simply saying that "in spite of the differences among their surface structures, signature pedagogies also share a set of common features" (2005a, p. 56). For researchers attempting to operationalise the concept, it is not clear at what level features impact pedagogy or how their presence or otherwise should be interpreted.

6.4.3 Development of the Conceptual Framework for the Study

In developing a conceptual framework for this study, the goal was to find an approach that would facilitate an in-depth examination of EL in business education. The various approaches taken by researchers who applied signature pedagogies in areas such as health and teacher education were considered, but none of these provided what could be considered an 'off the shelf' model or fully addressed the relationship between structures and features. Two approaches were influential in developing the conceptual framework used for this study. Baumann's (2010) conceptualisation which is used in a study of music education, provided some insights on hypothesised relationships, although his inclusion of two new categories (forms and qualities) adds to an already crowded signature pedagogies' lexicon.

Tan's (2019) work on teacher education was also helpful, as she considers the concept in terms of both structures and features. Her conceptualisation of structures follows the

standard interpretation (surface, deep and implicit), but her interpretation of features was interesting. She makes no mention of Shulman's features of pervasiveness, routinization, or temporal patterns and concentrates instead on the three categories of pedagogies of uncertainty, engagement, and formation, which she describes as "kinds of signature pedagogies" (p. 228). She provides a model showing her interpretation of the relationship between structures and these features (see Appendix A).

While I agree with Tan's overarching hypothesis that "a sound professional pedagogy in [teacher] education should include and integrate all three dimensions of structures – surface, deep and implicit – and three kinds of signature pedagogies – uncertainty, engagement and formation" (p. 228), her model does not include all the features identified by Shulman, and the relationship between structures and features is not clearly stated.

In Chapter Two, the conceptual framework for this study was outlined, stating that this exploration of EL would focus primarily on the structural dimensions, but at each structural level, the features which might relate most closely to that structure would also be considered. The rationale for this approach was based on Shulman's contention (2005b) that signature pedagogies are pedagogies of uncertainty, engagement and formation, and therefore any exploration of EL needs to seek evidence (or lack thereof) of the features associated with each of these pedagogies. The adoption this approach was also motivated by a desire to see if an examination of structures with associated features could provide a more workable framework for applying the concept of signature pedagogies.

Following Eisenhart's contention that in a conceptual framework, the researcher proposes "the concepts chosen for investigation or interpretation, and any anticipated relationships among them" (1991, p. 209), the following hypothesised relationships between structures and features were proposed in Chapter Two:

- Pervasiveness, routinization, and temporal pattern are largely operational features and therefore appear to relate most closely to the surface structure.
- Pedagogies of uncertainty and engagement encompass features such as uncertainty, visibility, accountability, collaboration, and public performance. The inclusion or

absence of these features in EL reflect educator assumptions about teaching and learning and therefore appear to pertain most closely to the deep structure.

- Pedagogies of formation represent the moral dimension of a discipline, and educator beliefs about professional values and identity, and thus values, attitudes and dispositions were hypothesised to relate to the implicit structure.

6.4.4 Findings from the Application of the Conceptual Framework

From an analysis of the findings using this framework, the hypothesised relationships were largely found to be reliable.

Features associated with surface structure:

- The pervasiveness of EL was determined by the number of examples of EL activities provided by respondents. Routinization was more difficult to ascertain without access to specific module information e.g., course outlines, assignment instructions. However, from the descriptions provided by respondents, discernable patterns in EL formats and practice were noted in most EL activities (case studies, live cases, role plays, simulations, and guest speakers), thus linking routinization to the surface structure. Finally, the discussion on the temporal pattern was based on educators' reports of both the cohort (undergraduate or postgraduate) and year (1st, 2nd or Final) in which their EL activity occurred. Thus, all of these features related strongly to the surface structure.

Features associated with the deep structure:

- Pedagogies of uncertainty refer to what Hyland and Kilcommins call the "natural habitat of professionals, a world of uncertainty where they will be required to think and act on their feet" (2009, p. 31). Educators assumptions about the role of uncertainty influence the way in which they choose and design their EL activities. For example, from the study, it was clear that postgraduate educators valued this trait and consequently chose EL activities where ambiguity was higher (e.g., live cases, applied projects, complex case studies) over structured exercises or simulations where ambiguity was lower. Similarly, they designed their EL activities to be less structured, allowing students to interpret the activity requirements and deliverables for

themselves. Those who valued ambiguity also placed emphasis on class discussions, where students had to be mentally agile when presenting recommendations or answering questions.

- Pedagogies of engagement encompass features such as visibility, accountability, collaboration, and public performance. Like pedagogies of uncertainty, respondents' choices on the EL method and format reflect their beliefs about the importance (or not) of these features. Respondents who valued visibility and accountability chose EL methods where discussion and shared reflection were central components in their designs. Similarly, those who placed importance on public performance deliberately included student presentations as part of live cases and applied projects. Thus, uncertainty and engagement are manifested in the EL activity that is observable in the surface structure, but the decision on their absence or inclusion comes from educator assumptions about knowledge and know-how in the deep structure.

Features associated with the implicit structure

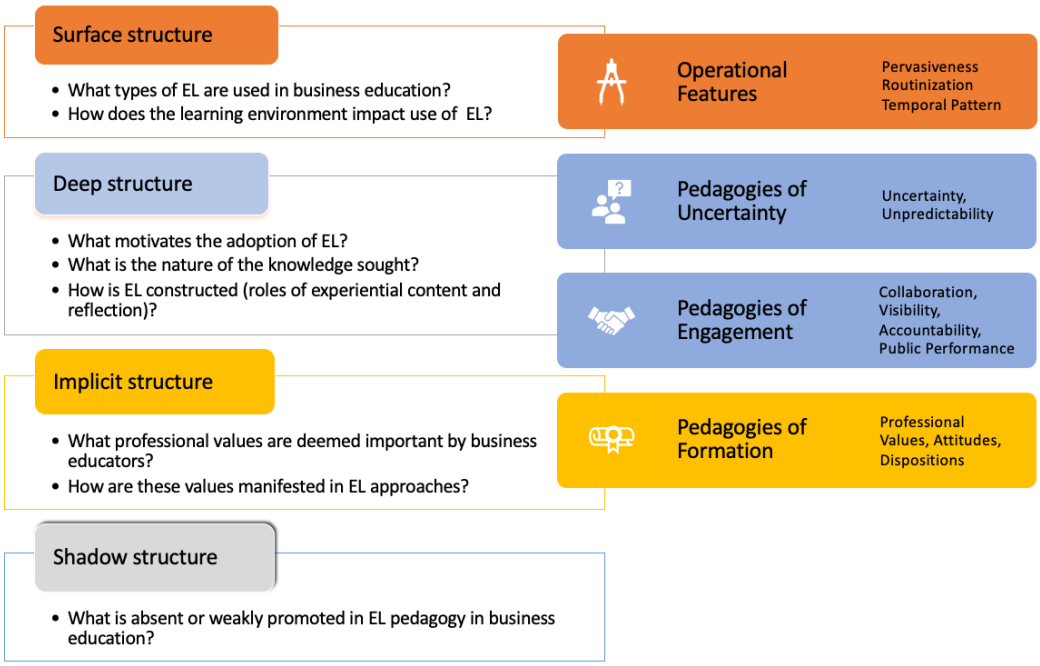
- Signature pedagogies are pedagogies of formation, as students are taught not just how to think and perform like professionals but also how to act with integrity. From the study, it was evident that where educators had strong beliefs about the professional values of their disciplines, this influenced the choice of EL method (e.g., a live case with a societal focus; guest speakers from the non-profit sector), as well as aspects of the activity (e.g., case studies on ethical issues or an applied project with a sustainability focus).

