Student Voice in Higher Education

Students' and tutors' perceptions of its utilisation and value

by

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ABSTRACT

Student Voice in Higher Education: Students' and Tutors' Perceptions of its Utilisation and Purpose.

This study explores and examines the perceptions of students and tutors of the utilisation and purpose of student voice in higher education. It is conducted in a higher education department within a further education college.

Literature form a range of secondary sources explores how student voice is visible in higher education and draws on the drivers behind its increased focus. Specific emphasis is seen in the views of student voice in terms of rights, participation and inclusivity whilst also recognising the challenges this brings. The value of the student-tutor relationship is highlighted as vital in the successful utilisation of student voice. The distribution and impact of power on the use of student voice is fundamental to the examination of literature and is further clearly reflected in the subsequent findings of my study.

I have taken a critical ethnographic approach to the study and drawn on feminist research theory and auto-ethnography to collect and analyse qualitative data, using semi structured interviews, focus groups and a research journal.

Demonstrated within the emerging themes, was a clear indication of the growing attention to collecting student voice and the problems this raises for students and tutors in terms of rights, participation and power inequalities. Research within the literature review supports these notions and also highlights gaps which have been explored within this study as students and tutors raise concerns regarding their position within the classroom, their unease of accountability and the value of relationships in addressing these issues. Contribution to knowledge is clearly shown in the examination of power issues within student voice work and indeed in everyday practice. This is evidenced through examination of the relationship and the examples of power inequalities raised by tutors and students. Significant findings are demonstrated in the unexpected revelation that tutors and students both feel disciplined by the other and believe the other to be the holder of the power.

Whilst existing literature reports on the benefits and challenges of student voice work, my study goes further to examine the role of power in the relationship and the significance of this in terms of transformational practice.

I conclude the study by presenting an action plan to outline my recommendations for transformative practice which combines literature relating to existing studies, key theory in the field of power, and emerging ideas in relation to the perceptions of students and tutors in order to establish an inclusive conclusion to the study.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Auto-ethnography	A qualitative, methodological approach which enables the culture of one's own group to be contextualised.
Critical discourse analysis	An approach to the study of discourse that understands language as a form of social practice. It focuses on the way that social and political domination is enacted and reproduced in text and language.
Critical ethnography	An approach to ethnography that attempts to make connections between the detailed analysis of ethnography to wider social structures and systems of power relationships.
Emancipation	The act of setting free from the power of another.
Neoliberalism	A theory of political and economic practices which propose that human wellbeing is best advanced by liberating individuals within a free market economy.
Student voice	Providing students with the opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue with partners within educational institutions with a view to making changes which will improve their experiences.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Johnson Nenty (2009) suggests that research begins with a problem which is to be validated and ultimately a solution sought. Supporting this argument, Selamat (2008) highlights two types of problems, those whose aim it is to increase our knowledge and those whose aim it is to make our life better. I would argue that my study, which investigates the perception of student voice in higher education, seeks to accomplish both by identifying what may improve the learning experiences for tutors and students and thus apply knowledge gained in order to transform practice.

My intention was to examine the perceptions of students and tutors of the utilisation and purpose of student voice in higher education. The findings should enable me to review and develop practice by addressing potential inequalities and improving the student experience whilst remaining mindful of the needs of the tutors and the organisation as a whole. I am conscious however, that a solution to the problem may not be reached nor answers secured, I merely make recommendations as to how the 'problem' may be solved. Whilst Johnson Nenty's (2009) study reflects a quantitative approach, I believe that elements of the discussions therein also apply to qualitative studies. Within the paper, he describes research as emanating from a detailed and insightful analysis of a research problem whereby a solution is sought. The suggestion here is that the topic should reflect three components; the dependent variable (the problem) the independent variable (the influences on the problem) and the population of the subjects under the study. Whilst this would appear to be useful in directing my data collection, I am conscious that there may not be a problem encountered and would not wish to create one. That said the basis of my aim to enhance experiences for students and tutors through increased knowledge remains key within my discussions. Further, my intention to create a rigorous methodological frame through the use of inductive analysis may well present challenges if my focus remains on a 'problem' as this would suggest that I had begun with a prescribed hypothesis.

I feel that it is pertinent to explain my role within the organisation and the demographics of the institution in which I work and in which the research took place. I have worked in the higher education department within a further education college for 9 years. The courses I teach range from Foundation degree level 4 and 5 and honours degree level 4, 5 and 6. The honours students range from 18-21 years (approx) and there is a broader span of ages amongst the foundation degree students. For the most part, the students have not achieved the required grades for University and have chosen to attend the institution as it is local, has smaller classes and increased tutor and mentor support.

It is important at this stage to consider the motivation for my study. In my role as a programme leader for an honours degree course, I was becoming heavily involved in collecting the views of students for a number of 'Programme Board of Studies' meetings, NSS feedback and unit reviews. In all of these cases, I have been surprised at the range of concerns raised by students in each case. It appeared that students had little understanding of the value of engaging with their voice in matters relating to their education as they seem unaware of the purpose of completing unit reviews. Students were also reticent in offering any ideas for developing their experiences when being asked to complete feedback. Similarly, I was surprised at how disinterested they were in offering their views and they tended to use the occasion as an opportunity to complain about their grades. In addition, initial discussions with tutors tended to demonstrate a lack of commitment to seeking the voice of students in a positive way. Unit reviews have prompted students to complain about teaching without offering any justification for their comments. It had become apparent that tutors were asking students to complete unit reviews once the unit had been completed and marks had been returned to students.

This was clearly impacting on the comments made, as the students' response reflected their disappointment if they had not achieved their desired grade resulting in the lack of meaningful dialogue regarding their true opinions. I became interested in acquiring the students' perceptions of student voice and how they felt it was utilised in my college. Further, I was intent on exploring how they felt that they could utilise their voices more effectively. I also wanted to explore tutors' experiences and ascertain why they felt uncomfortable about collecting the views of students.

As a former student of the same course, and a course tutor, I felt that as a dual insider, I had a good understanding of the experiences of the students and tutors. Shah (2004:556) supports this notion by arguing that 'a social insider is better positioned as a researcher because of her knowledge of the relevant patterns of social interaction required for gaining access and making meaning'. I believed that insider research would 'provide a level of trust and openness' that would be otherwise not possible (Corbin Dwyer and Buckle 2009:58). I was mindful however that as an insider there are ethical issues in being organisationally located inside the research. One such problem could be the difficulty over where research begins and ends as a result of constant available access. Mercer (2007) shared her concerns as she recalls this as being 'all consuming' as a result of being positioned onsite.

The debate surrounding insider/outsider positionality raises concerns about the methodological advantages and disadvantages of both approaches. In this instance, the role duality lends itself to concerns over power relationships and a lack of subjectivity. As an insider, I believed that I had a deeper insight about the students, the programme and the institution. However, there is a case to answer that this understanding may well present itself as a biased position which lacks objective interpretation. There is also a view that greater familiarity may lead to taken for granted assumption being made (Breckhus 1998). "Insider" research has also been criticised since participants and researcher may simply assume a shared understanding and knowledge without explaining and exploring particular experiences. (Chavez 2008). As an insider, I felt that I was best placed to understand where to locate information and to sift through data to identify critical events. In this way, I was able to demonstrate tacit and contextualised information. Moreover, it may be that this understanding may well present itself as a biased position which lacks objective interpretation.

As a student myself on EdD, I was also careful to consider how my own experiences impacted on my study, in particular my interpretation of events and subsequent data. The use of a research journal and memo writing was extremely valuable in enabling me to reflect on the recording and presenting of the data.

Examples of the challenges faced and opportunities realised with regard to the insider/outsider dichotomy are shown within the data analysis section of the thesis. In addition a contextual explanation of how these challenges and opportunities have driven the study forward or hindered its progression has been explored in depth.

Returning to the feedback received from students it appeared that they concentrated on their 'needs' as being the sole purpose of exercising their voice and did not have an understanding of student voice as a means of participation, inclusion or rights (McLeod 2011). In addition, students were heard to report that they did not see the point of giving their views verbally. I found it interesting, however, that students were keen to put their views forward when they felt that they needed to complain and quoted 'Well, we are paying for it now so we should get what we want'. This view was echoed by some tutors who felt that they were being judged and were more accountable in recent times. No more so is this seen than within the White Paper, 'Higher Education: Students at the heart of the System' (Department for Business Innovation and Skills', BIS 2011) which outlined the Coalition Government's reforms to encourage better standards of teaching in higher education and greater responsiveness to the student experience.

The key message demonstrated within the White Paper is putting students at the heart of the system by providing them with more valuable course information, better teaching experiences whilst at university, improved preparation for the job market and greater transparency in areas such as feedback on their work. Clearly this is intended to render universities and colleges more accountable and provides the means for judgements being made against individual's experiences. Whilst the rhetoric of student voice is promoted here, it remains to be seen whether in fact the introduction of a policy document is more likely to result in compliance rather than engagement. For many teachers tensions are sensed in terms of the fact that they feel caught between the desire to serve the competitive demands of a marketised society and to also play a socially integrative and democratic role which serves the rights of students (Bastian et al 1985). I was particularly interested in exploring the views of teachers in respect of the dilemmas they face in relation to maintaining congruence between these key demands.

1.1   Background to the 'problem' and rationale for my choice of study

I believe it to be pertinent at this point to explain why and how my study has come about. This will provide a background to my thoughts, feelings and concerns in relation to the completion of this study. In 2011, I completed a Master's Degree in Education (MEd) whereby I explored self-assessment as a method for increasing student understanding of learning outcomes through facilitation of an action research project. Whilst this provided a valuable understanding of the perceptions of students in relation to self-assessment, the key finding to emerge was that tutors were not empowering students and students did not feel in control of their learning (Sadler and Good 2006). This concern led me to consider the issue of power and control and how this was utilised in Higher Education. This being the case, my initial question for my EdD was 'An examination of the study conditions which enable student empowerment within higher education'. Following in-depth discussions with the programme team, it was felt that this study may not meet with ethical standards required and it was decided that it would be beneficial to change the title to consider a wider remit. My title was duly changed at this point to "**Student Voice in Higher Education: Students' and tutors' perceptions of its utilisation and purpose".** I considered that this new title would give me the opportunity to explore power without compromising the role of the tutor and student.

Halquist and Musanti (2010:449) describe this change of direction as a 'critical incident' within the research process and perceive this as a turning point that challenges the researcher and creates opportunities for knowing. In this instance, my interpretation of the significance of the event defined it as 'critical' as I searched for new meaning for my study. Musanti (2005) suggests that critical incidents are based on the following criteria. Firstly, critical incidents involve conflict. Secondly, researchers feel an element of surprise and finally they reveal patterns of behaviour. In this instance, I felt a sense of surprise at the change of direction and as the researcher this demanded my attention in seeing this setback as a stimulus for reflection. Further, I experienced a sense of conflict as I negotiated a new title with my supervisors.

Critical incidents do not have to be extreme. In fact, Norman et al (1992) call for a more positive term to be used, such as 'revelatory or significant', thereby rendering the concept more universally useful. Initially, I was disappointed with the change as I am passionate about equality, emancipatory work and identifying and regulating oppression. I reviewed my study and considered that I could in fact still explore power as this would likely become evident within my analysis. I was concerned at this point however that I was presenting a hypothesis by suggesting that student voice may be a problem, something which I had strived to avoid. My commitment to interpretive research which collects qualitative data was considered to be vital in assuring that the voice of the participants was clear. This being the case, I have worked hard through the use of reflexivity to ensure that my analysis and interpretation were not affected by my underlying beliefs whilst acknowledging that this may not be wholly possible as I bring my own culture, history and personal biography to the research relationship. I refer to the work of Bourdieu (1977) here, in his exploration of habitus which is characterised by an acquired set of culturally learned ways of being, thinking and behaving. The habitus I bring to the relationship and the field of research therefore represents my own 'belonging', and whilst fluid in essence, it does render me inseparable from the theory which I produce (Soyini Madison 2012:10).

1.2 Theoretical and conceptual foundations

Hair et al (2001) offer the notion that theory serves three purposes in research. Firstly, it provides a conceptual framework on which to base the study. Secondly, theory is a method for incorporating prior knowledge. Finally, it is a technique in linking research to larger bodies of knowledge. More simply put by Thomas (2009:67), theory is described as:

- Seeing links
- Generalising
- Abstracting ideas from data and offering explanations
- Connecting findings to those of others
- Having insights.

Within discussion on the value of theory in research, I was drawn to the idea that theory is constantly changing throughout the research process and as such represents a temporary construct. In this way, Bourdieu cited in Wacquant (1989) concurs that the fluidity of theory suggests that we as researchers should not see it as the aim of our research; rather it is a set of thinking tools which are visible through results. This concept is reflected throughout my study as I present a basic frame of literature to support my study. This was particularly important in the decisions I took as I wanted to present a 'story' of the data as and when it emerged. This would then enable me to draw on literature to support my findings in context. Significantly, I engaged with theoretical concepts during the course of my study to enable the production of inductive data which responds to the views of the participants.

Globally, attention to student voice work has been increasing in significance within Higher Education as a means to advance tutor professional development (Blair and Valdez Noel 2014). Evidence is seen in the increased number of studies which raise the profile of students as associates in the development of knowledge and as such have taken an active role in judgement processes (Bloxham and Boyd (2007).

I believe it to be important at this point to place my study within a historical context and to show how I have arrived at the decision to pursue exploration of this issue. Aristotle (1992) makes the distinction between 'mere' voice *(phoné)* and speech *(logos)*: the former characterised as the most basic form of communicating sensations and the latter as the medium for political debate and deliberation. Clearly, voice is not simply speech (McLeod 2011), although in contemporary times it would seem that there has been a reversal in what these two terms connote or at least that current conceptions of them have merged as part of a more general merging of voice with 'identity' and 'representation' (Baker 1999). Towards the end of the twentieth century in particular, the concept of voice has been related to claims for political recognition of difference and identity politics, alongside struggles for equality (McLeod 2011). Student voice has emerged as the single term in educational research, encompassing a range of initiatives that advocate the redefinition of the role of the student in research and educational change. Whilst Cook-Sather (2006) supports student voice as a legitimate perspective, presence and an active role in education, Wolk (1998:186) questions whether, granted that everyone has a voice, it

should not be something that should be 'given'. It is fair to say then that student voice is located within a web of academic structures and cultures which are shaped by policymakers, academics, researchers and students themselves.

The location of student voice is of particular importance in my study as I examine the roots of its utilisation, the power this brings and the challenges faced by both students and tutors in realising its potential in addressing emancipatory practices. In terms of my study, I offer a definition of emancipatory practice as a purpose of education through which the examination of oppression takes place and how education may shape practices that socialise people into what could be taken to be an oppressive society (Galloway 2012). Specifically, my study aims to identify practices which may demonstrate oppression, how these have originated within accepted procedures and routines, and to consider ways in which these could be re-examined. Whilst I acknowledge that qualitative, ethically conducted research aims to raise emancipatory consciousness, I feel that the critical theoretical base of my study will enable me to uncover underlying mechanisms and structures of power and control in order to effect positive changes.

1.3   Statement of the problem

According to Selamat (2008) the heart of any research project is the problem. It is with this in mind that I will present and analyse the problem to which I am trying to contribute a solution through my research. I began to consider that there may well be a problem in terms of the amount of feedback we as tutors were requesting from the students and their apathy in completing end of unit questionnaires was becoming evident. Legislative requirements are at the forefront of new government and institutional policies and procedures required from the awarding universities with whom we work. These are then delineated to programme leaders such as myself to ensure that correct procedures are put in place for collecting evidence of student voice. The views of tutors at this stage reflected the idea that student voice is 'an empty rhetoric' in that it was just a box-ticking exercise and that once these tick boxes were completed, we could continue with our previous practice. The students seemed to have the same outlook in that once they had done as they were asked they could continue in the usual way.

It would appear then that the problem identified lies in the fact that students do not seem to use their voice to support engagement with their studies and tutors are unsure how to support students in using their voice in a meaningful way. I am mindful however, that I may be making an assumption here in that students may be happy with their participation and engagement with 'voice' epistemologies and tutors may well not feel that there is a problem to be identified. Nevertheless, this study is intended to analyse key themes relating to student voice to gain the perspectives of tutors and students. As with all social research, my intention is to change practice if needed as a result of the study in order to provide positive experiences for students and tutors. This is especially relevant as legislation and policy place more emphasis on the benefits of engaging students in their education, if only to satisfy the increased attention on 'student engagement'.

1.4   Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is not to be confused with the problem of the study. Rather, I am examining what I hope to achieve by conducting my study. It is my intention therefore to realise a solution to the 'problem' by developing a deeper understanding of the perceptions of the participants and leading to a more positive experience. In order to do this, I have provided a set of guiding questions which should enable me to achieve my goals.

1.5   Research Questions

My research questions are stated in order to operationalise the research concerns identified (Johnson Nenty 2009).

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In order to address this concept, I will draw from the following questions:

- What do students and tutors understand by the term student voice?
- How do they see student voice in practice?
- What are the benefits, challenges and limitations of student voice?

- How could student and tutor experiences be improved by engaging with student voice?

1.6   General goals of the study

I would like to see the experiences of the participants improved in practice as they (students and tutors) deal with the intricacies and hurdles presented by the changing social demographics of university admissions, 'student voice' ideologies, policy administration and maintenance.

I would like to uncover a better understanding of the needs of the students in terms of their studies. Further, I am also committed to developing the relationship between the tutor and student as a result of this. I would like to also explore how the working life of the tutors can be enhanced through this improved relationship and mutual understanding.

This leads me to providing objectives, without which I would not be able to measure success.

- To collect perceptions and experiences of the utilisation of student voice from students and tutors.
- To analyse these perceptions by employing a rigorous methodology, an authentic data collection procedure and an ethically solid analysis of said data.
- To present findings with integrity in an emancipatory manner that acknowledges the value of the participants' responses.

Given that my study analyses the tutors' and students' perceptions of student voice, it is my intention to demonstrate emancipatory practices throughout my writing. This being the case, my commitment to the following core values when engaging with student voice work will be clearly defined and evidenced. Robinson and Taylor (2007) posit that student voice work is inherently an ethical and moral practice and that at the heart of this practice lie four core values:

1. A conception of communication as dialogue

2. The requirement for participation and democratic inclusivity.
3. The recognition that power relations are unequal and problematic.
4. The possibility for change and transformation.

It is with these core values in mind, that I consider the perceptions of tutors and students in relation to the value and purpose of student voice. These values will be threaded through my analysis of data in addition to demonstrating how they can be applied to transformative practice.

1.7   Significance of the study

I believe that the significance of my study lies in the advancement of knowledge and subsequent development of practice. Extrinsically, the benefits should be visible in the improved relationships between tutors and students evidenced through positive collaborative practices. Intrinsically, students and tutors may benefit from enlightenment as a result of emancipatory practice in terms of reducing oppression and equally an improved understanding of 'the self'. Reflexivity is fundamental throughout my study in ensuring that I searched my own knowledge, understanding and positionality to place myself firmly within this study.

In terms of the significance of my study in relation to the needs of the organisation and other stakeholders, I have reviewed a paucity of literature which belies the value of student voice from a number of principles, for example participation, collaborative research and voice as a means of promoting equality. These would appear to be of interest to the organisation as they strive to address how student voice is captured and facilitated in line with government obligations. Unfortunately, a great deal of the literature focuses on student voice in relation to children or young people with little emphasis placed on student voice work within higher education. Initially, this posed a problem within my collection of theoretical data as I struggled to apply a theoretical context to my ideas. It was only when I began collecting and analysing data that themes emerged which led me to investigate further into literature to review the broader issues emerging from my data. It was at this point that I could consider the value and significance of my study from the viewpoint of the organisation, stakeholders, staff and students and this will be demonstrated more fully within my

implications chapter following my data analysis through exploration of significance related to stakeholders which include the following:

1. Theory of advancing cumulative knowledge.
2. Current literature
3. Policy development
4. Practice development

1.8 Assumptions

As previously mentioned, I had made assumptions that the students would be interested in student voice and how they could be encouraged to use this effectively. I had also taken for granted that they would wish to become involved in discussions which explore their experiences. In this way I had assumed this to be true and as such had not considered that there is no universal truth (Foucault 1988); experiences depend upon the context, culture and time. Further analysis is made clear within this study as I explore Foucault's regimes of truth and how these are reflected in the voices of students.

In terms of the assumptions I have made in relation to the structure and conduct of my study, I had assumed that the data collection methods would yield motivating information and would answer my questions effectively, when in fact, in light of a lack of information received, I was compelled to modify and enhance my approach by including additional methods and support strategies. In essence these proved helpful in removing and reducing doubts on validity and strengthening the rigour of my writing. This will be discussed in more depth within my methodology chapter.