Overall, I believe that the approach taken, which facilitated the interplay between structures and features, contributed to a richer depiction of educator beliefs and actions on EL in business education. The examination of EL through the lens of *both* structures and features provided a deeper and more insightful set of findings on EL than would have been achieved from examining structures or features alone.

Therefore, from application of this approach, a revised conceptual framework for exploring EL can be proposed (Figure 6.1). In this framework, structures and features are considered *concurrently* to interrogate the pedagogy. The associated elements are colour-coded to

illustrate this in Figure 6.1. In using the framework to examine EL, the researcher asks questions to uncover educator assumptions and actions in the structural dimensions, while at the same time, looking for signs of features relevant to each structure. For example, when examining the surface structure and features, the researcher seeks information on EL methods, environment and the operational features of pervasiveness, routinization and temporal pattern. When examining the deep structure, questions are posed on motivation, nature of knowledge sought and method of construction. At the same time, the researcher seeks to uncover the presence or absence of pedagogies of uncertainty and engagement. Similarly, pedagogies of formation are explored in tandem with questions on professional values, to uncover the implicit structure. Researchers should also consider the possibility of a shadow structure, where the pedagogy is weak or absently promoted. The application of the signature pedagogies concept in this way provides a working framework that facilitates an in-depth exploration of EL as a pedagogy.

Figure 6.1 Revised Signature Pedagogies Framework



6.5 Limitations Of The Study

There are a number of potential limitations associated with this study. Firstly, this is a small study of educators in one business school, and the accounts of EL reported may not be representative of the experiences of educators in other HE business environments. However,

the cross-disciplinary nature of the participants within the study does provide an interdisciplinary insight into teaching and learning practices. Secondly, there are possible limitations related to the self-selecting nature of the sample. The educators who chose to take part may have greater interest or experience in the study's topic than others, and this should be considered when assessing the transferability of the findings. This study also relied primarily on interviews as the main data source, and this has implications for triangulation and construct validity. However, this limitation is mitigated to some extent by the cross-disciplinary nature of the study, with data sources representing the perspectives of different categories of respondents.

The timing of the data collection for this thesis represented an additional challenge as the interviews took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, when social distancing measures and restrictions on in-person interactions were in place. While ethical approval for Zoom interviews had already been granted, this approach introduced potential limitations as the absence of physical presence might have influenced the dynamics of communication and rapport between the researcher and respondents. However, as discussed in Chapter Four, the nature of the information collected remained robust, reliable and trustworthy, as the virtual setting did not appear to hinder the depth of responses or the quality of information shared by participants. Zoom provides recording facilities that, arguably, are less intrusive than what would be required in a face-to-face setting. The researcher's ability to establish rapport, coupled with the participants' familiarity with the platform, contributed to a conducive environment for open and candid dialogue.

Finally, the ethical implications of the status of the researcher as an insider-researcher must be acknowledged as a possible limitation. The particular responsibilities associated with this position were paramount throughout the data collection and analysis processes, and every effort was made to ensure respondents' experiences were reported authentically and accurately. It is worth noting that the insider research status in this thesis actually played a useful role in mitigating possible effects associated with online interviewing. By virtue of being an insider, the researcher already had established relationships with most participants, which facilitated a more natural and open exchange of information. While this insider advantage proved beneficial, it is important to acknowledge the potential influence of

personal biases. To address this limitation, the researcher engaged in ongoing critical self-reflection and incorporated methods such as member checking to ensure the research maintained credibility and objectivity.

6.6 Recommendations

From the findings in this study, three sets of recommendations are now proposed. The first two relate to the implementation of EL in business education, and the third is a recommendation for the application of the signature pedagogies framework in module and curriculum planning.

6.6.1 Recommendations for Business School Support for EL

From the interviews with educators in this business school, a picture of EL emerges, which demonstrates high levels of educator creativity and commitment to delivering this pedagogy at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels of education. However, it was also apparent that educators experienced frustration at times in their efforts to implement this pedagogy. Facilitating EL with large classes emerged as a particular concern for respondents, a problem that pertained largely to those teaching at undergraduate level. Large classes pose challenges for both educators and students, and this is exacerbated when educators use active learning approaches such as EL (Dean and Wright, 2017). Concerns about large classes are not unique to this business school, and it is recognised there is no magic wand to resolve the problems of large classes in tertiary education (Maringe and Sing, 2014). The study presented several examples of EL use in high-enrolment classes but also educators' views that implementation of this pedagogy could be improved with additional institutional support and the allocation of appropriate resources. The four recommendations that follow are all based on the findings from this case study and are addressed to business school leadership.

6.6.1.1 Instituting a Sequenced and Balanced Portfolio of EL at Undergraduate Level

Shulman makes the claim that "if you want people to develop habits of mind, hand and heart that will be with them for all their lives, things that happen once are not habit forming; those things that form habits are those that are done persistently" (2008, p. 17). In this business school, it was not possible to discern a distinct temporal pattern for EL in undergraduate education. Consideration of curriculum sequencing (O'Neill *et al.,* 2013), which would

facilitate EL occurring in a more comprehensive and systematic manner, could be of great benefit to both educators and students. Indeed, the benefits of attempting to formally institute what Shulman calls “a balanced and sequenced portfolio” (2005a,p. 55) for EL both within and across programmes could have far-reaching implications for the professional formation of business graduates. In research on professional identity development in business education, Ewing and Ewing (2017) warn that positioning EL at the end of a degree may be too late for the benefits to be realised. They say that the “late stage appearance of experiential methods may be valued by advanced students nearing graduation as more “real”. However, application at this point in a student's academic career is unlikely to be a strong driver of identity standard change” (p. 142). According to these authors, the development of graduates with a ‘work-ready’ identity requires earlier introduction of EL into curricula and multiple opportunities for learning through this pedagogy.

Therefore, this recommendation is for business school leadership to consider a formal approach to sequencing EL within undergraduate programmes. A formal approach could incorporate incremental levels of complexity and a mix of EL methods as learners progress through a degree programme. The EL continuum suggested by Hamilton and Klebba (2011) and shown in Figure 4.3 could be used to integrate a range of EL activities at different points of the curriculum. For example, a review of the skills and knowledge demanded by work placement employers could be used to inform the types of EL activities in the year prior to students commencing a work placement. Mindful of Ewing and Ewing’s advice above, opportunities for students to engage with real companies (e.g., through various forms of live or applied projects) should be incorporated at all stages throughout a programme. A capstone EL project that integrates learning from several modules could be the culmination of this systematic approach to EL in undergraduate business education. A planned approach to EL within a curriculum could provide learners with a progressive and meaningful learning journey where they have multiple opportunities to build their theoretical knowledge, develop practical skills and connect their learning to real-world business contexts.

6.6.1.2 Support for Upskilling of EL Educators

As identified in Chapter Three, the successful implementation of EL may be impeded by the limited pedagogic training received by most HE educators (Bell and Bell, 2020). The findings

from this study revealed that most educators had limited formal teacher training and effectively learned how to teach on the job. While all educators would have had exposure to lecturing when they were students, in this study, it emerged that this was not the case for EL. The literature suggests that EL requires "a unique set of teaching skills" (Dean *et al*., 2020, p. 572), and it is worth noting how EL teaching differs from other teaching approaches.

- In EL, the educator's role is less that of a traditional instructor and more that of a mentor and cheerleader (Wurdinger, 2005). In classrooms where EL is the main teaching approach, the educator is very much the guide on the side and not the sage on the stage.
- The management of experiential content in EL requires educators to have a clear understanding of the varying roles that realism, complexity and ambiguity can play in their EL activities. The subsequent decisions will influence the degree of reality in the learning experience, the amount of scaffolding that is required to support the learning process, and the extent to which students are exposed to ambiguity and complexity through the chosen EL method (Hamilton and Klebba, 2011).
- When managing classroom engagement and reflection in EL, educators have to ensure a psychologically safe environment where learners can participate and share information with their lecturer and fellow students (Cajiao and Burke, 2016). Researchers also suggest that the role of emotion should be recognised and incorporated in EL, thereby tasking educators to manage a very challenging pedagogical environment (McKeen *et al.,* 2016).
- EL methods should include opportunities for reflection, so educators must have skills in supporting, training and assessing reflective learning (Perusso *et al.,* 2019).
- Finally, educators must provide timely and relevant feedback throughout the activity in order to achieve the learning outcomes from EL (McKeen *et al.,* 2016) and to reduce the levels of student anxiety that may arise from a non-traditional teaching method (Black *et al.,* 2021).

This list makes it clear that effective implementation of EL makes considerable demands on educators' pedagogic knowledge and competence. Yet, the evidence from this case study is

that most EL practitioners have acquired their knowledge of the pedagogy through self-study and trial and error of different approaches in their classrooms. There is much that individual educators can do to improve their knowledge of the pedagogy e.g., engagement with academic literature, attendance at educational conferences, or finding like-minded colleagues to share information and techniques. However, there is a compelling case for institutional support for a professional qualification in EL that could be delivered as continuous professional development (CPD) for both experienced and novice EL educators. This course could be developed and taught by experienced academic staff who, in addition to addressing the requirements listed above, could also assist learners in utilising technology to support EL and in exploring the wide range of activities that fall under the umbrella of EL. The course could be delivered remotely, but Donnelly (2016) makes a convincing argument for this type of CPD to take place in a space where lecturers can talk to colleagues about their teaching, engage with academic literature, and "make explicit their theories about teaching, learning, the curriculum and the students they are teaching" (p. 3). Educators who complete the course could attain a university micro-credential or digital badge, or the course could even be developed as a module that contributes towards a professional certificate in HE teaching and learning. Dean *et al.* (2020) argue that the increasing use of EL in business education necessitates the development of experiential teaching practitioners as an identity construct. Formal training that certifies educator competence in EL teaching, facilitation and methods would be a good first step towards this goal.

6.6.1.3 Business School Support for Industry Engagement

According to the findings, respondents in this study placed considerable emphasis on the importance of realism in their EL activities, and in many cases, realism was provided through direct student interaction with business practitioners and companies. For example, in applied projects, business executives acted as 'dragons' to quiz students on their business plans, and industry managers judged posters of market feasibility projects. Realism is purported to be highest in the live case method of EL, and in this study, nine examples were provided of student-industry collaborations where teams were tasked with developing business strategies for real companies and organisations.

While the level of industry engagement reported in this study is commendable, the management of this task placed significant demands on educators' time and personal resources. In line with the challenges cited by McKeen *et al.* (2019), respondents reported difficulties in finding appropriate industry contacts, and the sourcing of clients for live projects (an annual task) was especially problematic. Most respondents reported that they relied on their own contact networks, but this is a resource that could quickly become depleted. Also, as noted by Lopez and Lee (2005), some organisations are more suitable for class projects than others, so educators had to allocate time to screening potential clients to ensure that expectations and project deliverables were realistic. According to the study findings, management of these tasks can be stressful even for experienced educators and may even cause some to avoid EL with high levels of industry engagement. The benefits students gain from live cases are well documented (e.g., Elam and Spotts, 2004; Grassberger and Wilder, 2015), so it would be unfortunate if this type of EL is only undertaken sporadically by a few determined and committed educators. As suggested by Fletcher-Brown *et al.* (2014), institutional support in the form of strong leadership and buy-in from university management can contribute significantly to the successful integration of external stakeholders in EL pedagogies.

Industry engagement benefits not only students but also HE institutions and the organisations that participate in engagement activities. Therefore, it is recommended that industry engagement be coordinated and managed at the business school level rather than the ad hoc approach evident from this study, where it is largely left to individual academics. As well as placing considerable demands on individuals, the current setup means that there is no centralised oversight of the number and nature of external industry interactions taking place in the school. While this is not uncommon in Irish HE (Sheridan *et al.*, 2012), the absence of a strategically managed, school-level approach impedes more widespread adoption and use of EL methods that rely on industry engagement. The current situation can be equally frustrating for external stakeholders who wish to build stronger ties with HE institutions. From the findings in this study, many of the client organisations involved in live cases were SMEs, and research indicates that small firms find it difficult to establish relationships with universities due to limited knowledge on how to access potential resources and partnerships (Pereira and Franco, 2021). Larger organisations are better able to establish relationships, but multiple

points of contact with a university may exist, thus reducing the benefits that might accrue from a more integrated approach.