1.9 Limitations

Limitations were identified as the lack of time to engage in real discussion with students and tutors. Time restraints were experienced when revisiting topics with students in order to member check information given. More detail relating to the problems encountered due to lack of time are discussed in more depth within the methodology chapter.

In relation to the methodology, limitations were evident in the ability to collect meaningful data from students who did not want to use their voice, whilst acknowledging and respecting their wish to not engage in discussion. Constraints were evident in the sample of participants as I only had access to my team and student groups. This was however, rectified towards the end of my study as I engaged in discussion with participants from the validating university thereby adding depth to the findings. More detail can be found in the methodology chapter relating to the challenges encountered as detailed above.

1.10   Delimitations

It is valuable here to address the self-imposed limitations within my study as this evidently demonstrates reflexivity within the research process as I analyse my rationale for making decisions, changes and directions taken. I feel that I inadvertently narrowed the scope of my study as I concentrated on my own department, team and student groups and perhaps should have taken this further by engaging with participants from other areas within the college. These could have included alternative Higher Education departments or Further Education teams in order to obtain a more balanced perspective. I did however, towards the end of my study, engage with tutors from our validating university in order to strengthen data. In terms of my analysis, my passion in relation to student voice lies in the reduction of power differentials and as such I concentrated more on this aspect when theming and analysing my data.

1.11   Definition of terms

This section will offer definitions of terms used within my study with an explanation of the implications of the terms used.

Student voice

In its most basic form, student voice is described as the values, beliefs and perspectives of students as expressed in an educational context. The use of such is presented through a variety of methods. In this instance, student voice is demonstrated by engagement with feedback in various forms. Feedback has emerged as the key representation of student voice by the tutors and students. There appears to be a clear focus on feedback as being the main feature of student

voice. Attempts to direct students to alternative interpretations of student voice resulted in a lack of engagement and students and tutors returned to feedback as their area of comfort and emphasis. There were however a number of instances whereby student voice is represented by email correspondence between students and tutors and occasions where student voice is represented by silence. This concept will be fully explored within the analysis of data and discussion of findings.

Utilisation

Utilisation refers to how the students use their voice in practical terms, for example, giving feedback and exercising their rights to participation. Utilisation can reflect the physical act of employing voice in addition to invisible forms for example, silence or withdrawal.

Transformation

Within this study the term transformation is defined as making changes which are positive and considered to be beneficial to the students, tutors and organisation. Transformation of practice in terms of student voice is understood as practice which will enable students to use their voice in a positive manner and for tutors to respond to and encourage the use of voice in a way that promotes sound relationships which enable the constructive use of voice in the educational setting.

Emancipation

Emancipation denotes a sense of freedom and liberation and it is with this in mind that I refer to emancipation as a means of freeing students to speak in order to satisfy their needs. Emancipation is highlighted within this study on a number of levels, these being as a means of growth and development (Harding 1987), the creation of democracy (Baker 1999) and the transformation of oppression (Foucault 1988). All of these terms are explored fully within this study.

1.12   Framework of the study

In recent years there has been an ever increasing move towards listening to student voices in schools, colleges and more recently, universities, partly resulting from the legal requirements to serve the rights of the child (United Nations Convention on the

Rights of the Child 1989). The rights of the child are upheld to enable expression of their views and to participate in decisions which affect them. Further legislation which puts students at the heart of the system (Dept. BIS 2011) serves to enable students to exercise their voice by developing collaborative experiences within university. It is with this in mind that I have drawn on four core values when engaging in student voice work in order to ensure my study remains ethical and moral (Robinson and Taylor 2007).

My study begins with an extensive review of literature which explores the notion of student voice in Higher Education and will show how theoretical concepts and empirical studies have directed the course of my inquiry. The literature included within this review has provided me with an understanding of current knowledge, in addition to the ability to reflect on its significance in terms of identifying gaps in knowledge areas which are yet unexplored. Literature within this review has been limited to key sources thereby enabling theory to be analysed as inductive concepts emerge from the data.

Chapter two, which constitutes the methodology, will demonstrate the approach I have taken, in addressing the 'political, theoretical and philosophical implications of chosen methods' (Seale 1998:3). I will show how I have taken a critical theory approach which encompasses my commitment to a feminist philosophy in order to maintain my commitment to emancipatory practices within my research.

Chapter three demonstrates my collection and analysis of data showing how I employed an interpretive approach in collecting qualitative data and how the data collection methods reflect the philosophical approach taken in terms of deductive or inductive data. Again, engagement with critical theory which encompasses my dedication to a feminist ideology has enabled me to explore the complexities of how and why data has emerged and how my position as the researcher has impacted on the findings.

Chapter four has given me the opportunity to offer a rigorous summary of my findings and to show how these relate to secondary data. From this standpoint, this has given me the opportunity to identify gaps in current knowledge and to show

where and how my study contributes to current knowledge in addition to generating new knowledge. Importantly, within this chapter, I have shown how the findings have led to the construction of extensive implications and recommendations for practice.

Finally, chapter five encompasses my conclusion which offers comprehensive reflections on how my study has impacted on, and will continue to shape my personal and professional experiences and future development.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW.

Working with literature is considered to be of utmost importance when engaging in doctoral study. Robson (1993) argues that developing the conceptual framework forces you to be explicit about what you think you are doing. In addition, it supports the researcher in being selective about the important features within the study in hand. This appears to suggest that engaging with literature involves constantly making decisions about the value of the information gained and making judgements about how the data can best be utilised. In fact, King et al (1994) go so far as to say that no empirical investigation can be successful without theory to guide its choice of questions. Engagement with literature then has two roles, firstly, by providing a theoretical clarification of what the researcher intends to investigate and secondly, it enables the reader to understand what the research seeks to accomplish and how this will be achieved.

Boote and Beile (2005) put forward the notion that the literature review should accomplish several important objectives. Firstly it should set the broad context of the study by demarcating what is and what is not within the scope of investigation. Secondly, it should situate the existing literature within a broader scholarly and historical context. It is important to note however, that the review should serve a critical role in leading the new productive work rather than merely mirroring research which has already been exhausted. The importance of articulating what specific research needs to be completed in the field cannot be overstated in ensuring that the significance of the study is clear and that a new perspective can be gained.

Since I was studying the perceived purpose and utilisation of student voice within higher education, it seemed fitting that I ensured that participants' voices were clearly stated within my study and as such I was particularly keen to allow the findings to drive the literature search. It was my intention to provide a conceptual framework that integrated theories that offered explanations of the issues under investigation. Drawing on the work of Punch (2000) I intended to view this approach

as a scaffold which would subsequently enable me to build an inductive model which should see levels of conceptualisation increase as my research progressed. Engaging with literature reflexively gave me the opportunity to report findings in context and better equipped me to present my analysis with honesty and integrity. Bearing in mind that the literature review was not comprehensive, literature will be explored and presented throughout my thesis as data becomes available. This enabled clear links to be made with participants' responses thereby creating congruence between the data collected and supporting literature. Further this reflected my epistemological view as a subjective, interactive researcher who saw findings being created as the investigation continued.

As previously mentioned, there does not appear to be a great deal of literature on student voice in higher education but am mindful however that as my studies progress, the concept is becoming more visible as a result of political ideologies which are ever-changing. Changes within the political landscape which focus on improving students choices in terms of their experiences in university have led to an increased focus on their needs and their participation in their education. Ball (2013:103) reiterates that educational institutions are 'vehicles' for government regulation and as such are they are implicated within a 'political economy' of education which is led my performance and accountability.

2.1 Concepts of 'voice'

A valuable place to begin appeared to be to present a brief indication of what 'voice' entails through the use of a variety of definitions. 'Voice and student voice' are terms which are notoriously difficult to define especially within contextual analyses. Within this review of literature voice is explored in its basic construct as a form of communication. I subsequently show how voice is evident within rights and participation agendas (McLeod 2011) which promote advocacy. Voice is further examined as a means of democratic reform which places students within a political and societal vehicle in a neoliberal society which places students as key players. I proceed to place student voice within power epistemologies and then show how relationships may have an impact on the utilisation of student voice. Finally I explored literature which analysed the authenticity of student voice and the spaces in which student voice is evident and enacted.

Clearly, voice is not simply speech; it can represent identity, agency or even power (McLeod 2011:181), although in contemporary times it would seem that there has been a reversal in what these two terms connote or, at least, that current conceptions of them have merged as part of a more general merging of voice with 'identity' and 'representation' (Baker, 1999). Baker (1999) goes on to argue that towards the end of the twentieth century in particular, the concept of voice has been related to claims for emancipation and democracy for homogenous groups thereby rendering the politics of difference as falsely represented. McLeod (2011) draws on these concepts to warn against the dangers of building voice-based equity politics which call for voice from individuals in an attempt to address difference.

Student voice has emerged as a single term in educational research, encompassing a range of initiatives that advocate the redefinition of the role of the student in research and educational change. Whilst Cook-Sather (2006) supports student voice as a legitimate perspective, presence and an active role in education, Wolk (1998:186) argues that, everyone has a voice, and therefore this is not something that can be given. This being the case, it could lead us to question what do we do with 'student voice' once it has been collected, and to what degree is this valued. In relation to my study, I aim to raise questions surrounding the use of voice in conservative terms which Cook-Sather (2006) describes as having a say without any guarantee of a response in comparison to a more radical form which sees a cultural shift which promotes students as having a presence and power. The fact that student voice is positioned within a numbers of structures and cultures which are shaped by policymakers, academics, researchers and students themselves lends itself to interpretation and misappropriation.

Further support is seen in the work of Taylor and Robinson (2009) who advocate that student voice is utilised as a mode of practical intervention which leaves the equally important aspects of voice in relation to power unexplored. Links are evident here in the introduction of student voice within government policies and agendas which encourage participation and collaboration. An example of such is seen in the implementation of the HE White paper 'Higher Education: Students at the heart of the system' Dept. BIS (2011).

Whilst it is apparent that there is a wealth of ideas of what student voice is, these terms are contested, unclear and value laden depending upon their foundations and their ideologies. In terms of my own study, I was initially focusing on the idea that student voice represents the following points (McLeod 2011:181):

- *Voice as strategy* to achieve empowerment, transformation and equality. This is particularly pertinent for my study as valuing and enabling student voice is seen as an integral part in presenting a democratic and citizen based education (Biesta, Lawy and Kelly 2009), thus seeing the students as having the capacity to express their voice as part of their learning. It is of particular interest to me to examine transformation as a way to enable vulnerable and silenced voices which may remain unheard. Particular focus is given with the study to how transformative practices could be developed to enable equality for all students. Further information can be found within the Implications for Practice chapter within my study.

- *Voice as participation* in learning and in the democratic process. Linking with the previous use of voice, participation focuses on the student engagement agenda, which if handled badly may result in the assumption that if students are involved they will automatically be using their voice. More importantly, within this category, participation appears to relate to the relationships between the learners and the tutors. This is an area which I was very interested in exploring as I examined not merely the explicit relationship but unpacked it further to consider the power held within these relationships in a practical sense.

- *Voice as right* to be heard or to have a say. Predictably guided by policy and legislation, students' rights to be heard have flourished with the introduction of a neoliberal standpoint promoted more recently within Universities and Colleges. Ball (2013) posits that performativity is a key instrument within a neoliberal university which values the use of comparisons and judgements leading to a sense of ontological insecurity and uncertainty. I believe this to be of utmost importance within my study if I am to examine the perceptions of

students and tutors and to show how these factors may impact on their behaviours exhibited in class.

- *Voice as difference* to promote inclusion and respect diversity. This concept appears to take on a dual purpose. Firstly to privilege and celebrate the giving of voice to those excluded groups, more commonly related to social change agenda. Clearly this presents problems within my study as I resist the notion of speaking for others and bestowing voice which is driven by my personal ideas of when it is appropriate. Secondly, the danger of speaking from a privileged location on behalf of others can in fact reinforce the oppression of the group who are represented (McLeod 2011). I was particularly concerned that my study does not demonstrate this and it is only with a rigorous methodological approach that draws on critical ethnography and feminist values that I am satisfied that I will achieve this.

2.2 Voice as collaborative practice

In Higher Education, student voice work is evident in the struggles for student advocacy and involvement in decision making, the lack of such, viewed as exclusion. More specifically, decisions which involve curriculum design, assessment, timetabling and facilities appear to be at the forefront of the requirements of students within my institution. It is with this in mind that those who advocate student voice see it as part of an emancipatory project, transformative in essence in terms of individuals and also oppressive hierarchies within educational institutions. Such concepts are seen through the eyes of critical pedagogical approaches such as that of Giroux (1986), feminists standpoints, such as Ellsworth (1989) and those whose theories have questioned the invisible coercion of 'voice' and whose interests it serves to silence them (Bragg 2007). Such critical theories will be explored in more depth within the data analysis section as I relate to specific findings to support these concepts.

Seale (2010) notes that there has been little research into voice in higher education that unpacks the meaning of 'student voice' and the effect this may have on engagement and participation. There appears to be an assumption that if students

are enabled to make valuable decisions, they will automatically become more engaged in their learning. This is of particular interest to me as the students with whom I work do not show any interest in the concept of using their voice in this context, whilst others use their voice in an am manner which does not necessarily visibly enhance their learning. Voice is not simply speech and its expression does not automatically denote inclusion. The failure of literature to expand on its conceptualisation means that significant concerns are not raised which explore the idea that certain policy agendas may be used to 'highjack' student voice agendas (Seale 2010). Rudduck and Fielding (2006) emphasise that the current popularity with student voice can lead to surface compliance which focuses on a 'how to do it' rather than 'why we want to do it'. Further they report a tension between institutional gain and personal gain and these are addressed through examination of student voice in terms of power relations, commitment to authenticity and inclusiveness. I explored this concept in that it encouraged compliance rather than participation.

2.3   Voice as democratic reform

Arnot and Reay (2007) put forward the notion that the history of egalitarianism points to the need to elicit and act upon student voice as a means of democratic reform. However, they warn that any materialist analysis of the relationship between education and the economy, and the role of state regulation and governance suggests that pupil voice can never carry the full weight of societal reform. It is clear that there has been a revival of 'voice' as a political agenda with regards to the broadening of widening participation within higher education and the rise of students as consumers within a market economy (David et al 2010). The White Paper, Higher Education: Students at the heart of the System (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, BIS 2011) outlined the Coalition Government's reforms to encourage better standards of teaching in higher education and greater responsiveness to the student experience. As mentioned earlier within the introduction, the key message demonstrated within the White Paper is putting students at the heart of the system by providing them with more valuable course information, better teaching whilst at university, better preparation for the job market and greater transparency in areas such as feedback on their work. Clearly, this is intended to lead universities to become more accountable to students on the quality of teaching and enable them to trigger quality reviews if concerns are raised (Dept. BIS 2011). Chapter two within

the white paper considers how well-informed students will drive teaching excellence, and begins with the proposition that students are in some way in control of driving the teaching excellence which appears to support the ideology of the reforms and enters into the introduction of the paper by stating that the primary goal of the reform is to improve the quality of students' academic experience.

Within my study, this key point will be explored further as I investigate whether in fact the utilisation of student voice led to improved experiences or whether the ideology of student voice was created to merely satisfy the demands of the knowledge economy. Whilst the HE White Paper (Dept. BIS 2011) has provided an interesting frame with which to research student voice, my study demonstrated the fundamental flaws of exploring student voice in terms of responding to policy demands which may result in compliance rather than engagement. It was clear that whilst there was a sense of security in the present climate in moving towards familiar goals in familiar ways, Frowe (2001) notes that teachers' impatience with vocabulary which denotes the modernisation of 'consumers' 'markets' and 'output characteristics' may leave them opting for the quieter life rather than more risk and excitement and a better deal for students. For many teachers the tensions are experienced in terms of the fact that they feel caught between the desire to serve the demands of a competitive society and to also play a socially integrative and democratic role, serving the rights of students (Bastian et al 1985). Fielding (2004a) argues that the rise in pupil voice as a means of school improvement cannot be divorced from the transformation of state governance.

New Labour's allying of "voice" and "choice" in relation to reform of UK public services indicates the power of the concept of student voice to legitimatise a neoliberal marketization of education (Arnot 2006). Perhaps it is worth considering at this point that within England, legislation which compels students to offer their views on their experiences (Education Act 2002, Education and Skills Act 2008, HE White paper 2011) are doing so in order to meet outcome targets and fulfil accountability measures; essentially meeting management needs, rather than developing students' agency and to enhance their identity as responsible learners.

Emancipatory critiques of the dominant neoliberal position argue that the current trend for student voice is primarily a way of measuring effectiveness driven by management systems and is linked firmly with economic performance. In fact Fielding (2004b) explores the idea that promotion of student engagement is essentially a disciplinary method designed to increase compliance and enhance productivity. This has been clear within my study as tutors speak of their unease over accountability and their inability to follow up on students' needs and concerns due to ineffective structures and cultures within the organisation. In a recent study, Baroutsis et al (2016) add weight to this argument by affirming that accountability discourses lead to teachers having less power in affecting change thereby reducing the possibility for democratic participation.

The use of National Student Survey NSS (2010) statistics here serves to support the key premise of the HE White paper (Dept. BIS 2011) by highlighting lower levels of satisfaction with assessment and feedback, seen as key elements of the students' learning experience and reiterated as a key theme within Higher education review (2015). Gale (2010) supports this view by suggesting that following changes in the governance and cultures of universities, new conceptions of student equity are necessary to account for the 'changed structure of feeling' (p2) and calls for us to consider how students' aspirations for their university experience can be realised in light of utilising their voice.

Seale (2010: 996) reflects on the two most commonly cited purposes of student voice projects in higher education as 'quality enhancement and assurance' and 'staff professional development' and advocates that these two broad principles tend to be aligned to policy or practice agendas and promote a strong student engagement or involvement agenda. Moreover, these purposes enable the rhetoric of student voice to be examined in addition to the concept that student 'voice as participation and voice as right' by becoming more engaged will somehow enable tutors to engage in self-reflection (McLeod 2011:182). Within her study which explores the concept of valuing student's voices and effective dialogue, Ballantyne (2012) reports that the 'right' to dialogue based on participants' self-identification as 'consumers' emerged strongly within her analyses. While students' responses indicated that they would value the opportunity for dialogue regarding assessment, course structure and the

receipt of teaching content in a face-to-face mode, the perception of dialoguing with the university as a right was a strongly emerging theme. Interestingly, within these study students spoke of the need to feel valued as part of the institution. This goes beyond the development of the relationship with staff and other students, it more clearly reveals that students are looking for a more meaningful relationship, one in which they hold significant rights and specific expectations as committed consumers. The relationship between tutors and students is of particular interest to me as initial feedback from interviews and focus groups has highlighted the value students place on the relationship in the classroom. Evidence of the work of Mcleod (2011) is seen here in her examination of the value of the relationship between tutors and students in enabling participation in democratic processes.

2.4   Voice as a means of empowerment

A key interest of mine is the concept of empowerment and how students are empowered within the classroom. Examination of research in this area has led me to a number of key perceptions which will be examined within my study. Much criticism has been laid at the door of researchers who demonstrate triumphalist hubris of critical pedagogy in bestowing freedom and giving voice. Engagement with this approach would suggest a form of arrogance and superiority in promoting a set of beliefs and would oppose my values as a researcher who was keen to promote the views and experiences of participants. I was concerned that within my study, I wish to avoid the concept of bestowing of power on students.   Alternatively, the joint process of exploration between student and researcher of student voice experiences is more valuable in reflecting on Luke and Gore's (1992) view that a commitment to a feminist and post-structuralist approach will expose the dangers of giving voice and the focus of power dynamics this may bring forth.

The concept of power is omnipresent within studies of student voice and as such will be explored within my analysis of data; this will give me the opportunity to link key studies with the findings in order to demonstrate a link between theoretical concepts and practice as seen within my research. Interestingly, Ellsworth (1989) conducted a study which led her to question why incitements to empowerment did not result in feeling empowered and argued that whilst student empowerment and dialogue give the illusion of equality, they clearly still show the authoritarian nature of the

student/teacher relationship. Her study goes on to explore the 'silence' of the student and suggests that this indicates that the student does not have a voice or a lack of social identity from which to demonstrate agency. Her reflection on the biases which result in what counts as voice and whose voices are recognised and valued, remained a vital point for further exploration within my study and will be re-visited later in the paper.

The popularity of student voice can make contributions to such seem easy, it is not.

> Work on voice starts from the position that interesting things can be said in groups who do not occupy the high ground, they may actually be quite lowly and situated at some distance from the centres of power (Smyth and Hattam 2002:378).

Particularly valuable is this discussion in terms of my study as I explored how voice is executed in practice and how the power differentials impacted on its use. Grace (1995) talked about the ideology of immaturity that gets in the way of our seeing students as responsible and capable young people. In fact, if I look at the work of Wyness (2000) he reminds us that for a variety of reasons we view the child or young person as a subordinate and we may need to review our notions of childhood. It would appear that caution is needed in assuming that power relations can be changed through the elicitation of student talk (Arnot and Reay 2007). Perhaps, if I consider the work of critics such as Mannion (2007) I see a view of this 'enlightenment rationale', in which students provide teachers with information about their experiences and educational processes of learning, which appears to restrict agency to those who have the task of improving the services given. In addition, the wish to consult students does not necessarily mean that teachers will respond to their needs. This concept was explored in depth within my study, as I examined the value of student feedback, what one does with it and how practice is changed as a result.

Talbot et al (2003:2) offers the definition of power as 'Power is deployed by those who are in a position to define and categorise, to include and exclude'. This quote appears to consider that tutors hold the power and the decision to include or exclude rests with them. Tan (2004) goes on to explain the notion that there are three types of power exercised by tutors. Firstly, sovereign power which sees tutors as having all

the power within the relationship. Tutors have control over the planning, process and implementation of teaching, resulting in anxieties faced by students in relation to their grades. Final authority on summative grades belongs to the tutor and the only way tutors can enable empowerment for their student is to relinquish some of their power. This suggests to me that the value of the student's voice is only viable if the outcome is subservient to the teacher's opinions. Secondly, epistemological power demonstrates that students are aware of the prevailing authority within the relationship with their tutors. This is demonstrated in studies which have shown that how students learn depends on how they think they will be assessed (Biggs 2002). It is important to note that within this concept, teachers are subject to power issues within the institution and may also face obstruction. In fact Cowan (1988) highlights the need to find ways to overcome opposition. Finally, disciplinary power does not consider who holds power but concentrates on how power arises without relating specifically to sovereign or epistemological power. Power is viewed as not solely negative or repressive if it relies on knowledge in order to control its subjects. As I believe power to be a major driving force within my study, Foucault, Freire and Bernstein are synthesised systematically within the analysis of inductive data which emerged.

2.5   The representation of voice within a relationship

Another key concept I wanted to explore was the relationship within the classroom and the impact this may have on the utilisation of student voice, the value of which has been previously reported by McLeod (2011). Attention to this is provided in the work of Sabri (2011) who argues that the discourse of student experience consigns experience to be meaningless by advancing false promises. Firstly, it gives the impression that educational experiences are not constrained by class, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation or responsibility (Clegg 2011). Secondly that it does not take into account the quality of the relationship between the student and the teacher. Finally, it assumes that the homogenised student group will receive the same experience within all institutions which is extremely unlikely (Reay, Crozier and Clayton 2010). Focused examination of these key issues within my study has shown that the relationship is of utmost importance to the students in terms of their confidence in using their voice and I am hopeful that this will give them the conviction to draw on the constraints they face in getting their voices heard.

2.6   Authenticity of student voice

Fielding (2004b) explores the concept of 'new wave' student voice in his work on the renewal of the civic society; he argues that what student voice aspires to do within an essentially neoliberal framework is quite different from what it actually does in practice. As previously indicated evidence of this is clearly seen in the HE White paper whereby students are allegedly given the opportunity to provide feedback to teachers on their learning and teaching practices. In reality, the teacher holds the information received and may interpret the information in a different way to which it was intended. Parallels can be seen here in that as the researcher I could also be seen to interpret information received from students in a way which they did not propose. Fielding (2004b) goes on to suggest that the neoliberal hegemony sees students using a range of ways in which they are consulted about their learning, its narrative thereby directing us to move away from traditional areas of pastoral and wider engagement to a more formal learning through consultation. In contrast, my study will reflect the second concept which is emerging more recently which demonstrates the idea of listening to students and proactively developing an affective agenda in terms of their responses and outcomes (Fielding 2004b), which clearly supports the work of Seale (2010) and Ellsworth (1989).

When considering authenticity in student voice work, there is a need to ensure that the process of consultation and participation seems credible to students. From the student perspective, authenticity rests on three things: Whether they have been involved in determining the focus of the consultation; whether the interest of adults in what they say is real or contrived; and whether there is discussion of their suggestions and active follow through (Rudduck and Fielding (2006). In terms of my study, this led me to consider if the subjects being discussed were seen as significant by the students and whether the subjects addressed can be discussed without fear of reprisals. Rudduck and Fielding (2006) suggest that students will soon tire of invitations to express their views on matters they do not think are important or are framed in language they are unable to access or find restricting, alienating or patronising. In addition, students are less likely to engage in discussions which do not result in actions which affect the quality of their student life. This was apparent within my study, as students reported that 'even if we highlight how things could be done differently, we are not likely to benefit as it may be

changed for the students next year'. This indicates that students are more likely to use their voice if there was a certain immediacy of any outcomes. Authenticity is a disciplined communication of genuine interest in what students think and have to say. There is however, a tendency to view young people as less significant than those who have reached adult life and in doing so obscure the richness of their experience and their capacity to have an impact on their student life (Holdsworth 2001). In order to maintain authenticity within student voice work, it is imperative, then, to ensure that tutors learn how to listen to students, offer feedback and discuss what lines of action there are to be taken and to explain why certain responses are not possible. The key word here appears to be 'listen' which leads me to consider whether tutors know how to listen and act appropriately or is student voice a matter of ticking the relevant boxes to show that the task has been completed. In terms of my study, I was interested in whether tutors had a readiness to be surprised by students' insights and capabilities and were not dismissive of their thinking.

It seems valuable at this point to reflect on the spaces in which student voice 'happens'. Firstly at institutional level, student voice impacts on the structures, for example student council, student governors and students sitting on panels of appointments. Secondly, student voice work is seen in the classroom. Here the students' cultural histories and forms of knowing are set in a privileged position (Kincheloe and Steinberg 1998). Value is seen here in engaging students in producing knowledge. The perceived outcome in both cases is to increase student representation and participation in processes and practices from which they have previously been excluded (Taylor and Robinson 2009). Whilst the desired outcome is highlighted, it remains to be seen at this stage whether student voice is utilised in these examples. My data analysis chapter addresses these issues in depth and questions the student and staff preoccupation with feedback which detracts from any discussion which explores the wider gamut of practices which engages with student voice.

Couldry (2010) argues that having a voice requires resources, both in practical terms and the status deemed to be necessary to be recognised as a voice. No more so is this seen than in the language used within higher education, which students report as being totally different from that which they have experienced in school or further

education (Read, Francis and Robson 2001). For students, this can cause considerable stress and leave them alienated by this specialised discourse. In fact, Bartholomae (1985) goes so far as to assert that practices within higher education place an expectation on the student to speak and write in a specific academic way well before they have learned the skill. It may be as Bourdieu (1977) suggests that in the language we use in higher education we are legitimising particular power relations. Whilst it is a requirement that students engage in the language of higher education, resources need to be available to enable them to take part in the experience. It does however beg the question as to why the students are not able to demonstrate knowledge in their own way, using their own voice.

The work of Bourdieu (1986 cited in Wacquant 2005) is helpful here in situating the voice of students within a socio-cultural context and, as such, leads to considerations as to how voice can valuably draw on cultural capital to extend its value and strength. This would require an emphasis on engagement with the cultural experiences of students and a move away from dominant discourses which seek to marginalise individuals. Practices which enable students to question social structures and to present their ideas in their own way would go some way to achieving this end. It would also require the development of 'fields' described by Navarro (2016:18) as 'a network, structure or set of relationships which may be intellectual, religious, educational, and cultural.' In this case the educational institution and the structure of the relationships between tutor and student may be improved to enable students to reproduce their individual capital. Further exploration of the work of Bourdieu is shown within the data analysis section of the study as I examine how the cultural experiences of the students and tutors reflect their own cultural and social capital.

This literature review chapter has explored existing empirical studies, related and relevant literature which contributes to the body of knowledge relating to student voice epistemologies. At the initial stage of writing, the literature was limited due to a lack of studies of student voice in higher education. Contemporary literature has, however, been included within the data analysis chapter as and when it became available as a direct result of an increased focus and emphasis on students' rights and engagement in making choices. Newly inspired studies have clearly emerged which begin to show a change of ideology, political upheaval and the need to

increase accountability in response to them. Further, in an effort to maintain a commitment to the emergence of inductive data, I have not only allowed the literature to influence my thinking about the data, but also allowed the data to influence my choice on which literature to include.

Within the following Methodology chapter, I will explore the methodological considerations I have made in relation to my study. These will encompass the theoretical frameworks and concepts in which my chosen approaches and methods are located. I will go on to show how ethical matters have been addressed to ensure a rigorous methodology.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The methodology section of my study refers to the principles and values, philosophies and ideologies that underpin research (Clough and Nutbrown 2007). It is designed to structure how the researcher perceives and understands the topic and the knowledge created. The deeply held principles, values and beliefs which drive the desire to conduct the research act as a scaffold when considering which literature to engage with, which data collection methods to use and which approach to use when analysing and interpreting data.

Within this chapter I will offer a rationale for my choice of methodological approach. I will demonstrate how my approach is underpinned by my own commitment to emancipatory research. My study explores and examines students' and tutors' perception of the utilisation and purpose of student voice in higher education with a view to potentially reveal practices which are oppressive and exclusive. Further, I will analyse my chosen data collection methods and show how I intended to reflect my personal values and principles within the collection and analytical process. Engaging with reflexivity has enabled me to position myself more closely within my study. It could be argued that reflexivity is a contested term. As one of the pillars of critical qualitative research, Fontana (2004) argues that it relates to the degree of influence that the researcher applies either intentionally or unintentionally to their findings. Primeau (2003:9) further puts forward the notion that 'reflexivity enhances the quality of research through its ability to extend our understanding of how our positions and interests as researchers affect all stages of the research process'. Within my study and subsequent analysis I will explain how I believe that I influenced the research and how this impacted on my findings.

When planning my methodology, I was particularly interested in the writing of Stierer and Antoniou (2004) who introduced the notion that there may be a need for distinctive methodologies for pedagogic research within higher education. They suggest that pedagogic research is largely shaped by educational research in schools or the distinct disciplines in which researchers work. Furthermore, it could be

suggested that the characteristics of the different settings are distinctive and require more clearly defined approaches which reflect their function and ethos. This can be seen in a number of ways; firstly, higher education institutions have a distinctive role and function in relation to their histories, culture and traditions, particularly for higher education operating within a further education environment (Becher and Trowler 2001). Secondly, learners in higher education are volunteers and adults, which may impact on their motivation and engagement with the research process. Finally, much of the research is practitioner based, focusing on experiential learning which may lead researchers in higher education to be more explicitly committed to particular philosophical or ideological values and principles (Stierer and Antoniou 2004). Although a framework for defining methodologies in research situated in higher education is provided within the writing of Stierer and Antoniou (2004), no specific answer is found in relation to how these methodologies could be utilised, other than the idea that the distinctiveness of methodologies in higher education pedagogic research may derive from the diversity of purposes and contexts which exist. Given this, my emphasis remained focused on ensuring that the methodology and consequent data collection methods were robust and clearly defined my own values, the values of the organisation in which I work and to create a visible harmony within the research.

3.1   Ontology, epistemology and methodology

Ontology is described as a set of assumptions about what the world 'is' (Henn et al 2009:18). In this way, it is an understanding of the nature of existence. I understand the world to be viewed in this way in that reality is composed of clearly formed entities which can be identified (Gray 2009). In this case these views are identified through multiple realities which are constructed by individuals. The way of being is evident in the responses of the participants as they present their views, assumptions and individual realities. Within my study however, I have questioned this representation in the external world as the lack of engagement with 'becoming' a construct which explores change and the limits of truth seeking. I consider that truth and meaning do not necessarily exist in the abstract and that meaning is constructed within the contextual situation. In this way, facts cannot be separated from the values attached to them. It is with this in mind that I drew on an interpretivist approach

which enabled social, historical and cultural interpretations of the data collected through methods which explored qualitative data.

My ontological approach fed into my epistemological stance in that it informed the way in which I understand how knowledge is created. In this instance methods have been chosen which reflect the idea that knowledge is subjective and is socially constructed. Engaging in interviews and focus groups enabled me to collect qualitative data which demonstrated multiple standpoints which are subject to contextual influences. I have acknowledged that reality is socially and culturally constructed within the mind and the world of those being researched. As a researcher employing an interpretivist approach I was able to put myself in the place of the participants and appreciate the structural circumstances in which they operated. I used this information to take account of their actions and responses. This was particularly valuable in terms of the tutors who I worked with on a day to day basis and as such am considered an 'insider' within the research. I was especially interested in how power lies predominantly with the researched within the interpretivist paradigm as those being viewed are considered to be experts on the topic of the research and their experiences thereof.

My epistemological perspective was seen within my collection of qualitative data reflecting a constructivist paradigm which sees 'truth and meaning' as constructed and interpreted subjectively. My belief that there is no universal truth (Foucault 1988) is seen in the value I place on making meaning through socially constructed practices an and an understanding that power and truth are interrelated through practices which constrain. The relationship between myself and participants is especially important within my study as I am better positioned to make links between variables and events within my data. Within this paradigm my role as the researcher and that of the researched are inextricably linked as tutor/student and tutor/tutor thereby enabling findings to be created as the study developed (Waring 2017). My place as an insider within the research cannot be overstated in terms of the quality of the data collected and the prior knowledge of the participants and their circumstances. I do however present the challenges and limitations experienced within my study in later chapters.

In terms of the data collected, the focus was very much on the inductive nature of evidence whereby information emerges throughout the study and draws on data to build theory as and when it emerges. The inclusion of a baseline of literature and theory within my literature review reflects this concept as I draw on theory throughout my study in order to support the views of participants thereby retaining their power within the research relationship.

Challenges were identified however in terms of the pre-set limitations of my own interpretation derived from my life experiences and subjectivity. This is discussed in more depth on page 12 and 13 as I relate the value and challenge of insider research. Attention to a rigorous frame within my methodology has enabled me to engage in ethnography which explores connections between culture, social word and researcher. In addition, value has been added through the inclusion of a critical inquiry which investigates currently held values of participants and challenges established social structures.

Taking these considerations into account I designed my research project using an interpretative approach, as I aspired to consider how the participants perceived their world and the experiences they have within it. Grix (2004) suggests that the emphasis of this paradigm is on understanding as opposed to explanation. He goes on to say that the social and natural sciences are distinct from one another and proposes that the interpretivist approach enables the social world to be studied from within. It could be argued however, that the distinctions here are another example of false dichotomies and as such as a researcher my role was to ensure that I did not reproduce participants as powerless (Stanley and Wise 1983). In my analysis chapter, I later explain how member checking enabled me to address this issue. As a social researcher, I collected qualitative data which was presented using an interpretive research tradition to explore the knowledge and understanding of participants through descriptions of social meanings in their social world. Ultimately, my purpose was to build an understanding of their perceptions of how student voice is utilised in higher education and the behaviour this provokes and elicits in terms of how students and tutors react to these within their relationship. In this case students were invited to share their understanding of student voice thus providing me with the

opportunity to examine the links between their engagement with such and their experiences in terms of emancipatory goals.

The interpretive paradigm is particularly associated with unstructured qualitative methods which enable the use of an analytical-inductive data analysis method. Evidently, focus groups, unstructured interviews and a personal research journal have given me the opportunity to satisfy these criteria by allowing me to collect and analyse inductive data which arises throughout the research process. In this way, focus groups permit researchers to enter the world of the participants and to utilise this privileged position to draw out 'complexities, nuances and contradictions' (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis 2013). Similarly, qualities of semi-structured interviews enabled the opportunity for inductive data to emerge due to the idea that participants may be 'answering questions other than those we are asking them' as they explore their own ways of understanding and making sense of their social world' (Mason 2002:231). In addition, the importance of including a research journal cannot be overstated in engaging in reflexivity to record promising analytical ideas.

3.2   Context of research, methods, recruitment and sampling

My research was conducted in a higher education department within a further education college. The department in which I work delivers BA (Hons) Childhood Studies, level 4-6, BA (Hons) Health and Social Care levels 4-6 and Foundation Degrees, Early Years Practice and Working with Children and Young People. I conducted focus group discussions with 10 students from BA Level 4, 10 students from BA Level 5, 16 students from BA Level 6 (Childhood studies), 12 students from BA Level 6 (Health & Social Care), and 12 students from Foundation Degree level 5. These will be identified within the data analysis as BACS4, BACS5, BACS6, BAHSC6 and FDA5. I will identify male participants when referring to their responses, but in all other cases the responses are from females. The focus groups were formed from participants, using the self-selected sample, whereby the participants volunteer themselves to take part.

I engaged in self-selected focus groups with the students as I felt it would give them the opportunity to offer their thoughts, opinions and views in an unthreatening

environment. The fact that the students are familiar with each other led me to believe that I would be able to stimulate discussion among the group which would otherwise be unheard. I considered that as the students share specific attributes, the discussions would enable them to clarify and articulate their views more clearly thereby demonstrating the interactive element of focus groups which is considered to be crucial in qualitative studies.

I introduced my study to all the groups and asked for volunteers to take part in a group discussion. Participation information sheets and informed consent letters (Appendix A) were distributed confidentially to the students who had volunteered to take part and given details of the date they would need to be returned. Bulmer (2008) puts forward the notion that informed consent is central to ethically sound research and reflects the principle that involvement in research is free from coercion and is based on accurate information about the research. The rights and obligations of the participant and the researcher were made transparent within the documentation and once again within the focus group discussion. The students were also given a time and date to attend which was outside of their class time to enable them to make a choice of whether to attend or not. I conducted the focus groups according to their study groups to ensure that they were with students who they knew and would hopefully be happy to share information with. Not all the class chose to attend; the groups consisted of the numbers stated above and I offered alternative times to any students who wanted to attend but were unable to. Interestingly, none of these were taken up. Reflecting on this, I made the assumption that students may feel awkward if they were in a smaller group or indeed alone. Llamputtong (2011) advises that the ideal size of a focus group should be between four and ten participants, however, I felt that this very much depends upon the size of the group that the participants are taken from and the subject matter in hand.

Reflecting on the data gathered from the focus groups and tutors it was clear that the tutors were far more inclined to offer their views on 'student voice' than the students. Ironically, this appeared to suggest as lack of interest from the students in a process which was intended to give them more freedom of speech, autonomy and

satisfaction in terms of their experiences at college. Alternatively, it could be that the students have less experience of being asked for their views and have less skill in engaging with discussion around their needs. In fact, students reported that they valued being asked for their views; something which they did not engage in at college. Tutors however are regularly consulted in terms of their views as part of their professional roles. Further, they appear to understand the value and purpose of encouraging the voice of students as part of their role.

The focus groups lasted approximately for one hour, with enough time given to 'warm up' before commencing the discussion about the issue (Conradson 2005). I felt that the use of focus groups would enable me to identify students' views by facilitating and moderating discussions among participants whilst electronically recording the discussion. In addition, I acted as the questioner to direct participants towards the focus of the discussion detailed in my focus group discussion frame (Appendix B). I believed that this would enable the students to put forward their views within a secure environment, however once engaged in these discussions it was apparent that this was not as straightforward as I had originally thought and will analyse these concepts in greater detail within my analysis of the data. Kitzinger (2005:57) puts forward the notion that focus group methodology is an 'ideal' approach for examining stories, experiences, points of view, individuals' concerns and beliefs.' Conradson (2005:131) supports this notion by adding that focus groups are particularly valuable when exploring issues 'where complex patterns of behaviour and motivation are evident'. In this way the researcher is able to explore 'the gap between what people say and what they do'. A key point was identified here as data revealed that this was in fact the case.

It could be suggested however that the very fact that students had volunteered to take part in the discussion may suggest that they were positive about the use of student voice, and therefore could potentially affect validity of the results as a broader range of views may not be reflected. Furthermore, I was conscious about power issues that may be evident, as the participants may feel uneasy about contributing. Benefits of the focus group discussion are seen in the familiarity of group members, sharing a common experience, knowledge and interest, although at

the initial stages, I was naïve in making this assumption. In this way, confidentiality is already established, as is the willingness to explore ideas with mutual respect, again, a naïve position to take given that not all students were willing to share ideas or contribute to group discussions. The focus group was felt to be a vital part of the research process as it intends to give the participants a 'voice' in which to express their views and ideas. I felt that the inseparability of the researcher and participants is essential to research in this area and as such the voice of the researcher is also seen as vital. Mitchell, (1993:55) offers the view that 'the informed researcher's voice no longer provides an authoritarian monologue but contributes a part to dialogue'.

I was concerned however that some participants may be less willing to contribute to the discussion than others and lead to a power dynamics, as stronger characters take ownership of the proceedings, a point which is addressed more fully within my analysis chapter. The very fact that I was trying to extract the voice from students who may not wish to contribute raises questions about the way in which I would approach them. A contextual analysis of how I addressed this can be seen on page 93 of the data analysis. Additionally, I would need to acknowledge their silence as 'voice' in its own right. This idea can be seen on page 106 and 138 in the analysis section. Clough (1998c) offers support for this idea when he describes 'inhibited voices' as those which are difficult to extract. In this way there may be evidence of the views of the group being difficult to separate from the views of the individual, thereby leading to the question of reliability in the results.