As a first step towards school-level management of industry engagement, it is recommended that all external interactions be collated using some form of customer relationship management (CRM) system, which would provide an overview of current contacts and relationships. The implementation of such a database would require buy-in from educators to build trust and share information, so the value and rewards from such a system would have to be clearly demonstrated. For EL educators, one immediate benefit would be less time spent on solo marketing efforts, and instead, recruitment of new partners could be part of the ongoing marketing efforts of the school and woven regularly into diverse school communication channels such as social media, public relations, and advertising (Shanahan *et al.,* 2019). This approach could provide a pipeline of potential client organisations for live cases, as well as practitioner contacts for guest speaker seminars and applied projects.

A dedicated industry engagement function in the school could assist not just with the recruitment of external partners but also with the practical management of their engagement in EL activities. This could involve screening to ascertain suitability for different EL modules, as well as looking after arrangements for physical client visits to classrooms (e.g., campus directions, carpark access, provision of refreshments) and managing post-visit relationships. Of interest from the findings in this study were the comments from three educators who all mentioned the same "small thing', i.e., that they would appreciate greater university acknowledgement of the time and engagement given by external practitioners and organisations in EL activities. This would not have to be a costly initiative, as even a 'thank you' email from the Dean could be helpful in building and encouraging relationships. The benefits of a school-level industry engagement function could provide the impetus for a strategic approach to embedding different types of EL throughout programmes, thus ensuring that students are exposed to a variety of approaches as they progress through their degrees.

6.6.1.4 Support for Routinization of EL Group Work and Reflection

From the study findings, there is an opportunity for institutional support that would help to routinize elements of student learning that are central to most EL methods. Two areas in

particular could benefit from a transfer of responsibility from the individual educator to the level of the school, namely, training for students on working in groups and guidance on reflection and reflective writing.

It is evident from this study that collaborative learning in the form of group work figures prominently in EL designs at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The benefits of group work are well documented (e.g., Davies, 2009), but it has also been noted that collaborative learning can be challenging for students if there are discrepancies in attitudes and motivations between group members (Järvenoja *et al.,* 2019). As observed by Oakley *et al.* (2004), students need explicit guidance to help them deal with the various logistical and interpersonal problems that are part of collaborative learning. Many EL educators provide such guidance, but in doing so, each one has to individually navigate the vast literature on teamwork to put together 'ground rules' for the operation of groups in their EL activities. Guidelines that are developed and delivered at the school or programme level could provide novice and experienced educators with an agreed-upon framework that could be used to facilitate group work processes across all modules. This would ensure that students are exposed to a consistent set of principles, tools and resources, irrespective of the EL method. Teamwork training could also provide students with coaching on how to give and receive peer feedback in preparation for using this skill in EL environments.

The second area where support at the school level could help EL implementation is around guidance and access to resources for reflective learning. There is considerable agreement in the education literature that reflection is not an innate skill and that students require support to become reflective practitioners (e.g., Perusso *et al.,* 2019). From the interviews, a very mixed picture emerged in terms of supporting reflection as part of EL activities. This diversity in reflection training and support could result in many students only partially engaging with reflection or, indeed, never fully realising the benefits of reflecting on experience. In addition, the lack of a programme wide approach means that over the course of a degree, students may sit through several 'how to reflect' classes or be directed to a multitude of perhaps conflicting resources on reflective learning and writing.

Therefore, the first part of this recommendation is that the school should engage an expert in reflection to develop a comprehensive set of resources that would be made available to both staff and students. This could be managed through the university's teaching enhancement office or contracted to an external provider. Secondly, the research findings indicated that some educators struggled with the challenge of teaching reflection as well as with specific aspects such as assessing and grading students' reflective writing. Just three respondents reported having undertaken courses to address this perceived lack of knowledge. Therefore, a further recommendation is that staff and students should be offered workshops in reflection that are facilitated and managed at the school or programme level. Training for staff could be run internally or externally via courses offered by organisations like the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning. Educator training on reflection should be comprehensive and include guidance on how to use reflective learning for both formative and summative assessment, how to facilitate collective as well as private reflection, and how to develop opportunities to integrate critical reflection into EL activities. Increasing educators' knowledge and confidence around reflection could help to elevate its role in EL as well as expand educators' repertoire on its use in EL in business education.

Training for students in reflection and reflective writing could be a compulsory element of each programme. Such an approach is already employed in many education and health science programmes (Bharuthrum, 2018) but is far less common in business education, particularly at undergraduate level. It could take the form of workshops at the start of each academic year where students are given clear guidelines on the expectations of reflective tasks, as well as opportunities for shared reflection and feedback on reflective writing. At postgraduate level, workshops on reflection could be provided as part of student induction at the commencement of programmes.

As outlined in these recommendations, routinization of both group work and reflection could have benefits for both EL educators and learners. Educators would have to spend less time on the instruction and management of both elements, thus allowing more time to be devoted to subject content and maximising learning from experience. Students would have a common understanding of what is expected of them as EL participants, learning that they could take with them from course to course.

6.6.2 Recommendations For EL Educators

The preceding recommendations were addressed to business school leadership, who have responsibility and control over resources that could facilitate EL practices. In this section, the focus is on EL educators, and there are recommendations on the sharing of EL practice and the incorporation of diverse reflective learning approaches into EL methods.

6.6.2.1 Sharing of EL Practice

The limited sharing of practice among educators reported in this study is concerning but largely unsurprising. Dean *et al.* (2020) describe an approach to HE teaching that "takes place within a closed, private environment [that creates] a barrier to interactions among educators" (p. 574). As a member of staff in the business school where this study took place, I had only very limited knowledge prior to starting the study on who else was using EL and even less information on the methods that were being employed. From my experience, the limited sharing of practice does not reflect a lack of collegiality but rather an absence of suitable forums where sharing of practice could take place. In theory, the sharing of module information and teaching methods should fall under the auspices of each degree's programme board, which is responsible for oversight of programme learning goals and student performance. In practice, however, the biannual board meetings are concerned more with programme content, academic structures, and module assessment methods than with the specific pedagogies that are used in each module.