The problem with separating the individual voice from the group voice was very much apparent within the views of the tutors; this will be further explored within the data analysis section. I hoped that the focus group would lead to spontaneity and synergism, described by Hess (1968) as when a wider bank of data emerges through the group interaction, and snowballing, when the statements of one respondent initiates a chain reaction of additional comments.

I also engaged in semi-structured interviews with three tutors from within my team and one tutor from the validating university. These lasted approximately 30 minutes, allowing for extended discussion where appropriate. Again, these tutors were invited to, and volunteered to take part in the study. I chose to engage in interviews with the

tutors as I thought that they would be able to speak freely in confidence. I believed that the tutors may have a good understanding of the topic area and would be able to offer insightful information. I was looking for the participants to be able to make explicit that which had previously been implicit. Where more clarity was needed, I felt that the interview would enable me to probe 'beneath the surface' to identify variables and their potential relationships. I also believed that the interview process would enable me to move from a process which merely answers questions to one which would allow me to make meaning through connections with my own experiences. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed me to explore the subjective meanings that respondents offer and to divert from these where relevant.

Tutors were given participant information sheets and informed consent letters (Appendix C) and asked to return them within a set time; their rights and those of the research highlighted within the letters and again at the outset of the interview. All tutors within the team were invited to take part, however, only three tutors from my team responded to my request for volunteers. Reflecting upon this, I realise that the timing may well have had an impact on this as the team were particularly busy at this time. I did however, approach the team at a later date when it was quieter, but still did not have any response. I was particularly mindful that I wanted the participants to be able to present a 'realist' approach which sees them describing external reality, in addition to a 'narrative' approach which sees them accessing stories through which they describe their world (Silverman 2005:154).

I prepared an interview frame (Appendix D) demonstrating my intentions for discussion, whilst bearing in mind the need to allow the discussion to take an alternative course where relevant. The interviews took place in a small office which was familiar to the tutors as somewhere that they meet with students on a regular basis. Burgoyne (1994) describes what he calls 'stakeholder analysis' as being the significant people within an organisation who can relay an understanding of what happens on a day to day basis. This was particularly important to me as I saw this as a commitment from the tutors to explore the use of student voice with a view to gaining a much broader understanding of its benefits, challenges and limitations. The interviews were semi-structured to allow for a depth of qualitative data to be gathered, whilst also enabling me to have some control over the process. With this in

mind, I provided a set of questions in addition to preparing a set of sub-questions which were used to probe further to gather more information (Koshy, 2009). In effect, this combined the structure of a list of issues to be covered with the freedom to allow the conversation to develop where necessary. In this way a certain degree of flexibility was shown and allowed for the pursuit of unexpected lines of enquiry.

Consideration was given to ethical issues whereby tutors may feel that they cannot be honest with their views. I particularly wanted to ensure that participants did not feel that there was a managerial agenda to the request to be involved in an interview. To address this point, I challenged the idea of the 'vertical relationship' between researcher and research "objects"' by adopting a more 'view from below' which sees the interview as an informal structure whereby a shared exchange of information is valued (Mies 1993:68).

A key issue in relation to interviewing was the development and use of my own interview skills. Thomas (2009) put forward the view that the quality and nature of questioning needs to be clear, along with demonstration of good listening skills and positive body language. These issues were carefully considered throughout the process in order to ensure the overall conduct of the interview was positive, although I was mindful that the process would need to be positive for both parties. In this instance I concentrated on ensuring that significant autonomy was given to the respondent in shaping the discussion by providing them with the opportunity to discuss the topic using their own frames of reference, language and concepts, rather than my own.

As a means of utilising reflexivity to analyse key concepts, I employed a research journal (otherwise termed as memo writing). This was of particular importance when justifying the value of the data received and a means of thinking through my ideas and concepts. Marshall and Rossman (2011) offer the purpose of thematic and theoretical memos as a tool used by the researcher to record their thoughts about how the data is accumulating and what patterns are emerging. Wolcott (1994) refers to this process as the transformational process which leads the research and in terms of my commitment to engaging with inductive data, this method was invaluable. I saw the use of the journal as enlightening as I identified my own view of

'reality' and this enabled me to search my own self to consider why I had made specific assumptions. The value of these moments of enlightenment were vital in identifying my taken for granted assumptions regarding the importance of my study. Specifically this was evident within my view that students would want to engage in discussion about the use of their voice when in fact, they were not enthusiastic in all instances.

Following the conducting of the focus group and interviews, I utilised the recording device to transcribe the data. This was completed line by line in a format which enabled me to make clear notes which directed me to emerging themes on the pages. All the transcriptions were made as soon as possible following the interview or focus group. Charmaz (1995) recommends the studying of data as it emerges in order to make it easier to identify respondents' meanings. I believed that completing the transcriptions myself was the best course of action as it placed me more firmly within the data, leading to a closer interpretation of detail. The transcripts and data device were duly stored in a locked cabinet.

3.3 Theoretical perspectives and research methodology

3.3.1 Ethnography

Ethnographic research was of particular interest to me due to its prime mode of data collection being focus group discussions and the fact that I was attempting to determine the relationships between culture and behaviour (Gray 2009).

Within this section I will demonstrate how I engaged with ethnography and how this was evidenced within my data collection and analysis. I will further show I extended my ethnographic approach to address critical ethnographic ideologies. Particular attention is given to how my role of the insider has impacted on the data collection and analysis. Examples are given to support my claims made and discussion around the potential challenges faced have been illustrated. I will begin by putting forward the historical context of ethnography in an attempt to theorise decisions I have taken.

Ethnographic research was pioneered in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by anthropologists and has now become a valuable approach for qualitative

researchers. Its origins are traced to Malinowski's fieldwork among Trobriand Islanders in 1914. 'He was the first to use participant observations to generate specific anthropological knowledge' (Ellen 1984:15). Malinowski believed that it was only by becoming involved in the lives of the participants that human experiences could be understood.

Ethnography refers primarily to the ethnographer participating in people's daily lives for an extended period of time collecting data which informs their research. Flick (2012: xv) argues that ethnographic researchers may become participant observers who attempt 'to balance the objective collection of data with the subjective insights that result from an on-going association with the people whose lives they seek to understand'. I believe that whilst I was not conducting observations in a traditional sense, I was in fact utilising observation techniques as I engaged in focus groups by recording interaction, reaction and participation. I was making judgements on how participants' behaviour impacted on presentation of their views. Examples can be seen on 104 where I explore the perceived reason behind the use of group voice as opposed to individual voice and the value attached to these. As an ethnographer I was able to observe the input from participants to assess whether the view given represented an individual or group understanding. It could be said however that in my role as an ethnographer who is an insider, my reflections are particularly subjective. Further, there is a perceived tendency to present a view of data which more closely reflects my own.

Jordan and Yeomans (2006) put forward the notion that ethnography is unique in its capacity to get close to sites of exploitation and oppression thereby enabling the researcher to experience first-hand what forms these take and how they are organised. The ethnographer can also remain in a privileged position in respect of developing and constructing emancipatory practices. I found this to be particularly valuable as I explored the potential hegemonic relationship between tutors and students. Following detailed findings which relate to the opposing view point which sees the students as holding the power within the relationship, I was obliged to review my previously held assumptions that the power lies with the tutors. I will return to these ideas more closely within the data analysis chapter of the thesis whereby I explore power as a key emerging theme. However, it is clear that

challenges can be experienced in relation to the subjectivity of the analysis of data when taking an ethnographic stance.

Early pioneers such as Malinowski advocated the use of participant observation, but the fact that researchers lived within the communities for considerable lengths of time reduced the objectivity in relating the experiences of participants (Angrosino 2007). This appeared to be significant within my study as I had worked with the students and tutors for some time and as such it could be viewed that my objectivity may be compromised. Harding (1987) however offers the contention that feminists should place themselves in the same critical plane as those being researched in an attempt to move away from conventional approaches which emphasise detachment and objectivity. In relation to my study I see myself moving away from models of impartiality and objectivity in order to challenge unequal and exploitative relations with a view to transform practice through emancipatory goals. As a feminist researcher I accept that no research is value free. I have attempted to use my experiences to emphasize the importance of listening to participants, recording the data in an ethical manner and understanding the views of the participants. It was intended that this would empower the participants through their contribution to a social issue whilst enabling a therapeutic encounter as they reflect on their thoughts.

It is important at this stage to reflect on my role as an insider within my research and demonstrate how ethnography can both support and hinder progress in collecting and analysing data collected from participants.

Whilst the value of ethnographic research is not called into question, there are a number of challenges I faced as an ethnographer. Firstly, I faced difficulties in separating myself as an insider and there were times when I received information which I found uncomfortable. An example of this is seen on page 114 whereby Tutor B suggested that as professional academics we are in a position to use our power accordingly. Secondly, my previous knowledge of tutors and student had the tendency to shape my views in terms of which data to include and which to leave out of the dataset. This was particularly evident as I recorded answers to questions which contradicted discussions held on an informal basis. An example is seen in a discussion with Tutor B who stated that he valued 'student voice' in the interview but

informally disagreed with this. Finally, recognising my positionality in terms of researcher, insider, tutor, colleague and friend caused further challenges in terms of reporting data.

Ethnographic researchers such as Zora Neale Hurston (1990a) began to experiment with ethnography in response to the challenges faced in studying social and cultural behaviour in action. She questioned if ethnography could be conducted in areas other than small rural communities. Furthermore, criticism was levelled at classic ethnographic studies which assumed homogeneity and stasis of the focus group and raised concerns over perspective and bias. This was felt to be relevant within my study as I questioned the value of individual voice and group voice and considered how these could be separated. Further analysis of the binary concept of group and individual voice will be developed more fully on page 104 within the analysis chapter of the study.

Following on from the work of Hurston, the Chicago School experimented with conducting ethnographic research in urban communities and in doing so has led to ethnography being included in education as an accepted field of research. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) more recently summarise by suggesting that there is a sense in which all researchers are participant observers and as a result the boundaries which frame ethnography are unclear. I accept that my role within the focus groups and interviews render me as an observer of the participants as I drew not only on what participants said but how they behaved and as such I paid particular attention to reflexivity in an effort to reduce researcher bias. My role as an insider here was particularly complex in that I saw my role as a means of amplifying the voices of those who may have been previously unheard in an attempt to represent their accounts. In this way, I saw myself as an advocate for their rights. Interestingly, this could however have reflected the use of power on my part by setting myself up as the advocate, thereby rendering students as incapable or unwilling to act for themselves. Alternatively, I was seeking to explore the accounts of the participants to understand how they were produced and the premise on which they are based. As an insider within my study I felt that at times there was a danger of my making assumptions about participants' views as I have previous knowledge of them as tutors and students. In addition, I felt that I may be exploiting the relationship

in order to obtain relevant data. As previously mentioned the use of reflexivity in the form of memo writing and journal entries helped to rationalise key points raised.

Historically, ethnography has viewed participant observation as central to and a necessary part of ethnography. Initially I considered this as a dilemma in that I was not able to observe the participants in my study, nor was it felt reasonable to do so. I was led to exploring focus groups as a means to overcome this dilemma as it offers conversational groups that in turn facilitated participant observation-like understandings. Whilst this could be seen as an unnatural setting as opposed to the natural setting which is so rich within ethnographic studies, I felt that the focus group would still de-emphasise the researcher in favour of the participants interests (Suter 2000). I also considered that 'natural' in this instance did in fact relate to the setting which the participants were familiar with and one in which they enacted their student experiences. Further, Reeves et al (2008:12) advise that when using ethnography an in-depth description of the setting in which the research takes place is vital and that the ethnographic approach is shown in 'the studies of social interactions, behaviours and perceptions that occur within groups, teams, organisations and communities'. I felt satisfied that the use of ethnography was indeed relevant and that in utilising this approach I was justified in not rejecting unusual or unfamiliar approaches in favour of 'safe' which may reduce creativity.

As an interpretive researcher I was interested in reporting data which reflected the nature of the discussions within the focus groups and semi structured interviews, whilst recognising my own values as a researcher. In practice however, I was mindful of the need to limit these influences through reflexivity to produce results which are a true reflection of the experiences of the participants. This was achieved through continuous recording of instances whereby I felt that I had, or had the potential to direct the views of participants towards those which reflected my values and beliefs. An example of this is my assumption that students value the relationship in the classroom and are driven to voice their views and concerns as a direct result of this.

3.3.2. Critical ethnography

I considered the use of critical ethnography as valuable due to its roots being grounded in the theory that society is structured by class and status which serve to marginalise minority groups. I believed this approach to be extremely beneficial if I was to demonstrate my commitment to feminist research which challenges unequal and oppressed groups. Feminist research therefore acts as a medium which can be used to reveal inequalities and in the case of my study, it relates to power differentials in the education system. It is with this in mind that I have searched for knowledge which is useful as opposed to knowledge *per se* (Kelly et al 1994). Useful knowledge in this context seeks to transform the lives through 'emancipation, growth and development' (Harding 1987:8) and that which is 'socially situated' thereby reflecting the experiences of women from an advantaged starting point (Harding 2003). In this instance I related 'emancipation, growth and development' to enabling students to voice their views in a secure environment leading them towards participation and inclusion. Validation of this point is evident within discussions with students who pointed out that they are professionals in their own right and expected to be treated as such at university through collaborative dialogue in an environment which encourages democratic participation.

Marshall and Rossman (2011:26) suggest that 'critical ethnography begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain'. In this case the unfairness relates to the power issues identified in relation to student voice both in terms of vulnerable voices, unequal power relations and the perceived identity of the students. Evidence is seen here of the influences of Neo-Marxism in their view that critical ethnography will always relate to political struggles for justice and equality.

Differing opinions can be explored as to the position of politics within social research, an example being Hammersley (1995), who argues that research should not be political in the sense of pursuing an immediate goal other than knowledge which is valuable and relevant. This was interesting to me as I explored the links between the political preoccupation with the promotion and endorsement of student voice in higher education and the evidence of the success of such (Dept. BIS 2011). Angrosino, (2007:11) advocates that critical theory not only challenges the dominant

institutions in society, but argues that the main philosophical approach of critical theory is the development of 'multiple standpoint epistemologies'. Angrosino (2007:11) goes on to suggest this perspective is 'based on the assumption that not only will there inevitably be different bodies of opinions within the community but that individual ethnographers will bring their own baggage with them'. In this instance my identity as the ethnographer was important when identifying the views and experiences of the participants as this presented a more individual view rather than views which were founded in generalisations thereby leading to a lack of validity. I felt this to be particularly relevant as a previous student, programme leader and tutor and as such I tried to relate participants' views to their experiences whilst reflecting upon my own.

A critical ethnographic approach appeared to address the rationale for my study as its origins are found in its commitment to challenging accepted teaching practices in addition to going beyond the classroom to explore issues surrounding dilemmas of policy, power and dominance in institutions (Marshall 1997a). With regard to this study, I examined the perceptions of teaching practices which demonstrate power and student empowerment. The fact that I utilised an emancipatory approach which sought to empower the subjects of this social inquiry reflected the view that as a critical ethnographer I explored beneath surface appearances to identify 'taken for granted' attitudes and assumptions. My intention was to disrupt the status quo through questioning prior notions regarding the underlying operations of power and control. This was particularly evident in responses from the tutors who were conscious of the underlying power issues within their relationships. An example can be seen in the response from tutor A who puts forward the notion that

> Teachers asking for feedback; the power is clear… again it is us (tutors) using our power to coerce them into saying what we want.

My questioning of this idea led to an interesting discussion whereby we explored how this impacted on their relationship and how this could be developed.

Madison (2012:5) proposes that this sees the critical ethnographer as moving from 'what is' to 'what could be' and demonstrates their contribution to emancipatory knowledge and social justice. By highlighting the inconsistencies within my

institution, I was then in a position to move towards 'what could be' through the development of implications and recommendations for practice.

It could be argued that ethnographic methods are particularly useful when researchers wish to explore issues which are currently not fully understood. In this instance it would relate to the role of the tutor and student in facilitating the voice of students being heard and understood. This would suggest that utilising methods which are detailed and quantifiable would be untimely. Rather, researchers may employ methods which could inform the research question by valuably providing an overview of key issues (Flick 2012). I believed that the methods chosen (interviews and focus groups) would draw on the collection of qualitative data to explore previously under- researched topics. In this instance, I felt that my study which explores student voice would likely lead to the exploration of current issues.

The tutors were extremely forthcoming in expressing their views on the use of voice in a neoliberal society. For example on page 100 where ideas around education, gender, social class and power demonstrate the value of utilising an ethnographic approach which makes use of both formal and informal meetings with participants. I found the focus on spontaneous discussions valued within ethnography with tutors to be particularly rewarding as we engaged in numerous discussions relating to student voice thereby showing me as the researcher both overtly and covertly in the lives of the participants. I refer to page 123 at this point which identifies an important issue raised regarding 'surveillance' of tutors in the workplace. In this way, certain topics lend themselves to be studied more effectively by ethnographic methods. In fact, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) draw upon Glaser & Strauss' theory (1967) by proposing that there is a distinction between substantive and formal theory. The notion of my study relating to empowerment within the classroom would tend to be located within 'formal theory' which is described by Glaser and Strauss (1967:32) as 'that which is developed for a formal or conceptual area of sociological inquiry'. Substantive theory, however, 'conceptualises the empirical substance of the area of research' (Urquhart 2013:107). It was hoped that the examination of power as a formal concept would lead to an interchange with more topical or substantive concerns. The importance of the researcher as an insider within ethnographic researcher cannot be overstated in that they are able to engage with the participants

both within a formal and social arena thereby strengthening the relationship between the researcher and participant. I will follow up on this idea on page 12 whereby I show how the role of the researcher as an insider can be both positive and negative in terms of collecting the voice of participants.

Within my study, I was interested in gathering information surrounding the use of student voice within the classroom and as such utilised focus groups to ascertain relevant data received from students. I hoped to recognise the specific elements which surrounded the distribution of power in line with secondary data. In particular I was interested in considering what language is used in the classroom which may demonstrate the use of power in practical terms. I was also concerned with highlighting the processes which placed teachers in control and the possible consequences of this in terms of retention, disaffection and empowerment. Ultimately, it was my aim to determine if groups or individuals were marginalised by oppression as a result of lack of student voice. Origins of the work of Freire (2002) are reflected here in his view that some teachers represent the cultural hegemony of the dominant society. His goal was to move students away from being objects in their education and become subjects who had 'the capacity to adapt themselves to reality plus the critical capacity to make choices and transform [their] reality' (Freire, 2002:4). This would appear to suggest that true empowerment comes from choices being made available to students and the knowledge of how to facilitate them. In this way choices are only able to be made if conditions are put in place to facilitate them. The concept of choices made by students in relation to using their voice will be explored more fully within my data analysis section whereby I will give contextual examples.

Whilst conducting my own qualitative study I felt it to be vital to ascertain my own positionality as an ethnographer. The fact that I was previously a student at my setting and I studied the same degree perhaps indicated that I had an understanding of their experiences. However, I was also mindful that this fact in itself may well have a negative effect on the collection of data and it would be wrong for me to judge their experiences based on my own. Fine (1994) advocates the positionality of voices, whereby the participants themselves are the focus and their voices relate their experiences. In this way the position of the ethnographer is not addressed.

Conversely, Noblit et al (2004) argues that critical ethnography has been criticised for its focus on social change with less consideration given to the researchers own positionality. Noblit et al (2004:3) further suggest that 'critical ethnographers must explicitly consider how their own acts of studying and representing people and situations are acts of dominance. Therefore an acknowledgment of positionality was vital in order to recognise my own power bias and privilege.

Ethnography involves working closely with research participants and as such requires all researchers to view ethics as a key part of their study. More specifically the fact that I was an 'insider' within my research study required me to address ethical considerations both at policy level but also in relation to my own personal values. Labaree (2002:109) puts forward the notion that research which takes place within one's place of work leads researchers to navigate their way through 'hidden ethical and methodological dilemmas of 'insiderness'. However, given that the position is not stable and that the dichotomy between insider and outsider is in fact more of a shifting of boundaries which is dependent upon situations, positions and relationships (Mercer 2007). This was particularly relevant within my study as I moved from engaging in discussion with the students during one of the focus groups, to involving a colleague, who conducted another focus group. I felt this to be particularly relevant at this time as I had just released the grades for this group. The timing was felt not be conducive to engaging with valid data as they (students) were in general disappointed with the grades received. Merton (1972) highlights two opposing positions in relation to the advantages and disadvantages of insider research, suggesting that it is only the outsider who can offer a true objective stance and observe situations with detachment. Conversely, the insider is better positioned as a researcher because of his or her knowledge of the interaction.