It is clear from the enthusiastic response to the call for participants in this research study that educators are willing to share their knowledge and experiences of EL. For some, apart from informal chats over coffee, the interview that took place was the first time they had shared their teaching philosophy in such detail with another member of staff, a finding that reinforces the prevailing notion of academics operating in isolation and pursuing individualised practice (Cotter *et al.,* 2017). However, it is widely recognised that there are significant benefits that can accrue from educators sharing pedagogical knowledge and experiences of practice (Donnelly, 2017), and in some institutions, communities of practice (CoPs) provide a forum for this type of collaboration. There have been calls for the development of specific EL communities of practice in business schools where training and support for the pedagogy can be facilitated, as well as the establishment of community-based

norms and codes of conduct for EL (Dean *et al.,* 2020; Agogue and Robinson, 2020). An EL CoP in this business school could serve as a means for more experienced practitioners to pass on their knowledge and expertise to novice EL educators. Such a forum could provide a vehicle for showcasing innovative EL practices, which could then be disseminated more widely through the school's social media and other marketing channels. An EL CoP could also allow educators to share the learning from their EL experiences that did not go well, a point reiterated by Edelson *et al.* (2019), who contend that both successes and failures with EL can be valuable learning opportunities. It is recognised that the development of an EL CoP in this business school is highly dependent on staff willingness to engage with colleagues and share experiences. However, it could also be supported by business school leadership through the provision of any resources that are deemed necessary to facilitate collaboration.

6.6.2.2 Enhancing Reflection in EL

The findings from this case study do not support the notion that reflection is neglected in EL in business education, but there are areas where reflective learning as part of EL could be enhanced. Firstly, educators should consider how their learning designs might extend the scope of reflection in EL to incorporate not only personal but also critical reflection. As issues related to social and ethical responsibility become more embedded in business education, this necessitates a shift in the nature and type of reflection emphasized by educators (Hibbert, 2012). It is recognised that stimulating critical reflection is more challenging in an undergraduate context, as students may lack the experience that would facilitate questioning of norms and personal assumptions. However, the reality is that most undergraduate students have work experience from part-time or summer employment, and while these may not be management roles, they still provide students with some exposure to the realities of management decision-making and the business environment. In the business school in this study, most of the undergraduate degrees offer a work placement in the third year, which means that most final-year students have relevant business experience that could be harnessed in critical reflective learning. Where students lack any relevant experience, Hibbert (2012) offers practical advice on introducing critical reflection into undergraduate teaching, including approaches for developing critical, reflexive dialogue and methods for exploring alternative worldviews.

A second recommendation for enhancing reflective learning is that educators should consider using some form of collaborative peer evaluation in their EL activities. Only five respondents in this research study reported using this method, a surprising outcome as Perusso *et al.* (2019) contend that 'learning from experience is incomplete without the involvement of peers" (p. 3). Peer evaluations can be used to develop not just reflective learning skills but also teamwork and accountability. This latter outcome has implications for professional formation, as producing and receiving peer feedback can help to develop key transferable professional skills (Ion *et al.,* 2019). The virtual learning environments used in many HE institutions have tools to facilitate peer feedback, but teaching assistance and advice from learning technologists may be necessary to fully utilise these approaches.

The final recommendation under this heading relates to practices that EL educators could consider to incorporate shared reflection in their modules, particularly those with large classes. From the findings of the study, the use of online forums emerged as a potential method for facilitating collective reflection with large classes. The educators using these forums reported good levels of engagement and that the asynchronous nature of the forums allowed students more time to reflect on their EL experience. It was also noted that this form of shared reflection accommodates diverse learning styles as students differ in their ability to engage in shared classroom discussions. Educators using this method could incorporate online learning principles from the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework into their learning designs (Garrison *et al.,* 1999), as this approach is based on collaborative inquiry and reflection in a learning community. Online forums can be an effective way to encourage student reflection and engagement, but educators need to be actively involved to facilitate the discussions (Guo *et al*., 2014). Therefore, the use of this method in large classes would require both technological and teaching assistance support.

6.6.3 Signature Pedagogies as a Framework for Pedagogic Design

The final recommendation emanating from this research is on the signature pedagogy concept itself and its potential in pedagogic design. As noted in Chapter Two, the limited number of studies utilising signature pedagogies in business research raised questions around its suitability as a lens for examining pedagogy. Having conducted research using the concept,

I believe that it has potential as a framework for guiding educators in module and curricular design.

In recent years, business education has been subjected to a barrage of criticism, with critics focusing variously on the content of business education (e.g., Alajoutsijärvi *et al*., 2015), on a perceived theory-application gap (e.g., James and Cassidy, 2018), and on a failure to engage with broader social and environmental issues (Snelson-Powell *et al.*, 2016). In the face of these issues, it is unsurprising that the long-standing debate on the status of business as a profession remains unresolved.

There are calls, however, for business schools to address these issues and to adopt a more holistic approach to education that delivers three distinct sources of value: academic value (business knowledge); professional value (business skills); and moral value (character) (Kosnik *et al.,* 2013). The question then arises as to how educators operationalise this advice to realise the goal of preparing students not just for successful business careers but also as professionals who demonstrate good judgement when faced with social and ethical dilemmas.

The concept of signature pedagogies could provide a framework to keep these issues front of mind and to help educators integrate knowledge, skills and moral values when designing modules and curricula. Tan (2019) expresses similar views, saying that "by embedding the surface, deep and implicit structures and the pedagogies of uncertainty, engagement and formation into the course design, the pre-service teachers benefit from a well-conceived and coherent module that harmonize values, skills and knowledge" (p. 239). While Tan is writing in the context of teacher training, I believe this suggestion is equally valid for business education.

So how would this work in practice? Based on the approach to signature pedagogies taken in this research study, Shulman's concepts of structures and features could provide a template for educators to examine their beliefs, assumptions, and practices. The overall goal of the exercise would be to stimulate educators' thinking about how the content and pedagogy of a module contribute to the development of habits of the mind, hand, and heart. The template shown in Table 6.1 starts with the implicit structure and poses questions for the educator to consider on professional values and societal responsibilities. Mindful that the deep structure

is essential to underpin the surface structure, this section would seek to uncover educator assumptions about the rationale for pedagogical decisions, methods of knowledge construction, competencies sought, as well as educator beliefs on the features inherent in pedagogies of uncertainty and engagement. Holdsworth and Hegarty (2016) claim that changes in educational practices will only occur "if academics are able to recognise and reflect on the issues embedded in their own practice, and are then able to explore new and alternative approaches" (p. 177). By starting with the implicit and deep structures, the educator is better placed to make decisions on specific teaching methods (surface structure) and to make changes if necessary.