Within my study, as an insider I believe that one of the problems I encountered was inevitably, 'informant bias'. In fact, Preedy and Riches (1988) warn of the possibility that insider research has a greater risk of distortion due to preconceptions of the situation and the need to maintain the relationship. In view of this I attempted to reduce this by sharing the information with the participants before including it in the study whilst remaining fully aware of the dominant discourse of the researcher in terms of collecting 'multiple truths' which are socially constructed and temporal in

essence. The students however were reticent to change anything and did not appear interested in reflecting on or reviewing data. The results of this are explored more fully within the data analysis chapter.

I considered myself to be a teacher who has always acknowledged a feminist standpoint and as such have assumed that my research should also reflect my commitment to feminist values and beliefs. It is with this in mind that I have approached feminist ethnography as a way of combining my commitment to equality through critical ethnography, emancipatory practice and feminist ethnography. My first task was to consider how feminism and ethnography would sit together within my study.

Skeggs (2007) puts forward the notion that four main contemporary locations have used ethnography; these being anthropology, sociology, education and social studies. The relationship between sociology and education is particularly important within my study as I examine the complexities of race, gender and class within higher education (Afshar and Maynard 1994). In addition, consideration of identity formation through realist based methods such as interviews within qualitative research were employed. Likewise, feminism challenges accepted theories by providing new knowledge relating to women's and girl's lives. Skeggs (2007) further notes that debate within feminist theory impact upon how feminist ethnography is framed. Firstly, it engages in general debates within feminist theories about politics, methodology, ethics and epistemology and secondly with debates surrounding ethnography outside feminism. It was intended therefore that my methodological stance would reflect feminist values not only through the methods chosen, but also with debates surrounding inequality in relation to other areas of oppression. In this way my intention was to move away from ethnographies which are 'about' women to ethnographies which are informed 'by' feminist theory. In this instance, evidence is seen in my search for transformative practices which enable power to be more equally distributed. Validation for this argument is seen in the work of Dickens (1983:1) who proposes that very few feminists believe in a feminist methodology, rather 'feminists have crafted ethical and political stances out of feminism more generally and applied these to the research processes.

From a personal point of view I had initially thought that as a feminist that I could apply a feminist methodology but soon realised that I could only apply ethical and political structures to the process. As feminist debates run parallel with other forms of oppression I was mindful that I did not want to relinquish my commitment to a critical ethnographic approach, rather I wanted to combine this with feminist theory, both of which demonstrate the initial impetus of visibility within the research process. Further, my commitment to feminist principles which attempt to equalise power differentials within my research led me to utilise reflexivity to ensure that I did not render participants as powerless whilst acknowledging that power is considered to be fluid and flows in multiple directions (Foucault 1991). I accepted that this would be a difficult task for a couple of reasons. Firstly, we enter ethnography with our own 'baggage' which we cannot as researchers easily disinvest. With this in mind, it is more likely that as a researcher I take responsibility for the reproduction of power rather than equalising it. Secondly, I began with small steps to relinquish control of the research through engagement with an inductive analysis of data and member checking (Lincoln and Guba 1985) whereby I returned to the participants to review and agree data supplied, thus giving them control of the outcomes. That is not say that the study was without its problems in terms of ethics and I will return to this in the Ethics section and examples within the analysis of data.

3.4   Ethics

When I considered the ethics involved in my study, I was mindful that I needed to take into account the power issues in relation to my position as a researcher and the possibility of coercion. When interviewing fellow tutors, they may have felt that although they had volunteered for the task, they may have done so as an obligation. This was compounded by the fact that the fellow tutors were also friends, a factor which could be seen to give me a greater understanding of their world. I found this to be particularly problematic when interviewing Tutor A and Tutor C they referred to previous discussions we had had on the subject of student voice. In their responses they relayed comments I had made in a different context. An example is given as "Well you know what I mean, you understand". Ethically this supports the view that if research takes place with one's own colleagues, boundaries need to be made very clear at the outset of the study. I had not considered this and failed to take the necessary step to eliminate this.

Although it was my intention to promote an equal relationship, the epistemological power is seen in the participant's prevailing understanding of authority, both as a team leader and a researcher (Tan 2008). Henn et al (2006) further warn of the ethical implications of power, authority and influence within the relationships formed during a research process and highlights the dangers of persuasive influences which are covert in essence and lead to the reality of equality becoming far less likely. Within my research I considered this to be extremely important if I was to follow a rigorous ethical path through the data collection and analysis. I perceived that my existing relationship with the students and tutors was a positive one and I ensured that I avoided using this to convince students and tutors to support my comments and requests when engaging with data collection. Although I did return participants to clarify comments made, on one occasion I declined to return to students in a bid to extract information which I deemed important. This instance can be seen on page 111 whereby I had received conflicting feedback on end of module reviews. I realised that this information was important to me, but may not perceived to in the same way by them. Further example is included whereby my prior relationship with tutors caused concern when I realised that a tutor had an approach which could be considered to represent dominant practices. In this case, I needed to step back to allow the data to be explored and reflect on my feelings in relation to this.

As previously mentioned, I was committed to adopting an emancipatory approach to the study and as such I was looking to effect changes through understanding and empowerment as a result of the relationship which had been created (Lather 1991). Challenges may be seen here however as Freedman (2006) reports in her study that questions could be raised as to whether in fact research which involves working with students or fellow tutors can truly be emancipatory due to the role they take in the process. This was of interest to me as my interviews with tutors demonstrated concerns surrounding the accountability for tutors when collecting student voice. Tutors offered ideas relating to how the process could be more 'emancipatory', for example Tutor C said

> 'We should really be recording all the emails, and casual conversations had
> with students which relate to their voice'.

As the programme leader, it is likely that tutors would remain accountable as a result of the extra collection of student voice and considered whether it was ethical to engage in a discussion which could potentially result in tutors increasing their workload.

It is fair to say that no research is value free or objective (Stanley and Wise 1983), and I am mindful that within my study I have addressed the critique of feminism as overstating the subjective, emotive and irrational, thereby adding value to the binary categories which I sought to dissolve. Harding (1987) offers the contention that feminists should 'place themselves on the same critical plane as those they are researching' and as such supports the role of encompassing subjective experiences through my ability to highlight exploitative or oppressive practices. It would appear then that Hammersley and Gomm's (1997: 4.12) view that rejects the view that: 'truth is the only value that constitutes the goal of research'.

It is important to discuss the idea that research is conducted with a purpose in mind and in this case I hoped to be able to develop practices which demonstrate equality and engagement through collaboration. My concern was what would happen if I was unable to make relevant changes as a result of the study. The extent to which I would be able to control and direct any changes which the research might have highlighted was unknown and unclear at this stage. Maynard (2013) argues that feminists have raised concerns about the ethics of research which generate issues in participants' minds, then abandons them to come to terms with these on their own. If this was found to be the case, careful handling of the recommendations and outcomes would be vital to avoid misuse of power.

3.5   Ethics relating to insiderness

The concept of researching with one's own students and fellow work colleagues can be seen as problematic and it with this in mind that I offer the following discussion on the challenges and opportunities which were raised in operating as an 'insider' within my research thesis.

As an 'insider' within my study it is reported that this brings with it perceived privileges and constraints (Dobson 2009). Within this section, I will demonstrate how

the role of the insider is considered to be valuable within social research but also warn of the constraints and difficulties this brings in terms of ethics. I will draw on data as exemplars to support the points given.

Coy (2006) purports that acting as an insider in research enables a meaningful rapport to take place between the researcher and the participant as they present a shared meaning of the responses. In this manner the participant may consider the researcher identity to be one of trust and credibility. The fact that I know the tutors very well through engaging in shared practices and have formed friendships with them can be seen as a positive step towards a shared understanding of views and experiences.

Examples can be seen in discussions held with Tutor A on page 123 as I describe an incident whereby we shared a discussion surrounding surveillance and Bentham's Panopticon. In this instance we both had a shared view of the fact that as tutors we are under surveillance from the institution and this places us 'on the same side'. The fact that we had discussed this issue in an informal basis on numerous occasions had led me to make a number of assumptions. I found that there was a tendency to 'fill the gaps' in the discussions with information which had been given previously in addition to information which I knew about the participant on a personal basis. In terms of ethics this may have led to incorrect judgements being made due to the context in which this information had been given. In this instance, I felt that high levels of involvement on a personal level did not lead to more in-depth knowledge, rather it led to high levels of detached observations and inductions of possible connections in the data. The 'reality' of the data at this point was compromised as I was involved in the data and was not able to detach myself from it. I was also left to question whether my experiences had influenced the data in a negative way or if it had helped the data to evolve through explanatory perceptions. I further questioned the value of obtaining this information as I had engaged in non-scheduled interviewing with a colleague and friend. Maynard (2013:15) argues that this form of ethnographic research can present a deliberate separation of the researcher from the 'subject' of the researched. As a researcher who is committed to feminist ideology, this clearly demonstrated the involvement of hierarchal power relationship, something which I wished to avoid. In this instance it could be seen that I was not

constrained by pre-set questions and resulted in the discussion taking a self-indulgent path rendering the participant as passive.

In an interview with Tutor B he raised concerns that his role a man within a female environment caused him some concern. He felt conscious of how he treated females and commented that this "can trip me up sometimes". Ethically, this led to unease as my involvement in the discussion and my role as both a professional and a scholar were 'at odds'. As a researcher, I wanted to prolong the discussion and challenge these ideas, whilst my professional self-led me towards retaining my professionalism. As a colleague and a friend who has knowledge of the life of the participant, I felt unable to probe further in the discussion but was fearful of creating discomfort through making judgements. The shared knowledge of each other's lives complicated the relationship at this point and led to a tendency to become detached.

A further incident was highlighted with Tutor B which caused me to reflect on my positionality in the research process. In this instance, detailed on pages 114 and 121. The tutor reported that he did not see any problem with the tutors holding the power in the relationship and related knowledge and qualifications to power. I was surprised by this comment and allowed myself to be judgemental of the comments made. Whilst I did not voice my concerns, I reflected on my role as a programme leader and felt that the tutor may have regretted his comments and swiftly moved on to another discussion. Ethically, I felt that we had both avoided this discussion with me not wishing to probe further and Tutor B not knowing how to articulate his feelings. Of course it was not a problem for tutor B to voice his opinions, but I felt that the relationship had become strained and lacked commitment and depth from hereon. It is with this in mind that I considered the complexity of the insider/outsider nexus. Whilst the participant had given their informed consent, the question is raised in terms of 'consent to what?' (Hammersley and Traianou (2012:89). In this case the tutor may not have considered where the discussion would lead and may have felt the weight of power preventing him from withdrawing the data.

Engaging in reflexivity, I explored my own reactions to ascertain how these were formulated. I needed to ascertain if I had allowed my views to substantiate the findings or not. 'Feminist researchers value the analysis of their own positioning in

research because they question the ways in which objectivity has been constructed in research' (Ropers-Huilman and Winters 2011:681). It is with this in mind that, as a feminist, I examined the way in which the relationship served the needs of the research and the participants.

Ethical issues were also raised when collecting data from tutors as I needed to consider my 'identity' within the relationship. I struggled with my role as researcher when the participants were my colleagues and friends. As the programme leader I was asking tutors to collect data from students which they felt was unnecessary and not valuable. My identity was at this stage called into question as the tutors also knew my personal view regarding collecting data from students and this potentially enabled them to offer their views without constraint. Whilst this was a positive step, it also questioned whether they felt able to express their real thoughts as they were fully aware of mine. Examples are seen on page 126 as tutors report a disadvantage for them as student data is collected data so frequently and also question the value of this.

Generally during the interviews with tutors, I felt that whilst I was careful to report the findings using a rigorous approach. In this instance I reported the data word for word and considered all utterances of equal value. I felt that I may have developed the discussions on subjects which I knew to be valuable (in my point of view) and paid less attention to less valuable comments. Dobson (2009) puts forward the notion that attention should be given to a blend of involvement and detachment reflected within Eliasian theory which posits an understanding of the dynamics of identity in terms of involvement and detachment. The critique being that static positionality like insider/outsider is not always helpful (Mullings 1999).

At one point during the research, in an attempt to reduce ethical concerns, I asked a fellow tutor to facilitate the focus group with a particular class as I wanted to see if there would be any difference in another person conducting the discussion. I also felt that this may potentially give the students the opportunity to voice their concerns more freely as I was very well known to them as their programme leader. When I analysed the data I realised that there was little difference between what I had collected and what had been collected by my colleague. I had initially thought that the data

may unfold a different story but as the data was analysed by me this appeared to suggest that the data was generated through the researcher and filtered through their own values, biases, beliefs and constructs.

3.6   Anonymity and confidentiality

As with all research studies, the importance of confidentiality and anonymity cannot be overstated; whilst sometimes used interchangeably, there are clear distinctions between their meanings. In short, anonymity relates to protection of the participant and confidentiality refers to protection of the data.

Anonymity calls for the researcher to protect the identity of the participants who take part in the study by removing their names. In addition any other identifying information, for example, age, gender or job title should be removed. In response to this I used alphabetical references and colour codes to record and identify tutors' responses and ideas. In addition, alphabetical and colour codes were allocated to specific groups of students who made contributions. These details were known only by myself as the researcher. Holdaway (1982) warns of the necessity to avoid including geographic locations and other characteristics which could identify the organisation and people within them. With this in mind I ensured that these were not visible or implied. Ryen (2007) however argues that within certain small scale qualitative studies it is impossible to ensure absolute anonymity and in these cases, the promise of rigorous attention to confidentiality is vital. It is particularly problematic to maintain anonymity within an ethnographic study as the researcher is very much part of the research and as such cannot be separated from the participants. As an insider within my research it was not possible to eliminate the identity of the participants from my data and it was with this mind that I felt the need to consider my various identities as a researcher, professional, colleague and friend when recording and analysing data. In the initial stages of the study, I followed the following steps:

- Discuss with the participants the terms of the study and commitment to honouring anonymity and confidentiality
- Engage in reflexivity in an effort to the reduce effect of my personal involvement.

- Acknowledge my role as an ethnographer, and not allowing my ideological position to distort or misrepresent information.

Further attention was given to the issue of anonymity within focus group discussions. In these instances it was not possible to remain anonymous as the group were well aware of the comments made by its members. Likewise the nature of the research questions discussed in the group may differ due to the extension of discussions as the interactions change and the topic begins to flow. In this case, I advised the students that if they wanted to remove any of their data, they could contact me in confidence.

Confidentiality relates to the protection of the data collected. As participants have the right to control information relating to them (Guba and Lincoln 1989), confidentiality was maintained within my study by advising participants that their identity and any information given would be protected by the researcher. As mentioned previously all data was protected by using a colour coding system. I supplied the participants with an information sheet (Appendix A and C) which detailed how the data would be stored confidentially, who would have access to the data and instructions as to how they (participants) could withdraw from the study and have their data removed at any time. In addition I advised the participants that there may be certain cases when information regarding illegal activities or child protection concerns may require me to report these to relevant authorities. In these cases, the full implications for providing anonymity and confidentiality were clearly considered and addressed.

Whilst the code of ethics was followed in relation to my study, it was apparent that they can sometimes appear too general and do not specifically relate to individual situations. Specifically this relates to participant interviews at interactional level whereby the reality is often far removed from the ethical codes (Punch 1998). In response to this, Neuman (2006:130) advocates that 'ethics begins with you, the researcher. A researcher's personal moral code is the strongest defence against unethical behaviour.' Consequently, my intention was to address ethical issues such as beneficence, non-maleficence, confidentiality and power on a situational basis; using my personal and professional judgement whilst upholding my moral values. Stutchbury and Fox (2010) support this notion by putting forward the idea that in

order to act ethically, researchers need to understand the nature of morality and moral reasoning. Stutchbury and Fox (2010:490) go further by explaining that there are two classical theories of moral philosophy which lead to conflicting rules and principles. 'Deontology' is related to 'doing your duty' regardless of the consequences and 'utilitarian' ethics which sees the researcher looking to produce the greatest good for the greatest number of people. In relation to my study, I was drawn to the emphasis on relational ethics (Flinders 1992) which places our attachments and regard for others at the centre of the considerations we make as researcher. This appeared to be particularly relevant to my study as critical ethnography placed me within the study which attempted to expose inequalities and oppression.

In order to ascertain if knowledge has been created and is of value, it is important that researchers review the research methods to ascertain if they have been successful in obtaining the required knowledge. Within this study I have attempted to gain knowledge in relation to understanding the experiences of students and tutors and also to understand their human behaviour within their social context. Based on the work of Weber (1949), the value of this approach is seen in the opportunity to view the social world of others from within. The facilitation of focus groups and interviews clearly demonstrate the interpretive approach whereby I was not looking to identify a 'truth'; rather I was attempting to identify key issues which may arise in the use of student voice in the classroom. This appears to demonstrate a building of understanding to create knowledge that relies heavily on the analytic-inductive method of data collection and analysis. Furthermore the subjective nature of studying behaviours leads to concerns over validity. It could be argued that the researcher's perceptions and prior knowledge may impact on the data collected and as such it was my intention to pay close attention to the interpretations given to the data, the sampling of participants, the setting selected and what was recorded.

Another area which required consideration was reliability due to the inability to make generalisations regarding the data since the range and scope was small and under representative of the student population. In fact, Ward Schofield (1993) suggests that the goal of qualitative work is to describe and explain patterns of behaviour within a specific group through provision of thick descriptions and rich data for under-

researched areas. It is not to draw conclusions with regard to human behaviour. Rather, it was intended that the nature of my study was to determine the utilisation of student voice within the classroom and to highlight the conditions created which empowered students and as such I have related my findings to the context in which the data was examined. The action-ability of the knowledge I have gained was to use responses received to create a more equal relationship in the classroom as a result of putting into place opportunities to develop student empowerment where relevant.

The use of focus groups and interviews which are designed to explore the use of student voice are considered to be valuable in terms of the knowledge they will create, the impact on myself as a practitioner and the organisation as a whole. Although inductive in nature, the likelihood is that there may be an imbalance of power observed which could lead to revision and modification of practice. As a practitioner-researcher, I felt that I was in an ideal position to understand the strengths, weaknesses and culture of the organisation in which I work whilst maintaining a keen awareness of my positionality therein. Furthermore, I was able to consider the developing needs of the team in which I work thereby affording me the opportunity to address these needs through my research. Gray (2009) supports this by proposing that the researcher-practitioner may have access to key decision makers within the organisation but also warns of the challenges they face in taking this forward. It could be considered that 'the researcher-practitioner may be imbued with the organisations ethos and attitudes and so have difficulty in adopting fresh perspectives and approaches' (Gray 2009:402). In relation to my study, the ethos of the organisation encourages research and was fully supportive of my study. However, it was important to note that the proposal for the research may well not reflect the final document and that elements of the study will change over time.

Although the manager's consent was obtained, I was mindful that, as this is sensitive subject, there may be issues which arise during the course of the study which challenge the institution's ethics procedure and application. In response to this, I reviewed ethics on a situational basis in conjunction with my own moral judgements.

When considering the value of my study, it was clear that members of my team were likely to attach different levels of importance to the outcomes depending upon their

interest areas and values. With this in mind, I employed a non-ethnocentric approach. Ethnocentrism refers to the way we look at the world from our perspective or from our filter of meaning (McAndrew 1986). Here, we use our understanding as a collective identity. Ethnocentrism assumes that our understanding is the only valuable understanding and is in fact the only 'natural, correct, in fact the only true way of being human' (Schultz and Lavenda 1990:32). With this in mind, I attempted to avoid judging my colleagues based on my own opinions when disseminating the findings and made use of a whole team approach to consider the outcomes and potential action to be taken. This was found to be extremely useful as I shared my ideas on the implications for practice and members of the team offered ideas. Members of the team were able to identify specific problems when considering the implementation of action taken. In one instance, a query was raised with regards to involving the students in collaborative research in terms of confidentiality and access to information. On a personal level the value of the study was clear in that any action I took to modify practice was transformational in terms of positive changes made in the student's and tutor's experiences. More information is found within my implications for practice chapter and subsequent summary of my findings.

As with all research, there is an expectation that there is a value and purpose for it. In the case of my study, the value was demonstrated as being of a developmental nature, whereby I and fellow tutors could use the information gathered to review practice and modify it accordingly. As previously mentioned, examination of my research methods and methodological stance uncovered a number of issues of which I needed to prepare for in my study. Most importantly, the use of power within the research process was evident and it is only by deconstructing this, can I truly present an emancipatory project.

My study has led me to question the action ability of the research findings that is the consideration of any action required following completion of the study, and the effectiveness of the methods in enabling me to achieve this. Furthermore, I have been called upon to address the type of knowledge being created and have considered how this relates both to the methods chosen and also research approach taken.