Table 6.1 Template for Module Evaluation (adapted from Shulman, 2005a; McLain, 2021)

Structures	Features	Questions	Habits
Implicit Structure	Pedagogies of Formation	What professional values do you think are important for graduates in your discipline? What responsibilities do business graduates have in terms of the societal impact of their professional behaviour?	**How does the content and pedagogy of your module build habits of mind, hand, and heart?**
Deep Structure	Rationale	What is the rationale for your pedagogic choice?	
	Knowledge construction	What are your priorities in constructing knowledge in your module?	
	Competencies	What competencies do you seek to develop and why?	
	Application of knowledge	Where in the module are opportunities for students to apply their knowledge?	
	Pedagogies of Engagement	What strategies do you use to encourage engagement with students? How does your teaching approach address student visibility, accountability, and interaction? Where in the module are opportunities for public performance of student learning?	
	Pedagogies of Uncertainty	Where and how do learners experience uncertainty in your module? How do you scaffold student learning? How do you support students to become resilient and independent learners?	
Surface Structure		What specific teaching methods do you think are most appropriate for your module and why? How does the learning environment for the module impact your teaching approach?	

I believe this approach could be applied in both new module development and in the redesign of existing modules. The framework has even more potential if used as a discursive tool to encourage professional dialogue as it provides educators with "opportunities to make the implicit explicit, visible and open to scrutiny" (McLain, 2021, P.1641). The application of the signature pedagogies concept in this way is endorsed by Dawson *et al.* (2011) where it was used to guide the design of a doctoral programme in educational technology:

> Using signature pedagogies as a framework forced us to debate and dialogue about our underlying beliefs and notions regarding professional practice degrees. Each program team should go through the process of identifying beliefs regarding how knowledge is acquired (deep structure), desired professional attitudes, values and dispositions (implicit structure) and the ways in which teaching and learning occurs (surface structure). (p. 9)

Disciplinary groups or members of a degree programme could use the template to frame discussions on professional values, pedagogical assumptions, and teaching and learning strategies.

6.7 Suggestions For Further Research

Within business education, there are a number of areas where further research on EL would be of value. This study took place in one business school, and it would be interesting to see how the findings compare to cross-faculty studies of EL in other HE institutions. Further research could extend the study to compare the implementation of EL in multiple schools or universities. Another avenue for future research would be to focus on specific business disciplines (e.g., finance, entrepreneurship, management) to explore how EL is implemented and experienced within each discipline. This targeted approach has the potential to provide insights into the unique challenges and benefits associated with different areas of business education. It would also be of value to examine the role of external stakeholders, such as industry partners, in the design and execution of EL initiatives.

When planning this research study, a decision was made to focus on the educators who use EL rather than students who learn through this approach. While educator support for the pedagogy is evident from the findings, there is a need for an equally in-depth exploration of students' experiences of EL. Two areas are of particular interest. Dean *et al.* (2020) have called for further research on the ethical norms of EL methods and the moral obligations of business

schools who prioritise this pedagogy. From the educators' perspectives, this did not emerge as a concern in this study, but it would be very interesting to gain a greater understanding of students' experiences related to this aspect of EL. One issue that did arise in this study was the possible resistance by some students to learning through EL pedagogies. Hunter-Jones (2012) identifies a formulaic learner type who dislikes the non-traditional nature of EL and sees it as an impediment to their academic success. Further research on this student perspective would be of value to EL educators and business school leaders.

Finally, there is considerable scope for further research on signature pedagogies both in business education as well as in other disciplines. This study adds to the very limited literature base on the concept of signature pedagogies within the business field, and it would be of value to see application of the concept both in specific business disciplines and in further cross-faculty studies.

The framework developed in this thesis presents refinements to Shulman's concept of signature pedagogies, particularly in terms of the relationships between structures and features. The relationship between the features of engagement, uncertainty, and formation and the surface, deep, and implicit structures is an intricate and dynamic one. Future researchers stand to gain much by considering these elements together, as opposed to focusing on features or structures in isolation. Researchers could use the framework to explore the synergies and interdependencies between the features and structures of signature pedagogies. This integrated approach offers a more nuanced understanding of educational practices and should provide valuable insights for educators seeking to optimise teaching and learning experiences. Understanding and leveraging these relationships can inform the intentional design of educational experiences that not only foster deep learning within the discipline, but also prepare students to navigate uncertainty and engage meaningfully with the values and practices of their chosen profession. Future research could also examine the suitability of this framework in other educational contexts, as well as investigate how specific elements contribute to the effectiveness and uniqueness of teaching and learning practices within different disciplines or professions.

In this thesis, the area of focus was on the perspectives of academics employing EL pedagogies. While educator perspectives are valuable, so too is the impact of signature pedagogies on student learning outcomes. Empirical research on factors such as academic performance, critical thinking and employability skills could be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of specific signature pedagogical approaches. In any discipline where a particular pedagogy is prioritised, it warrants examination of how participation in the signature pedagogy correlates with students' readiness for the workforce and which components of the teaching approach contribute most significantly to skill development. Longitudinal studies that assess the long-term impact of signature pedagogies on students' academic and professional development would be particularly interesting.

6.8 Conclusion

"Teaching and learning are not activities for the faint of heart" **(**Shulman, 2011, p. xii)

This exploration of EL provided revealing insights on the way in which EL is implemented in business education in one HE institution. By framing the exploration of EL through the lens of signature pedagogies, the findings from the study provided greater depth and richness to the understanding of how EL is enacted and how its implementation could be improved to ensure the full learning effects of this pedagogy are achieved.

It is clear that EL can be a powerful means of engaging learners in business education. Through hands-on experiences, real-world applications and reflective practices, EL can deepen learners' understanding of pedagogic content, enhance skill development and create an holistic learning experience. As EL moves from periphery to core in business education, faculty development and the provision of appropriate resources and support become critical for effective implementation.

The concept of signature pedagogies offers a promising framework for business educators. By utilising it in this study, it provided a comprehensive perspective on how EL is structured and delivered within one business school. As a tool for module and curriculum design, signature pedagogies could be utilised to create meaningful learning experiences that align with the goals and values of 21st-century business education. By adopting a signature

pedagogies approach, educators can ensure that students are well-prepared to navigate the complexities of the business world, contribute meaningfully to their professions, and make a positive impact on society.

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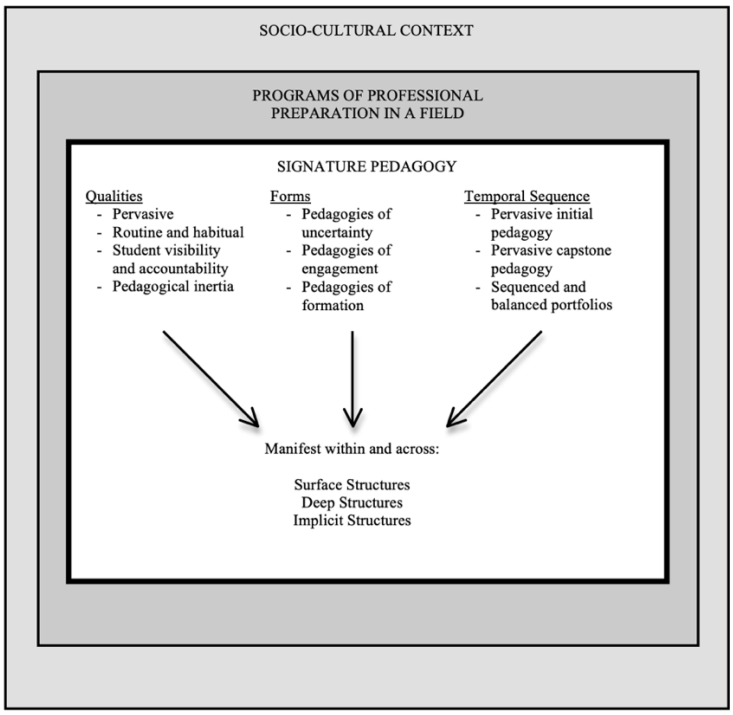
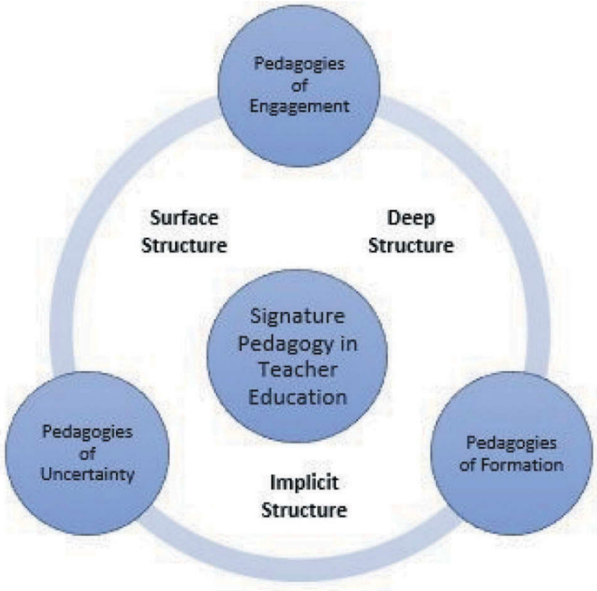
Appendix A

Representations of the Signature Pedagogies concept

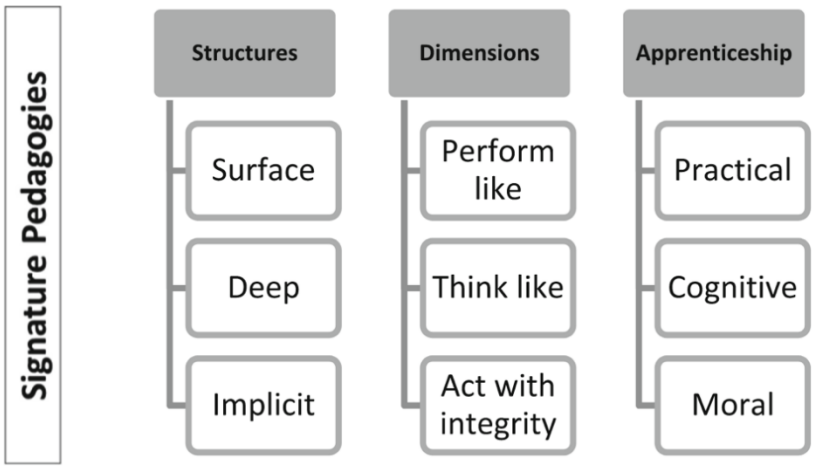
Bauman, 2010



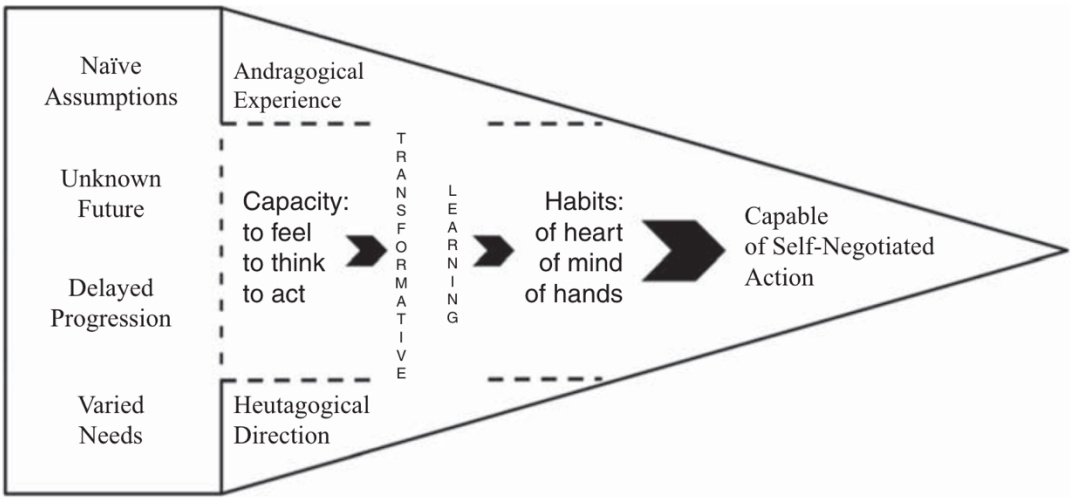
Tan, 2019



Conlon, 2022



Jones, 2018



Appendix B

Study Invitation Email

Dear [Name],

I am conducting research on staff members' use of Experiential Learning (EL) approaches in business education. This research is in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Professional Doctorate in Education in the DCU Institute of Education, and has been approved by DCU Research Ethics Committee.

For the purpose of this study, EL is considered to be an active learning pedagogy where students learn through reflective problem-solving by connecting theories and knowledge to real-world situations. EL activities may include, but are not limited to, case studies, consulting projects, practicums, simulations, role plays and applied projects.

If you currently use or have used EL activities in your modules, I would like to invite you to participate in the research study. Participation would require one interview focusing on your understanding and experience of teaching using EL approaches, and the perceived benefits and challenges associated with implementing this pedagogy. No personal data will be collected or processed for this study, and all comments and responses will be treated confidentially. The Plain Language Statement for this study is attached for your information.

Please contact me if you would be willing to take part in the research or if you would like further information.