The overarching challenge within my research lay with the on-going nature of the study. I was mindful that ethics are situational and needed to be reviewed regularly, as are the research methods and approaches taken. As the study progressed, I expected these to fluctuate and responded to these as required. Most importantly, this related to the ongoing issues of coercion, power and beneficence, all of which will be explained more fully within the analysis of the data. Within this chapter I demonstrate how amendments have been made, for example, I became involved in in-depth informal discussions with colleagues regarding the utilisation of voice. This produced extremely valuable data which had not been planned for and as such provided an inductive element to my study.

As my study was essentially employing a critical approach to the engagement and perceptions of student voice and equality within the participation of such, I have shown reflexivity not only as a tool for ensuring that validity is addressed but also that the emancipatory aims of the research were realised and communicated. In this way I concur with McCabe and Holmes (2009) in their study on reflexivity from a Foucauldian perspective, that to view reflexivity as merely a means of ensuring validity in qualitative research somewhat limits the researcher's ability to highlight subtle changes that comprise emancipation. Day (2012) puts forward the notion that reflexivity has emerged as a central and critical concept in the methodology of qualitative social research and offers the researcher a critical lens through which they can analyse key methodological dilemmas. Given that my study focused on a critical examination of the use of student voice, I believe reflexivity to be an effective way to reflect on the process of my research to try to understand how my own values and views may have influenced the findings (Jootun 2009). In practical terms, this involved reflecting on how and why I had made particular decisions and whose interests they sought to promote such as when I made the decision to include data from a tutor which reflected badly on them. My reflexive diary (memo) enabled me to record my thoughts in relation to the potential outcome of this. The situation demonstrated the tutor's feeling that he was in power because he has a PHD, and I felt that he may well feel unhappy with the comments made once they were read back. This was of particular importance to me as I believe that in qualitative research the inquiry is valid if it represents those features of the phenomenon that it is intended to describe, explain or theorise (Hammersley 1987:69).

Within the following chapter, which is the data analysis, I will show how inductive and deductive data was collected, analysed and situated within my study. I will demonstrate how a number of methodological theories have supported and guided my progress through the study.

CHAPTER 4
DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is one of the most critical phases in the qualitative research process and as such calls for a rigorous approach which will not only effectively gather significant data, but also reflect the epistemological and ontological position of the researcher. This relates to how I as the researcher understand how knowledge is constructed and how I see view the world in terms of the nature of social reality. The analytical method utilised will clearly influence the results and interpretation of the data collected. Merriam (2009:203) argues that the ultimate goal of data analysis is to 'make sense of the data'. In this way researchers are systematically searching for meaning. Hatch (2002) further offers the view that the concept of analysis is the way in which the researcher organises and interrogates the data in order to develop explanations, make interpretations and generate theories.

Within my data analysis chapter I begin by charting the approach I took in analysing my data and offer an explanation as to why I chose specific analytical tools. I go on to show how thematic analysis enabled me to identify implicit and explicit information gathered from focus groups and individual interviews. Finally, my analysis is structured into identified themes which subsequently demonstrate engagement with the body of knowledge in this field.

It would seem logical at this point to revisit my research question and relay the significance in terms of the collection and analysis of data. I will explore the extent to which data collected supports existing knowledge in the field of student voice and show the significance in terms of providing new knowledge and understanding of key issues surrounding student voice work. Given that my title of 'Student voice in higher education: students' and tutors' perceptions of the utilisation and purpose of student voice in higher education' calls for the collection of data from tutors and students, I present a rigorous interpretation of the data as depicted by the participants and analysed by myself as the researcher.

Marshall and Rossman (2011: 207) provide a definition of qualitative analysis as 'the process of bringing order, structure and interpretation to a mass of collected data'. Further they warn of the messy, time consuming nature of qualitative data which is extremely complex and not easily converted into standard measurable units which represent what has been seen and heard. It is with this in mind that researchers choose the most relevant method with which to analyse their data and whilst there are a good number of analytical tools and methods, Wolcott (1994) argues that there are generic tenets which cover the majority of qualitative data, these being analysis, description and interpretation. More importantly I was drawn to the words of Agar (1996:13) who posits that: 'researchers need a way to argue what we know based on the process by which we came to know it'. This was particularly important to me as my epistemological stance reflects the view that participants are central in creating their own knowledge.

From such a perspective then it does not make sense to exclude a particular technique because of discomfort, misconceptions or prejudice regarding how it may be used as this may reduce the creativity and originality of the study. No more so is this seen than in the nexus of qualitative versus quantitative data collection. It would seem that existing definitions of qualitative research are constructed by a dichotomous typology that presents a contrast between qualitative and quantitative research or assumes a particular epistemological stance. It is only as I explored the previous quote that I understood the need to make decisions based on how I obtained the data. It is with in mind that I utilised reflexivity within my analysis of the data by recognising the tentative and subjective nature of analysis itself (Finlay 2002). I concentrated on facts as presented by the participants whilst also acknowledging the part I played in constructing these facts. Whilst reflexivity is not a specific tool of data analysis its value is paramount in strengthening the validity and authenticity of the data which emerges. Denzin and Lincoln (2008: 21) clarify this point by stating that 'there is no clear window into the inner life of an individual. Any gaze is always filtered through the lens of language, gender, social class, race and ethnicity'. As an insider I felt that I was placed to explore the inner life of the participants whilst remaining mindful of the challenges this brings.

I was confident that I could rely on reflexivity as a means to guide me through this process by drawing on my research journal to identify my positionality and

thought processes which took place. Given that I identified data collection and analysis as an onerous task, I was mindful that I needed a framework with which to work when collecting and analysing my data. Following research into a number of frameworks, I settled on Braun and Clarke (2006) who recommend using the following steps in order to analyse data:

- Familiarise self with the data

- Generate initial codes

- Search for themes

- Review themes

- Define and name themes

- Produce the report

Whilst this appears to be an acceptable structure and fairly simplistic in nature it does not take into account vital links to theoretical frameworks, methodology and prior literature (Grbich 2013). I believe reflexivity to be a key component within a qualitative research study and following analysis of the data collected within my own study, I loosely utilised the stages demonstrated by Braun and Clarke (2006). I did however pay particular attention to how my existing theoretical stance had an impact on the analysis and how this was then interpreted. Further reservations are voiced by Silverman (2011) who warns of the danger of merely following the stages. He states that this will not allow for creativity and reflexivity within the process of analysis, rather it will demonstrate a rather mundane generic analytical process. Bearing this in mind, I employed the stages merely as a frame to explore and explain the underlying meanings within the data and to consider broader elements which address 'patterns, norms, orders, rules and structures (Silverman 2011:276).

The first action towards data analysis was the transcription of the digitally recorded discussions from the focus groups and interviews. These were completed as soon as possible following receipt of the data to enable me to draw on my recollection of the discussions held.

I began my analysis by engaging with coding, described by Wilson (2013: 164) as 'the names or labels that refer to concepts'. The denotation at its most descriptive level involves translating raw data into conceptual references. Initially, I felt overwhelmed by this task and was unsure where to begin. Following Braun & Clarke's (2006) checklist led me back to familiarising myself with the data and it was not until I had read through all the data a couple of times that I could begin to think about applying the codes. I began to realise that I was doing more than just applying labels to the text; I was lifting out the specific points to create a more conceptual plane. My initial task was to engage in open coding, described by Charmaz and Mitchell (2013) as the researcher being involved in conceptualising the data line by line and making transcriptions in the margins of field notes. This process was tedious as it felt like I needed to conceptualise a number of related incidents to create many concepts. I was mindful that I did not want to merely describe the codes by summarising the text; I wanted to engage with analytical coding whereby I considered a number of key questions, for example:

What is going on?
Are there any taken for granted assumptions visible here?
How does the context impact on the data?
How do I, as the researcher, impact on the data?

I read through the transcripts a number of times and highlighted what I thought to be key issues. As I engaged with the data, I identified relevant theoretical frameworks, for example power and rights based agendas. Further, I drew on the literature previously reviewed, for example the value of student/tutor relationship and empowerment and began to make connections between concepts. I was then able to place these ideas into groups and label these accordingly into emerging themes. Recognition of the types of feedback utilised and the impact of temporal factors were further explored and placed within the coding frame. This was completed by creating a chart which identified comments according to the codes and I placed these loosely within the themes (Appendix E). The themes were then coded to indicate the variety of concepts identified. In addition, these were colour coded to reflect the participants' response. Once I had completed the chart, I added to the detail as new data was

identified. Once I had these in place, I could begin to answer the questions raised above to ascertain the value of the information given.

Goodwin (1994) describes labelling of the data as developing a professional vision of such and I realised that I was beginning to make some analytical choices about which lines, chunks or sections of the data I would highlight as being valuable. I was mindful however that as a feminist I would endeavour to not reproduce participants as powerless (Stanley and Wise 1983). I employed a feminist approach which carefully embodies their context and particular ontological stances. In order to do this I utilised member checking; seen as the testing of data, analytic categories and conclusions with the original members who have offered their views to the study. In these instances, for the most part, I engaged with this on an informal basis as the issues arose by questioning their understanding of the salient information which to include. It is worth noting that whilst member checking is valuable in giving the participants the opportunity to identify errors or misconceptions, within interpretive research the knowledge is co-constructed and as such does not represent an objective truth or reality with which to measure or compare.

As I engaged in line by line coding, I felt that I was living in the detail as opposed to thinking broadly in relation to the data which was emerging. This tight focus helped me to concentrate on working with the data and avoiding excessive priori presuppositions. Sacks (1992) puts forward the notion that discourse and conversation analysis may be useful here in helping me initially to recognise key words and concepts which were emerging, especially words which reflect power and control. The value of conversation analysis is seen in the collection of data fundamentally through interactions in a social context. Heritage ((2011) warns that conversation analysis routinely works backward from the outcome to explore how the action was produced. This would appear to demonstrate a supposition on my part and a preconceived view of the outcome. Conversely, Heritage (2011) does promote the use of this discipline as it places the focus on what participants actually do, paying particular attention to their individual identities rather than placing them in a homogenous group. Further, as I was engaged in critical ethnography, my initial discourse analysis of the HE White Paper 'Putting students at the heart of the

system' was beneficial in supporting me in the interpretation and explanation of the text in my study in terms of relationships, interactions and the social context. The use of grammar and language found in the white paper helped me to define the role of the person holding the power and to replicate this within my own study.

A key concern for me was that I did not want to become over-reliant on priori codes which derive from engagement with prior theory and literature. I was more interested in searching for inductive codes which emerge directly from the data.

On devising my analytical method, I had also reflected on the fact that it is vital to have an understanding of the theoretical background in the literature before attempting to conceptualise the outcomes. It may be that this originated from a personal lack of confidence as to the validity of the emerging data, and on a personal level, I found it difficult to navigate my way through emerging theory without the support of a review of literature on which to rely. This was particularly valuable as I engaged in auto-ethnography as a means of drawing out relevant data, thus enabling me to explore fully what it was that had caused the students to answer in a particular way by drawing on their own social world and the elements which they believed had shaped their ideas. As a previous student at the same institution, I was able to draw on my own experiences in an attempt to reach the voice of the participant. Using a combination of autobiography and ethnography, I relayed a range of my own experiences from which the students could reflect to contextualise the discussion within the focus group. These included discussions on my perceived view on the use of voice when I began my degree and comparisons made to the use of voice in the ever-changing university experience.

4.1   Thematic analysis

I considered thematic analysis to be an effective way of ensuring that my criteria for a balance between inductive and deductive analysis were met. Whilst thematic analysis is not necessarily connected with any pre-existing philosophical stance and can be used across a number of theoretical frameworks, Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that the method works to both reflect the perceived reality of the participants and go a step further to unravel the surface of this reality. Grbich (2013) supports this notion by adding that meanings are sought by way of an iterative inquiry and

developed through interpretive explanations. In view of this both Grbich (2013) and Braun and Clarke (2006) agree that this would suggest that the theoretical position of the researcher should be made clear and transparent within the analytical process. My own interpretations have been made visible through the use of a research journal and drawing on reflexivity, I have shown how my own positionality has impacted on the dataset. Evidence of this can be seen in extracts from my journal within the thematic analysis which follows.

Thematic analysis is described as a method of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns of experiences extracted from the data (Braun and Clarke 2006). It moves beyond counting explicit words or phrases, but concentrates on identifying both implicit and explicit ideas expressed within the data. Whilst this would appear to be a clear structure, Savin-Baden and Howell- Major (2013) suggest there is not a clear agreement for what thematic analysis is or how one does it. The literature appears to support the idea that by repeated handling of the data the researcher is getting a feel for the text and working with it prior to coding. Thus thematic analysis acknowledges the intuition of the researcher in the process of considering connections and interconnections between codes, concepts and themes.

I decided to utilise thematic analysis as it is the method which I am most familiar with. Holloway and Todres (2003) advocate thematic analysis as a foundational method for qualitative analysis which effectively addresses the diverse and complex approaches within qualitative research. It is often the first qualitative method of analysis that researchers learn as it provides core skills which are useful in conducting many other forms of qualitative analysis. In fact Holloway and Todres (2003:347) go on to identify 'thematising meanings' as one of the few generic skills across qualitative research. I was drawn to thematic analysis by its flexibility as it is not considered to be tied to a particular theoretical discipline. Through its theoretical freedom thematic analysis provided me with a flexible tool which lends itself to a constructivist approach whereby I located myself inside the inquiry to get as close to the studied phenomenon as possible. This is clearly shown within the analysis of the themes as I emphasise how I engaged in auto-ethnography in an attempt to get closer to the foundations of the data. This was particularly valuable to me when working with participants on the concept of student voice. I was mindful however that

there are a number of pitfalls found in analysing data in this way not least the power relationships which co-exist between the researcher and the participants. It is only with attention to reflexive considerations within my study that I overcame this obstacle. The use of memo writing within my journal was beneficial in these instances, for example when I struggled with interpreting meanings within the data I listed my concerns in my journal and raised these with the participants at a later date. This was particularly worthwhile when working with tutors as conversations were easy to arrange and their mutual understanding of the research process resulted in their support.

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that although there is great flexibility within thematic analysis it is important that researchers do not try to limit this flexibility. In addition Antaki et al (2002) present the idea that as there is a lack of clear and concise guidelines on the execution of thematic analysis and this may result in an 'anything goes' approach. Within my analysis I attempted to ensure that flexibility was not constrained and that whilst a clear demarcation was made as to how thematic analysis was conducted on my analysis of data, I remained open to the use of alternative analytical tools.

I engaged with the transcripts word by word and line by line and made notes on the script to direct me to key areas of interest and began to generate initial codes by listing the salient points and attempted to search for themes within them. I found it helpful to review the retrieved data as I continued in order to justify relevance and make amendments accordingly. As Silverman (2011) points out I needed to be fully immersed in the data in order to really explore key themes. At this point I began to struggle as I tended to chunk information together and found it necessary to unpack the data more closely to ascertain the key issues being explored. Slowly the themes became more refined and I found that I could place key points relatively easily within the designated labels. Interestingly, I found myself utilising aspects of discourse analysis when examining power issues and conversation analysis by searching for and focusing on specific utterances, words or sentences in order to make connections. Sacks (1992) puts forward the argument that using these tools can enable and enhance engagement with archived data which had previously been set aside. I expected to be overwhelmed with the amount of data I had extracted and

fully expected to be engaging in data reduction by discarding irrelevant data and simplifying the themes (Miles and Huberman 1994). In addition I had conveniently placed the data into themes and reviewed these on an on-going basis for validity and significance.

I had now reached the stage of reviewing my themes and felt that the next task would be to liaise with the participants to ascertain their agreement that I had represented their 'voice' effectively and truthfully. As I was aiming to reproduce data which was representative of the dataset whilst at the same time, producing work which was relatively abstract, I believed that the participants would be in the best position to secure this. Guba and Lincoln (1989) argue that a study is credible if it presents such a vivid and faithful description that participants would recognise it as their own. In this instance, the only way to ensure this was to provide copies of extracts from the transcripts for participants to agree the description. These were offered as hard copies with a timescale of two weeks to return them. Importantly however this merely produced an abstract representation of how the participant describes the situation rather than to explain it. I could see the value of maintaining credibility in my own study by ensuring that feedback from participants was used to create new concepts. More specifically this was evident in directing me to intended denotations and connotations and the emerging codes which were confirmed with participants.

I made certain that the participants guided the enquiry by checking that the concepts raised by them had been used to develop the study, thus ensuring that emerging theory is reflective of primary data. I found that the participants merely agreed with the descriptions and supported the inclusion of the concepts raised at this stage. This let me to consider whether this was due to a lack of interest or a reticence to engage in further research. In addition I was mindful that on a number of occasions I needed to acknowledge and make explicit my own interpretations, assumptions and understandings of the effects on the study.

Theoretical credibility was ensured through the use of theoretical sampling which sees the researcher returning to participants to follow leads to develop categories and demonstrate relationships between them. In this way, I was using this approach

to decide where to sample from next whilst also engaging with constant comparison methods which enabled me to compare the data within the coded labels in an attempt to densify the categories (Urquhart 2013). I was careful however, that I did not continually return to the participant until I got the information I wanted. This was particularly evident as I explored 'power' within my analysis. I returned to the participants in order to ascertain their understanding of power differentials. As I offer an analysis of power inequalities as a theme within my study, this will be evidenced in detail further within my study. Henn et al (2006) offer the notion that reflexivity is vital in the recording of data and advocate the use of memos as an integral part of the process. My journal was supportive here as I recorded the feedback from the students. It also gave me the opportunity to review how their interest in the study was evident as a couple of the groups were not interested in reviewing themes and I became mindful that this was my focus and not theirs.

One potential challenge which I encountered was my ability to extract relevant information as I attempted to navigate myself through an array of data which may or not be relevant to my study. Strauss and Corbin (1998: 42) describe this concept as theoretical sensitivity; keeping an awareness of the subtleties of the meanings in the data. They argue that theoretical sensitivity implies 'the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand and the capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn't'. As a researcher I attempted to address this through a review of literature to ascertain the value of the emerging data. I constantly reviewed the analytical process to ensure that I was able to step back from the data to ensure that I was not losing sight of the research questions.

It was also important that I was able to draw on my own professional and personal experiences of the topics within the field and consider how they could be more clearly understood and interpreted. Gray (2009) puts forward the notion that theoretical sensitivity is a way of ensuring that the creativity involved in qualitative research is harnessed; a point which I tried to maintain within my study. This became evident as my commitment to emancipatory practice led me to consider whether in fact as I was driving the 'emancipatory' discourse forward. I had taken a couple of turns which led me down a path which revealed a deeper acknowledgment of emancipatory practices. Firstly, I believed that I may have forced my own critical

stance on the participants by making an assumption that what I term as emancipatory would not necessarily reflect that of the participants (Freedman 2006). I believed that the participants needed to understand the hegemonic influences of power within teacher/student relationships. I had initially drawn on the work of Lather (1991) who explained that emancipatory social research allows for change through understanding and empowerment as a result of the relationship between the researcher and participant. What I had neglected to consider was my own privileged perspective and my belief that my understanding of the concept was somehow more superior to that of the participants. Secondly in my search for an awareness of power and subject positions which represent hierarchy, I had not acknowledged how issues of imposition of thought or a presentation of honesty about my own position may have impacted on the validity of my research to the disadvantage of the authentic participant voice.

The following section within the data analysis chapter will highlight the inductive themes which have emerged from the tutor interviews and focus group discussions with the student groups. The themes are detailed as:

- Rights, personal feelings and experiences
- Different types of feedback
- Different types of student voice
- Temporal factors
- Power issues
- Relationships and tutor engagement

4.2   Analysis of the data

I demonstrate how these themes have emerged from the data and how they are intrinsically connected through explicit discursive practices. Within the analysis I highlight how I made changes to the collection and analysis of the data through engaging in reflexivity in an attempt to not only achieve qualitative validity but also to realise goals of emancipation and social transformation of oppression seen as vital within critical enquiry. I further show how I had reached a stage in my research when I became disillusioned with the findings of my study as there did not appear to be

any specific direction or structure on which I could frame my discussions and findings. I considered this to be another 'critical incident' as described by Schon (1987) as a problematic situation that presents itself as a unique case and promotes reflection. Whilst this would appear to address the idea that this situation was problematic, it did not reflect the need for change. Sikes, Measor and Woods (1985:432) demonstrate the idea that critical incidents are 'highly charged moments and episodes that have enormous consequences for personal change and development'. What appears to make the event 'critical' is the personal interpretation of the significance of it in terms of progression of the study.

We are reminded by Guillemin and Gillam (2004) that research invites an opportunity for knowledge construction and it is whilst recognising this that I became aware that I would use this critical incident as a stimulus for reflexive practice. In order to do this I would need to ask myself some searching questions in order to analyse the incident and move towards meaning making. Halquist (2009) recommends that researchers look at whose interests are served or denied by the actions taken and what conditions sustain this. Further, Halquist (2009) questions what power relationships between the researcher and the students are being expressed and what cultural and organisational structures prevent engagement in alternate ways. I considered how the data had been recorded, the context in which it was collected and whether the organisation had any influence on the outcomes. This was particularly relevant when the students appeared to lose interest in the study and demonstrated a lack of engagement.

On attempting to analyse data, I found that focus groups with degree students and interviews with tutors were not initially revealing any significant data which would reflect the findings of other researchers. I found that when I was looking for a different understanding of the concept of student voice and knowledge of how student voice could be utilised I realised that tutors and students appeared to focus on 'feedback' as being the principal purpose of student voice. It was whilst engaging with literature on grounded theory that I began to understand the value of inductive themes. Furthermore I began to feel the tensions brought about as a result of trying to locate the data within theoretical contexts. Conversely I was aware however, that inductive practice tends to ignore the part that the researcher has to play in the

research process (McGhee et al 2007). Reflecting upon these tensions, my decision to go back to the literature in order to place the participant's voices within it appeared to be the obvious step forward. Freshwater and Rolfe (2001) describe this process as 'turning back on the original action' and utilise the metaphor of 'knee jerk reflex' to explain how going back to the literature with hindsight of data collected acknowledges perspective gained not from the data themselves but from previous learning (McGhee et al 2007). Brown (2006:181) further supports the view of this action by reporting that 'reflexivity is often discussed in relation to the researcher's empirical work, but reflexivity is equally needed in relation to the academic context in which most research and learning takes place'.

It was at this point that I began to introduce 'memo-writing' as a method of acknowledging the influences I brought as a researcher to the construction and interpretation of the data. Further, this would also help to ensure that I did not become so reflexive that I stifled creativity within my study and failed to produce a rigorous theoretical account of the data. Glaser (2001:47) warns of 'reflexivity paralysis' but recommends the researcher to be reflexive in the sense of being self-aware.

As previously mentioned I emerged myself in the critical aspect of the value of reflexivity within qualitative social research is clear as it enabled me as the researcher to use this critical lens to analyse problems encountered during the course of my study. This was particularly important when I was faced critical incidents within my data collection as I struggled with decisions relating to which data to include and which to leave out. The use of the memo writing within my research diary helped me to explore my own personal beliefs in relation to student voice. An example can be seen where I became aware of the personal judgements I had made during my data collection in terms of 'my expected answers' and reported that I felt that I had exercised my power as a researcher and course leader to search for relevant data.

The use of a reflective diary as a 'decision trail' (Jootun et al 2009), led me to define the rationale for methodological decisions, for example, I decided that in order for me to appreciate the responses of the participant, I asked a member of the team to

interview me and I would try to answer the same questions honestly. This proved to be enlightening as the questions asked appeared to direct me to specific answers and did not facilitate a freedom of views to be expressed. An example of this was the question which asks "How do you see the use of student voice in the university centre? This question merely directed the students to the forms which they were familiar with, for example student feedback forms, but did not give them the opportunity to explore 'voice' in a variety of contexts. It was following this incident that I amended the questions to enable students to expand their understanding and draw on alternative formats. Questions which asked students to give examples of how they feel that the collection of voice could be improved established a stronger sense of sharing dialogue as a discussion as opposed to basic questions and answers.

The following section focuses on the emerged themes which have led the analysis of my study. Themes detailed are:

- Rights, personal feelings and experiences
- Different types of feedback
- Different types of student voice
- Temporal factors
- Power issues
- Relationships and tutor engagement

4.3   Themes

Theme One - Rights, needs and participation

The focus explored and examined within this theme is the value placed on students' rights both from the perspective of the student and the tutor.   Additionally it is demonstrated how the students evoke their rights and how they see these as 'student voice'. Data was collected from students who are studying on BA (Hons) Childhood studies level 4 (BACS4, ten students), level 5 (BACS5) ten students and level 6 (BACS6, 16 students), BA (Hons) Health and Social Care level 6 (HSC6 12 students) and Foundation Degree Working with Children and Young People level 5

(FDA5, 12 students). A further focus group discussion was held with six tutors and managers from the validating university. Data was also collected from three tutors who teach across the above courses and from one tutor from the validating university.

Students who are studying on Foundation degree report that they consider 'student voice' to be about "listening" (to tutors) and being able to change things within the programme. They value the fact that they have put forward their ideas and been listened to, thereby resulting in their satisfaction. Respect appears to be very important to this group of students who stated that if their assignments were not marked in time it would be explained and an apology offered.

> There was an incident when the assignments were going to be returned late to us; the teacher apologised and explained the reason why and this seemed acceptable and we were happy with this. We felt that as we had been consulted, and they (teachers) were respecting us.

This concept was considered by the group to be of utmost importance that they were treated respectfully and they saw this as a key part of their rights to participation. As they were mature students who held responsible roles, I made the assumption that as professionals in their own right, they felt they were equal in terms of 'power' to the tutors. Within the focus group, I attempted to develop this point further by asking them if they understood this to be the case and they all agreed and added that they felt that they were respected in their own setting. Evidence of such appeared to focus on listening and entering into a collaborative dialogue in order to improve their experiences.

> In work we are able to express our views and we expect that to be the case in university as we are professionals and should be treated as such (FDA5).

This quote suggests that students, quite rightly, expect the same respect from the university as they do from their workplace and I draw on the work of Baroutsis et al (2016) to demonstrate the value of dialogue in promoting active listening by all parties within the relationship. Here, Baroutis et al (2016) relate to 'consulting' as a form of dialogue, suggesting that this implies 'membership' of the community and thereby encourages a sense of belonging and a greater positivity in their learning (Rudduck and Fielding 2006). The impact of a rights agenda within students voice

work cannot be overstated in this instance and is effectively reflected in the work of McLeod (2011:181) who advocates valuing 'voice-as-right' as a respectful articulation of student voice in 'having their say' .

Interestingly, Tutor A supported the idea of respect for the students by stating that she thought that student voice was about the students having their say and being able to share their feelings end experiences. Whilst, tutor A concurs with the students that the relationship is vital, she does not follow up with how they are able to have their say or what happens to the information received from students when it is received. She does however, add more detail within alternate themes which appear to support the idea that she considers them to be 'professional'.

Students on BACS6 support the notion that they value their rights by giving examples of when they had used their voice and changes that had been made as a result of this. Examples of these changes are exam dates, extra time allocated in sessions for student choice of work, and placing WIFI in the building. Again, this group focused on student voice as 'having our needs met'. Interestingly, Higher Education Policy Institute HEPI (2014) report that students are in general less content than young people, even going so far as to say that they are less content than the population as a whole. Students did not mention this or appear to have any understanding of the government's focus on student voice as a means of developing their experiences, for example The White Paper, 'putting students at the heart of the system' (Dept. BIS 2011). Their actions did however demonstrate that they consider themselves to be entitled to voice their opinions on matters which concern them. BACS5 offered the view that:

> We are only allowed to participate when asked by the tutor. It should really be on an ongoing basis, so we can ask at any time. Even then we don't know what happens to the information.

This lack of a 'complete picture' for the students leaves then without an authentic, active voice and thereby renders student voice work as 'tokenistic'. McLeod (2011) put forward the notion that student voice is represented by 'voice as participation' proposing links with the student engagement agenda. Whilst in essence this is a valuable representation of the purpose of student voice, it does not however address

the complexities of the nature of the participation or the power differentials which act within the relationships.

Simmons et al. (2015) draws on literature which addresses participation in three contexts; these being, as an enlightenment rationale, which assumes that children and young people have something important to tell us. Secondly, Simmons et al. (2015) situates participation as a promise of empowerment as rights based approach. Thirdly, they look to participation in its potential to promote citizenship in addition to its relational possibilities within a social context.

I relate to the Hart's (1997) 'ladder' metaphor here, highlighted by Fielding (2004b) which in this case, demonstrates the idea that each rung on a 'ladder' represents student participation in shared decisions regarding their learning. In this instance, it may be that the students have not previously had access to decision making in real terms and as such have no sight or understanding of the overall neoliberal hegemony which moves away from the traditional pastoral engagement with students towards the marketization of higher education and the subsequent accountability of formal learning (Fielding 2004b). In this way students are encouraged to take responsibility for themselves and engage in 'disciplined self-management' (Ozga 2009:152). It is perhaps, no accident that the introduction of the White Paper 'Putting students at the heart of the system' (Dept. BIS 2011) demonstrates three key points. Firstly, the title appears to suggest that students are not currently at the heart of the system. Secondly, the document now places students in a position of power and are now accountable for their actions by suggesting that their decisions regarding their experiences are equal and accessible for all members of society. Thirdly, given that this document is aimed at improving student experiences by engaging their voice, there does not appear to be any evidence of student consultation nor of enabling or establishing a collaborative approach to the intended outcomes.

I became concerned at this point that I had not prepared the students well enough to enable them to answer specific questions which related to the areas in which I was interested. Given that my intention was to let the data speak for itself, I did not feel that I could press them for fear of distorting the data and I felt that I would need to be

careful that I did not continually return to the participant until I got the information I wanted to reflect my own ideas. I did however; go back to my colleagues and research partner on an informal basis in the form of a focus group to gain clarification of key concepts.

The National Health Service Confederation (2010) advocates the use of research partners for a number of reasons. Firstly, as a collaborative partner, the research partner plays a part in defining the goals within the research. Secondly, it is likely that better decisions will be made through a culture of quality improvement. Finally, it promotes a research aware environment whereby a critical eye may highlight issues which may have lay undiscovered. Further support of collaborative work within research lies in the studies of "communities of practice"; in this instance I draw on the work of Peltonen (2004:249) who promotes the idea that communities of practice 'offer a relatively coherent view of social practices in knowledge creation'. Whilst, Peltonen (2004) uses communities of practice to demonstrate how social construction is seen within work practices, I believe it to be equally valuable in its application to collaborative practices within research, given that the goal of research is to create knowledge with a view to developing educational practice.

At this stage I was also drawn to the concept of member checking, typically viewed as a technique for establishing validity of an account. In this instance, I approached the group FDA5, BACS4 and BACS6 to ascertain if they had any further considerations to add to their original comments regarding student voice. I particularly wanted to ascertain if they had understood power to be significant in their comments on addressing their rights and to establish if they saw power at work in their classrooms. I felt that member checking would give the participants an opportunity to correct any errors and challenge what they may perceive as incorrect information being recorded. I also hoped that the participants would offer additional information which may have been stimulated by turning back on the process.

Morse (1994), Angen (2000) and Sandelowski (1993) all offer interesting critiques of the use of member checks as a method for confirming validity within a study. There is an assumption that there is a fixed truth of reality which can be confirmed by the researcher and the participant but member checking may lead to confusion as

participants may change their mind about an issue. This may also lead to disagreement relating to the researchers interpretations and lead to questioning whose interpretation should stand. In one session the students did in fact forget what they had previously said and this resulted in confusion. I also felt that the students from BACS4 were not interested in checking their previous answers given, as far as they were concerned, they stated:

We have done all this before. Why are we repeating it?

Evidence of the shortfalls of member checking was apparent here and perhaps suggested that this method would be most suited to the collection of factual data which may be more easily checked.

My decision to return to the literature in order to place the participant's voices within this appeared to be the obvious step forward. I was now particularly interested in locating research which explored the 'over collection' of feedback, which would support students' views that they had already been asked for relevant information. Unfortunately, I did not come across any such research and can only assume that research in this area may only become more prevalent with the increased focus on collecting students' views as part of the Higher Education Review (QAA 2015). This appeared to be a significant finding as I questioned the lack of research in this area. I believe that my study adds to the body of knowledge already published in addition to creating new knowledge through exploration of contemporary ideas.

Satisfied that my initial findings were relevant in this instance, I proceeded to consider how I could engage the students in a more open exchange of ideas within a mutually respectful environment. Rudd et al (2007:8) call for a relationship which 'empowers learners by providing appropriate ways of listening to their concerns, interests and needs in order to develop educational experiences better suited to individuals' thereby promoting a person centred learning community (Fielding 2004). It was at this point that I considered the use of auto-ethnography in order to support the discussions. I was confident that I had been drawing on my own 'intellectual autobiography' (Maynard 2013:16) through constant examining of my own position as a researcher who brings my own personal history through which understandings

and conclusions are reached. I was mindful that I needed to take this one step further by sharing experiences in order draw out relevant data. So I shared information regarding the challenges I was experiencing in researching student voice and asked for their advice. Students were reticent to engage in offering advice, again perhaps demonstrating that they assumed the power rested with researcher. The tutors from my team however, were keen to recommend a course of action to support me. Storytelling and argument analysis (Gold and Holman 2001) appeared to be a good place to start as it is considered to be effective within experientially based teaching methods as it encourages multiple perspectives and facilitates negotiation through intelligent discussion. Gergen (1989) further supports this notion by arguing that much of the responsibility for transformation lies in the ability to make shared meanings with others. This would seem particularly valuable when considering how I can develop practices which improve students and tutors experiences through a social constructionist approach.

Auto-ethnography is described by Reed-Danahay (1997:9) as 'a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context. It is both method and text'. I felt this to be a significant point within my research which I had not planned for. My intention had been to bring into focus the key issues being discussed. I was however concerned that my reflexive stance which turned back on myself as a former student may take two courses. Firstly, it could become the subject of 'self-indulgence' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007) and secondly, there could be a sense that I have 'othered' my former self. Given that data collected is considered to be always authored and peopled by the participatory self (Coffey 1999), then the self should be present and emerging in the data. Conversely, my engagement with reflexivity enabled me to change my epistemological stance as a direct result of having immersed myself within the data.

Having considered these challenges I went ahead and shared some of my experiences of studying at university with a group of students who I felt I had good relationship with and felt comfortable sharing my thoughts in order to elicit silent, marginalised and uninterested voices within the discussion. I believed that if I shared my experiences, it would encourage students to engage in positive dialogue. Again, I

had not taken into account the fact that they may still see me as the researcher holding the power in the relationship.

Engaging in discussion with this particular group FD5, I found to be particularly challenging, as it felt more like me telling them my stories, rather than a collaborative dialogue which I had expected. Terry (2006) argues that the 'confessional' standpoint can easily give the illusion of addressing broader social and political ills, (in this case the power concept of student voice), when in fact it leaves them unchallenged and unchanged. It is with this in mind that I came to the conclusion that I was 'othering' the students who felt that they had not had the same experience as I had and therefore were not valued and further led me to consider whether in fact auto-ethnography would be effective when engaging in critical ethnography. It did however, enable the students to speak in depth about issues previously discussed, but did not reveal any additional understandings of the key concepts of student voice work. I was concerned that I had in fact created a power imbalance within the relationship, something I wished to avoid at all costs as a feminist researcher. Maynard (2013) argues that feminist researchers reject the inevitability of such power relations. She instead argues for the significance of a genuine relationship rather than an instrumental rapport between them. I was wary that I had treated the participants as merely a source of data and would need to re-think how I would address the concept that the initial impetus behind the claims for feminist research was visibility and the breaking down of power inequalities.

Tutors offer similar ideas in terms of their understanding of student voice as noted by tutor B (male) who stated that:

> I see student voice as an element of power which we pass to the students. It is our job to pass on this power and to take it back when needed.

Support of the work of Wolk (1998:186) is evident here who argues that, everyone has a voice, and therefore this is not something that can be given. Echoes of the work of Foucault (1983) are also evident here in his rejection of power as an object of possession that can be given to individuals or groups of people. I was concerned at this point as I reflected on how we, as tutors, see ourselves 'passing power' on to the students and draw on the work of Talbot et al (2003:2) who offers the definition of

power as 'deployed by those who are in a position to define and categorise, to include and exclude'. I would suggest that even if we pass the power onto the students we in fact still hold control of how it is utilised. Returning to Foucault (1983), his assertion that power exists within the relationships seems to be a much more relevant solution as to how we use it to adapt our practice. I will however, be returning to the concept of 'power' within subsequent themes.

Tutor B (male) further offers the view that:

> Passing the power onto the students gives them a 'say' for example when I ask the students 'what they would like to do within this unit' this gives them ownership.

McLeod (2011) would potentially view this as a good example of 'voice-as-difference' as a celebration of how to use voice to promote inclusion and respect diversity and at first sight would appear to address this concept. It could however be construed that the passing of power could be termed as 'bestowing power' thereby creating an imbalance in the relationship.

Bovill, Cook-Sather and Felton (2011) put forward the notion that academic staff should not only consult students, but also explore ways for students to become participants in teaching approaches and curricula. This contention challenges deeply entrenched constructs of students as subordinates, instead they become engaged with what is taught and how. In line with feminist ideologies, I am interested in how this concept moves away from traditional hierarchal models and how it calls for 'radical collegiality' in which students are 'agents in the process of transformative learning' (Fielding 2001:22). Interestingly, tutor B draws on the fact that he is male and feels the need to treat women (which the class is predominantly made up of) as equal by searching for their voice to signify their rights. He supports this by stating that:

> This can 'trip me up' as I sometimes get it wrong.

I found this to be particularly interesting as I turned back to the literature to add a theoretical context to my findings. In doing so, I realised that the identity of the tutor may well have an impact on the classroom relationship and subsequent utilisation of student voice. Feminist theory would argue that women are already oppressed as

men come from a position of dominance and this could be evident within the teacher/student relationship (Gray 2009). Gray (2009) goes on to say that men in the main, adopt a more rational, objective approach in contrast to the females who have access to a deeper reality through their personal experiences of being oppressed. It would seem then that the male teacher may have to work a little harder to gain the trust of female students who may be anxious about their gender and may not feel able to offer their voice without fear of further oppression. Tutor B (male) supported this notion by stating:

> I am much more careful when talking with females, as I am worried that I may be misunderstood.

Significantly, female tutors and students did not report on this and I did not take the point further. With hindsight, this would have been an interesting lead to follow. Much research appears to concentrate on the gendered linguistic activities within classrooms (Cameron 2010) and draws on the perceived differences in the use of language by males and females. Whilst relevant in terms of how power is demonstrated through language, the gender differential did not seem to be pertinent or supported here. Put simply, the male tutor appears worried by gender differentials, however Cameron (2010) argues that any social division experienced in people's lives are bound to affect the use of language and it is this concept of the use of language that requires contemplation. It would seem fair to say therefore that language as a social practice is determined by social structures, the site of which is often a struggle for power (Fairclough 1994). Tutor C added strength to the philosophy that student voice is an attempt to represent their rights, and drew on her personal experiences and feelings in relation to this. She argued that:

> Student voice is about rights, and equality, it's about opinions, views and having control over them.

She also raised concerns that seemed to suggest that she was unsure of her role when they (students) were upset and need to be signposted to support. From her personal point of view, she was worried about her own accountability, for example:

> When I receive feedback from unit reviews I recognise that this demonstrates their (students) expectations lay at my feet as a result of 'policy and legislation'.

Keddie (2015: 225) confirms this point by highlighting that current forms of regulation and accountability reflects a vast ethical shift for teachers as they become subject to 'innumerable judgements, comparisons and targets'. With this in mind, I refer back to my literature review whereby I raised concerns regarding the neoliberal drive within educational legislation which encourages students to offer critique of their educational experiences (Education Act 2002, Education and Skills Act 2008, HE White paper 2011). Such pieces of legislation are motivated by the need to meet outcome targets and fulfil accountability measures; essentially meeting management needs, rather than developing students' agency and enhance their identity as responsible learners. This was felt to be particularly relevant for this tutor as she wrestles with unease over accountability and her inability to follow up on students' needs and concerns due to ineffective structures and cultures within the organisation.

It would seem valuable here to draw on the work of Callan (2014:42) who argues that when researching children's experiences, practitioners should adopt an 'ethics of care' approach whereby rights and participation are valued, thereby supporting the notion that the members of the community (in this case, the students) are 'experts' in their own lives. Callan (2014) further advises that this results in a change in perception in the position of the tutor in terms of the balance of power.

As previously mentioned, I felt that it was important to consider if there were any taken for granted assumptions demonstrated within my analysis and highlighted my assumptions that students would have a good understanding of what student voice is and would be keen to share their experiences. This was not always the case, as students did not seem to show engagement with student voice as a means of participation and equality, rather they saw it a means of satisfying their needs. I also felt the need to consider how the context impacted on the data and realised that my questioning them in a focus group may determine their responses. As I am their programme leader and personal tutor their voices may not have been a true representation of their experiences as these may be tempered due to concerns that they may be penalised in some way for negative comments. Drever (1995:31) puts forward the notion that 'people's willingness to talk to you, is influenced by who they think you are'. In this case, the programme leader is asking the questions which may

lead to the distortion of data as participants may face difficulties in tempering the truth in favour of keeping a professional balance within the relationship.

Theme Two - Different types of feedback

From engaging with the data, I found that the responses I received very much depended upon different types of feedback given to tutors from the students in end of unit reviews and programme board of studies meetings. As previously mentioned there appeared to be a focus on feedback as being the key concept of student voice work. In this instance, I wished to draw on the work of Seale (2011) who puts forward the notion that voice can be seen as a right to be heard or to have their say. Typically this is seen in the type of feedback at the completion of units of study. Seale (2011) follows this discourse with the idea that students can also use this as a means of further participation. In this case the students for the most part do not offer any ideas of how the teaching, learning and assessment can be improved; they focus on modes of complaining. I refer back to the work of Mukherjee et al (2009) whose study examines the relationship between student perceptions of different types of educator power and variations in the modes of student complaining behaviour in higher education.