Best wishes,
Joanne

Appendix C

Plain Language Statement

Plain Language Statement

Introduction

This research study seeks to explore Business School academics' experiences of experiential and reflective learning pedagogies. Experiential learning (EL) has been described as "effective learning that results from students being actively involved in an experience and then reflecting on that experience" (Elam and Spotts, 2004, p.50). From the literature, it is suggested that further research is needed to identify the types of EL activities that drive critical thinking development as well as the relationship between EL activities and reflective assessment and learning (Dahl *et al.*, 2018)

The research is being conducted in partial fulfilment of the Professional Doctorate in Education in the DCU Institute of Education. The principal investigator is Joanne Lynch from DCU Business School (joanne.lynch@dcu.ie) and the supervisors are Dr Zita Lysaght and Dr Francesca Lorenzi from the DCU Institute of Education. No personal data will be collected for this research project.

As you are an academic staff member who has experience of using experiential learning in your teaching practice, I would like to invite you to take part in this research study.

Participant involvement

Participants will be invited to take part in an interview which will last no more than one hour. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the interviews will take place via Zoom. The interviews will be conducted using the DCU licenced product and all Zoom security settings recommended by DCU will be enabled.

The interviews will be recorded. All comments and responses will be treated confidentially. The data obtained from your participation will not be used for any other purpose. The recordings will be securely stored and deleted following transcription and each participant's review of their interview. Anonymity will be provided by the replacement of personal names with participant numbers known only to the researcher. All data will be stored securely on the principal researcher's password-protected DCU Google drive. No one else will have access to the data which will be deleted two years following the planned submission of the thesis in June 2022.

The Data Controller is DCU and the DCU Data Protection Officer is Mr. Martin Ward (data.protection@dcu.ie Ph: 7005118 / 7008257). You also have the right to lodge a complaint with the Irish Data Protection Commission.

There are no known risks to participants from involvement in this study. If you decide to take part in the research, a summary of the research findings and recommendations will be provided on request.

As outlined in the Informed Consent Form, confidentiality of information provided cannot always be guaranteed by researchers and can only be protected within the limitations of the law - i.e., it is possible for data to be subject to subpoena, freedom of information claim or mandated reporting by some professions. The Informed Consent Form will also advise

interviewees that their participation is voluntary and that they may withdraw from the project at any time.

If you have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research and Innovation Support, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000, e-mail **rec@dcu.ie**

Appendix D
Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

This research study seeks to explore Business School academics' experiences of experiential and reflective learning pedagogies. The research is being conducted in partial fulfilment of the Professional Doctorate in Education in the DCU Institute of Education.

The principal investigator is Joanne Lynch from DCU Business School (joanne.lynch@dcu.ie) and the supervisors are Dr Zita Lysaght and Dr Francesca Lorenzi from the DCU Institute of Education.

Please note: no personal data will be collected or processed for this research study.

Participant: Please circle Yes or No for each of the following statements:

I have read the Plain Language Statement (or had it read to me)	*Yes/No*
I understand the information provided	*Yes/No*
I understand the information provided in relation to data protection	*Yes/No*
I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study	*Yes/No*
I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions	*Yes/No*
I am aware that my interview will be audiotaped	*Yes/No*
I confirm that I have been informed that my involvement in the study is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any point.	*Yes/No*
I confirm that arrangements have been made to protect the confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations	*Yes/No*
I confirm that arrangements have been made regarding retention/disposal of data	*Yes/No*
I agree that the researcher may use anonymized data in related research publications that might arise from this research	*Yes/No*

Signature:

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researchers, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project

Participants Signature: _____

Name in Block Capitals: _____

Date: _____

Appendix E
Guide to Interview Topics Provided to Respondents

Experiential Learning in Business Education

Interview topics

Introductory questions.

Years of third-level teaching experience
Module title(s)/code(s)/programme(s)

Main questions.

Participants will be asked to discuss their views on the following topics:

- Competencies and values for graduates in business/your discipline
- Pedagogic approaches used to enhance student learning
- EL approach used including:
    - Method(s)
    - Rationale for choice of method
    - Perceived advantages and disadvantages
    - Assessment and feedback in EL
    - Reflection
    - Use of technology/EL in an online environment

Closing questions

Participants will be asked if there are any further comments they would like to make relevant to the research topic.

Appendix F
Interview guide

Experiential Learning in Business Education

Interview Guide

Introductory questions.

Years of third-level teaching experience
Module title(s)/code(s)/programme(s)

Implicit/Deep Structure

Competencies/Values

I'd like to get your views about the competencies and values you perceive to be important for graduates in business/your discipline

- What competencies do you think are important for business graduates?
- What professional values do you think are important for business graduates?

Pedagogic approaches

Before talking about your specific EL approaches or activities you use, I'd like to get some idea about your experiences on the pedagogic approaches you use/have used.

- Could you tell me how EL fits within your overall approach to teaching?
- Could you tell me about other pedagogic approaches you use have used/use in conjunction with EL and your experience with them? (Probe for challenges/advantages with existing/other pedagogies).

Deep/Surface structure

I'd like to ask you a few questions about your use of EL,, how you use it, why, your thoughts on benefits and challenges.

- What types of EL activities do you use? (Probe for resources (physical, tech, business community etc.)
- Why have you chosen this EL method?
- How did you learn about this approach? (Probe for prior exposure to EL/learning from others)
- Could you describe how the activity is used in your class/module and what students are asked to do?

- Does the task involve class or group discussion/presentation? (Probe for accountability/ visibility/ public performance)
- Is the EL part of your module assessed? If so, how?
- Do you provide feedback? (probe for when and what kind)

I'm interested in the experiential content of your approach so I'd like to ask you questions about the roles of realism, complexity and ambiguity in your EL activity.

Realism

- How important is it to you that students relate material to real-world?
- How real do you think the experience should be?
- Do you think students struggle with the real-world element?

Complexity

- Does your EL activity involve a wide or narrow range of variables that students have to consider?
- From your experience, do students experience any difficulties with the task?
- Do you get many questions from students about the activity?
- Is the EL activity loosely structured or more highly structured?

Ambiguity

- What is the role of ambiguity in your EL design?
- From your experience, how do students cope with ambiguity in your EL activity?

I'd like to ask you a few questions about reflection in EL.

- Is reflection part of your EL activity? If no, why not?
- If yes, what kind of reflection? (probe for personal, academic, critical)
- Is the reflection assessed? If no, why not?
- If yes, how is it assessed?
- What is your experience of your students' reflective capacities?
- Do you provide guidance for reflection/ reflective writing? (probe for what type of guidance)

Learning Environment

- Could you talk about the impact (if any) of technology on your EL experience?
- What was your experience of using EL online? (probe for advantages/disadvantages)

Challenges

- Based on your experience, what do you think are the particular benefits, limitations or challenges associated with using EL in your teaching?

- Are there particular resources that would make you inclined to use more EL/use differently or that would make use of the approach easier for you/more beneficial for students?

Other comments on your experience of EL?