Whilst this was a quantitative study which relied heavily on numerical data and considered the likelihood of students complaining in relation to their perception of the power held by the tutors, I felt it was useful in focusing on the value of the relationship when promoting the use of student voice and this will be explored further within theme six.

Returning to the different types of feedback utilised in higher education, Tutor A offered the view that:

> The content of feedback depends upon the hidden agendas at work within the lives of the student at that time. For example, if the students are not asked appropriate questions regarding their experiences, there is a danger that students will supply opinionated value judgements.

This links closely with the following theme which considered temporal factors when collecting the views of the students. In this way tutor A suggested that:

> We are only receiving part of their voice as the methods we use for collecting their voice do not lend themselves easily to the collecting of qualitative data which would give us a much clearer idea of the experiences and values of the students.

Tutor A expanded on this point by arguing that:

> Feedback which relies on quantitative data is 'dangerous' as it merely provides a surface level knowledge of the patterns of their behaviours.

More relevant would be transformative knowledge acquired by means of qualitative data which would enable a developmental process within practice. Given this the tutor questions the value of collecting this data but acknowledges that we are obliged to collect it in order to demonstrate engagement with 'putting students at the heart of the system' (Dept. BIS 2011). Tutor A expands as she draws on the neoliberal approach to widening participation and student engagement with decisions which relate to them. She further questioned the 'obsession' with collecting feedback to satisfy the need for improved practice in order to simply respond to policy which requires collaborative practice in terms of curriculum setting, giving feedback and involvement with university procedures. It is interesting to note that tutors felt that there was often little point in collecting the voice of students when no real changes were seen in practical terms. In this case referring to the response to the neoliberal agenda which gives students choices but does not in fact give tutors a voice. Tutor C reinforced this point by stating that:

> Time and effort does not always bring results, how do we measure the time taken. I think it takes its toll on the staff.

The underlying concern here appears to relate to the lack of opportunity for tutors to voice their views, in this case relating to the excessive collection of student feedback. The value attached to the voice of the student appears to far outweigh the value given to the views of the tutors. Tutor feedback demonstrated that they were fully aware of the expectations regarding student satisfaction but clearly recognised the difficulties and challenges this brings.

It was with interest that I engaged with the work of Blaire and Valdez Noel (2014) which proposes that literature suggests that evaluation schemes are considered valuable, but there is little evidence to suggest any significance changes have been

made in teaching practice. Neumann (2001) goes so far as to suggest that whilst student evaluations give voice to students, they appear to be better at indicating current performance levels rather than affecting change. These evaluations present more of a summative process than formative as initially intended.

The interview with Tutor C interestingly highlighted the problems and challenges when dealing with the use of Facebook and other social media by stating that:

> Students are using their voice to make judgements which cannot be substantiated or defended.

This seems particularly worrying to this tutor as she felt that

> They (students) could be reporting on the effectiveness of my teaching in an open forum instead of reporting it to me as we have encouraged within the taught sessions, group tutorials, and individual tutorials.

This was particularly interesting to me as I had not considered that the students were using their voice in this way and research literature had not directed me to consider this key idea. I was however able to locate this idea within the work of Bourdieu in relation to habitus. Students clearly value social media as a means of demonstrating the various locations and relations in which they belong. Bourdieu would describe this as a set of dispositions which are not biological but are culturally learned modes of being and thinking. Feedback from students on BACS6 highlighted that:

> We use social media all the time, we are used to this

Clearly this comment shows their comfort and commitment to social media and as such they bring their own cultural capital to the classroom relationship. Having highlighted it however, I considered how this could be addressed through careful instruction, but also to draw on this as a valuable source of data collection of their voice. Matthews et al (2000) explores this point as they draw on the concept of agency. In this way, children and young people demonstrate agency by expressing their own desires and wishes within their own worlds through negotiation and interaction with the environment. Whilst Matthews et al (2000:292) discusses this concept in terms of children and young people operating within a 'third space', it is

not too dissimilar to working with students who access university direct from the completion of level 3 qualifications.

Exploring these two points further, it could be argued that student voice work could be considered to be impositional, in terms of two key foci of student 'identity and voice'. In relation to the above data collected from two tutors, tutor C argues for more consideration of the validity of the methods for collecting student voice by stating:

> It's like the methods used are geared towards encouraging the students to complain. We should really look at how we can collect it from an unbiased approach in terms of both inclusive practice and also the value of the methods which we utilise in collecting their voice.

Cook-Sather (2007) offers concerns that in re-imagining and re-positioning students within educational processes, we have the potential to reinforce rather than disrupt existing social conditions and dominant power relations. Robinson and Taylor (2012) further substantiate this argument by drawing on the work of Thomson and Gunter (2006) who put forward the notion that student voice work can be simultaneously transformative and oppressive. Robinson and Taylor (2012) further raise the question that student voice work may be restrained by power relations that are enacted within the social norms of the context. Tutor D (University) confirmed this point by stating that:

> I feel that I am always asking students for their opinion on things and I don't believe that they always benefit from this as they don't see what goes into making changes for them.

My discussion here was not to call to question the importance of engaging in critical analyses of existing social conditions, but to consider how to reduce impositional practices which seem to promise to bring liberation through reinforcement of existing oppressions and marginalisation. In this instance, I perceived the use of social media as a negative construct and would wish to look at ways to develop this to become a more positive, collaborative process. I was mindful however, that once again, I was considering moving into the world of the student and making judgements therein without being invited. The rapid growth of social media, which is very much part of the students' world has had a tremendous impact on every facet of our personal and professional lives. Given that a large number of internet users are teachers and students, social media seems to have greatly influenced the way we

teach and learn as a means of closing the gap between business and education. Evidently engaging with social media is seen as valuable if students are to become competent and marketable through development of industry related skills (Jefferson 2013). A recent study by Faiza, Afia and Chihab (2013) explores the benefits of social media in education and confirms that social media improves communication and fosters collaboration with the emphasis on interaction. I approached the students of BACS6 to ask their advice on how they felt that we could collect their voice in the future. I was particularly interested if they would offer a preference for providing feedback via social media. The group thought that this would be a good idea and offered the views that:

> We use social media all the time so it would not be an effort to do this.

I was mindful at this point that this was clearly an individual opinion from one member of the group and was careful not to consider it to be a true representation of the whole group. I acknowledge that Focus groups within an ethnographic study provide revealing information about contextual, interpretive accounts of the participants but it is questionable whether focus groups can collect the thoughts, feelings and opinions of all the respondents. I accept this to be case and understood that the only way to address this issue would be to follow the focus groups with individual interviews. I considered this and came to the conclusion that this would not be relevant as I felt that I would be singling out specific participants based on their lack of responses.

Returning to the discussion relating to social media, whilst the response from the students would appear to support the idea that they may benefit from using their voices via the social media, it was disappointing that my study falls short of demonstrating clear links between social and media and how voice is utilised in this way. In addition, I questioned the students about their engagement with the national student survey and internal student survey and revealed that not a great many students chose to complete this through digital media. Group BACS6 responded that:

> Well that's different, it is the college which wants the information, not us choosing to give it, it's like the college is interfering in our way of doing things.

This seemed to reveal that the students did not value the opportunity to complete the survey and the fact that it is can be completed using digital media does not encourage them to do so. The above quote also demonstrated the idea that the students valued being able to use their voice so long as it was not at the request of the institution.

Further searches through literature have also revealed a lack of studies relating to the use of student voice in digital formats so I did not have the means to make concrete links between primary and secondary data. I was mindful, however, that there was a possibility that engaging with social media as a tool for collecting the voice of students may be useful when engaging with vulnerable voices. Batchelor (2006) drew on the concept of vulnerability in relation to student voice and offers the view that students maintain two roles, the present which focuses on their experiences as students and preparing their identity for the future. It is perhaps valuable then to consider the identity of the student as part of a digital world and to bear in mind that in silencing certain modes of utilising student voice we as tutors, render them silent also. It would seem then that as tutors we would need to convince the students that we wish to engage in a genuine discussion about their learning. Rudduck, Chaplain and Wallace (1996:2) argue if teachers view young people as adversaries to be managed then it is 'unlikely that they can unravel the power relationships and to convince them that they take their views seriously'.

Theme Three - Different types of voice

An interesting theme to emerge from the data was that students and tutors were very much aware of the types of voices being heard and responded to. Focus was demonstrated on the difference between individual voice and group voice and what impact this had in terms of engagement. Tutor A appeared committed to capturing the different types of voices and noted that:

> The students' voices are captured individually, but they also have a group voice'. If you give students the chance to use their voice individually, then this is more valuable than as a group, whereby stronger members transform that voice.

Whilst subjective in essence, this does however demonstrate the tutor's presentation of binary options depicting an either/or dichotomy. In addition, the tutor saw

individual voice as more valuable which raises an interesting point in relation to the less valuable use of group voice. This appears to relate to the identity of the student and how they saw themselves and were seen by others as individuals, as part of a group and also as part of the institution and the higher education system.

Another issue was raised here, as I explored the implications of 'finding a voice' which examined discourses around personal identity. Hart et al (2004) confirm this concept by stating that classrooms by their very function are difficult in terms of affirming students' voices given that they are often perceived as part of homogenous group. The importance however of students developing their own identity cannot be overstated if students are to be transformed by their engagement with student voice. Tutor A went on to say that:

> Certain modes of feedback require diverse ranges of voices to be heard. For example, tutor feedback on the completion of the unit requires individual voice, whereas, feedback which requires the group views for programme board of studies requires group voice.

Again this relates to the idea that there are those whose voices are heard more, and there is the tendency that if a more vocal student offers a complaint, then others may follow suit. It appears that this is where the individual and group identities merge and create an unclear focus. Orner (1992) argues this very point by stating that poststructuralist feminist theory advises us to avoid presumptions of singular, essential, authentic and stable notions of identity. More valuably we should as tutors, be looking for ways to represent their complexities. Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2015) draw on the work of Bland and Atweh (2007) as they advocate that when institutions draw on student voice, they choose to draw upon those from the dominant culture and devalue those from subordinate cultures thereby creating barriers of under representations. Tutor C focused her ideas on how students use their voice in emails and argued that:

> If they need help or support, they (students) email all the time, which is rarely measured or considered in terms of the time given to students.

Tutor C goes further by suggesting that:

> Students knock on the door and expect to be seen and to have their concerns solved immediately.

Clearly relating to their individual needs, again students were expressing themselves through their 'individual identity', a concept very different from that of 'group identity'.

Tutor B (male) takes this point further by suggesting that

> Some voices are vulnerable; the students may just want to be quiet. We, as tutors need to be careful that we do not assume that they have something to say, silence is equally important for them to reflect on their understanding of how to use their voice.

Further support of this key point was raised by students In BACS5 as they put forward the notion that

> Sometimes, I just want to be quiet and tutors keep asking me to offer judgements on teaching and my feelings towards it. It is like I would say if I wasn't happy; my silence merely suggests that I am happy with everything.

Danger may become evident here in so much as tutors not only assume that all students would wish to voice their concerns, but coercion into participation which may be seen as manipulative.

Mann (2001: 15) posits that a reason for their silence may be that the student is engaging in 'alienation as a strategy for self-preservation', an idea which questions the notion that by 'not thinking' students' sense of self is not threatened. An example was given here by Tutor B (male) who related this point:

> Non-traditional students may feel like outsiders and not feel a sense of ownership over their voice due to their culture, gender or race.

Mann (2001:11) likens this to the position of crossing the borders to a new country whereby they may have limited knowledge of the language and customs. In this case, 'alienation arises from being in a place where those in power are in a position to impose their ways of perceiving and understanding the world'. If we accept Harre's (1985) explanation of Wittgenstein's work and assume that language provides a way of understanding ourselves and the world, then we as tutors would need to support the constructive power of language. We could achieve this by drawing on the view that knowledge is historically and culturally specific to individual students with

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individual cultural capital. With this in mind, attention is drawn to the work of Bourdieu, who asserts that the education systems often operate in such a way as to legitimatise class inequalities. Success in the education system is facilitated by the possession of cultural capital and as such we as tutors have the responsibility to support students in presenting their own cultural competence. Support of this is seen in the voice of Tutor B (male) who asserted that:

> Students' experiences of class, race, and gender may also have an impact on their use of their voice.

Again, in support of the work of Cook-Sather (2007) who warn against the impositional potential for student voice work, tutors may need to be mindful not to expect students to use a voice which they are not yet ready to use. It would appear valuable here to address the work of Freire (1980) who posits that silence is a prime indicator of oppression. Whilst this may be the case, I warn against making such an assumption without supporting evidence.

When asked how the students feel that their voice is used, they do not appear to address the issue of identity and individual and group voice explicitly; they concentrated on the functional aspect of how their voice is heard. For example student group FDA5 draw on the discourse of the student representative and their role in taking their individual views forward through to programme board of studies meetings. The student representative in the group described her role as:

> Listening to everybody's views and putting forward their ideas.

There does not appear to be any acknowledgment that even within their group there may be vulnerable or silenced voices. Within the focus group discussion, I asked her (student rep) if all the voices are heard and she replied:

> Yes, all the voices are heard as they all gave me their ideas and views.

Again, I was mindful that the individual taking forward the ideas is interpreting these and filtering them through the lens of her own experiences. Reflecting here on the challenge facing contemporary student voice work, it is apparent that there is not a singular learner voice, but there are a 'plurality of voices' reflecting different priorities, concerns and desires which need to be taken into consideration when recording the

responses (Cruddas 2001, Silva 2001, Mitra 2001). In addition, these voices are fluid and changing in response to the situation, environment and personal circumstances. The student rep from group BACS6 supports this notion by stating that:

> As student rep, I take forward individual and group views

The student representative does not however, draw the line between which is which (individual or group view), or state the perceived hierarchal value placed on each.

Interestingly, Group BACS6 and BAHSC6 were the only groups who considered that they could use their voice within teaching sessions. This was a surprise to me as I had made the assumption that this would play a large part in having their views heard. In some ways it contradicts the earlier discussion which highlights the students' need for participation as demonstrated in Hart's (1992) metaphor of the ladder of participation and Fielding's (2001) typology which identifies the spectrum of student involvement. Reflecting these ideas led me to question why the students do not utilise the facility to use their voice in sessions. Group BACS6 stated that:

> Student voice is about being given the opportunity to structure teaching sessions to suit us.

In this instance they related to the practice of being asked to research individually and bring the information back to the session. They stated that:

> Whilst this does not immediately bring to mind the idea of using our voice, it does mean that we are trusted and were able to share findings from the research to the group as a sort of teacher.

Using their voice as a means of sharing knowledge had not occurred to me and I had also not uncovered literature to support this idea. Once I had transcribed the focus group discussion, I returned to the students to ask them to expand on this idea. Students reiterated the value of being trusted to share their findings in class, further adding that:

> We really like to research and to show the tutors what we have achieved, it makes me (us) feel part of the learning process.

I believe this method of 'member checking' is an important quality control process which gives the participants the opportunity to review their statements for accuracy (Drury Francis and Chapman 2007). It could be considered that this process is therapeutic as participants are engaged in discussions about their life experiences; they may gain a deeper insight into their own thoughts feelings and motivations. Further, I felt that returning to the participants to validate their responses also gives them the sense that the researcher takes their views seriously and considers them to be valuable.

A further example of the different types of voices used by students was also pointed out by group BACS6 who referred to individual and group tutorials as

> A forum for having a say about what they were thinking and feeling.

Again this appeared to relate to the diverse range of identities held by the students. In this case they appear to see their identity as 'higher education students' and this led me to question whether this identity is shared by all and how their understanding of themselves as HE students as opposed to FE students has emerged. It is worth noting however that identity and the use of voice are multiple and constantly in a state of flux (Kamler 2001) and it with this in mind that I identify within the analysis of data the multiple faces of identity and how these impact on the use of voice. On these occasions when students are sharing their thoughts with tutors, they advised that they were actively encouraged to put forward their thoughts and feelings. When asked whether this was similar to how their voice was used in Further education, the student group BACS5 replied:

> HE voice is heard with more maturity

When asked to expand on this point, they went on to suggest:

> I think we are taken more seriously in HE; there is a sense of respect shown by the tutors.

This would appear to be a valuable step towards a collaborative relationship between tutors and students and it would seem supportive in providing students with the skills to use their voice effectively.

Theme Four - Temporal factors

It would seem that engagement with student voice and the value this brings is partially influenced by the time and the way in which students are asked for feedback. Tutor A mentioned that obtaining feedback from the students depended on the time that tutors ask for it. She mentioned that:

> What has gone before has a real impact on the feedback given. For example, if a student has not received the grade they expected or felt they deserved, their feedback may reflect this as they react to the disappointment. Conversely, if the student received a higher grade than expected they may rate the teaching and assessment as more effective.

Interestingly this seemed to suggest that students' views are reflected in what they see the views of tutors are. Tutor C supported this notion by suggesting that:

> It also depends upon the time of day, the place at which the students are within the teaching of the unit and the amount of training they have received in completing the forms.

She noted that the marketization of higher education and the response to the White paper (Dept. BIS 2011) left us reliant on 'box ticking' in order to ascertain the extent of the student experience. She further remarked that clearly this over-reliance on quantitative data lacked substance as we merely scratch the surface of their views without delving into the reasons behind them.

I draw on my own research journal here as I recalled a recent experience in collecting feedback on completed units. A new member of the team had mistakenly collected the unit reviews from the students part way through the unit instead of waiting until the end of the unit. The feedback received suggested that the students were 'very satisfied' in most aspects of the taught sessions, resources, assessment and feedback. Her own review of the units related that she felt that the students were very happy with the teaching within the units. On completion of the unit two months later in my role as programme leader, I collected the views again. These reviews demonstrated a very different picture, and signified that the students were 'very dissatisfied' with the unit in all aspects. This raised a very interesting point to me in that it would appear that it depended upon who was asking for the feedback as to what feedback was given. The students may have felt that they could not give an accurate picture to the tutor. Alternatively, they may have felt that as programme

leader they needed to give more detailed feedback to me. Whilst, I am aware that I have presented a descriptive account here, I was mindful that I needed to turn back to literature to attempt to place this notion within a theoretical context. In doing so, I came across a dilemma in responding to student voice.

The Higher Education Review 2012-2015 (QAA 2012) calls for student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement. The review states that if students are to be placed at the heart of the higher education system, they need to be given opportunities and encouragement to provide feedback on their experiences, and to contribute to changes and improvements. By involving students in quality assurance and enhancement providers enable them to be active participants in shaping their own education and gain access to a vital source of feedback and creativity (QAA 2013:1). Whilst admirable in essence, there needs to be awareness of the complexity of taking feedback from students which is not supplied in an honest or professional manner and the ultimate impact of this on quality reviews. In this instance I felt uncomfortable in returning to the students to address this issue as I considered it to be unethical, believing that I would be questioning their views and compromising their confidentiality. At the same time my commitment to ascertaining the unique experiences of the students was also compromised and I was concerned about how it would affect the validity of the data. I also contemplated how this could be interpreted by the management systems in the college.

As previously mentioned, I considered member checking as a means of clarifying the data received in an effort to improve accuracy, credibility and validity (Barbour 2001, Byrne 2001, Doyle 2007, Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Although this appeared to be the ideal solution to the discrepancy in verifying the accuracy of the findings, I decided against this as my commitment to emancipatory practice which respects the views of the students far outweighed the need for feedback at this time. What this did however, was to suggest that unit leaders perhaps should not collect data from their own students as this questions the validity of the responses and the rigour with which it is collected.

In terms of the time taken in the collection of the views of students, Tutor C put forward the notion that:

> Collecting their (student) voice is 'time consuming' and 'frustrating', we engage in a plethora of meetings with students to help to solve their issues. Also, emails and telephone calls with the students are not recognised in terms of collecting voice; some students are demanding and feel the need to use their voice incessantly at every occasion.

Tutor C felt that this took its toll on the staff, a point which was clearly not addressed within the current discourse of student voice collection. Further, teaching unions express concerns about the threat to professional integrity and the degree to which the student voice is used for purposes other than improving the wellbeing of students (Czerniawiski et al 2009). Support is seen here for the tutor who raised concerns of the impact of student voice collection on staff. Young people are now more able to express their views about teachers and teaching via new information technologies which leave teachers concerned about how these are used. Substantiation is evident in the work of Sabri (2013) in her work which contradicts the Browne Report (2010:25) which states that 'students are best placed to make judgements about what they want from higher education'. Sabri (2013) questions this by arguing that 'best' implies that there are those who are not so well placed within the relationship for example academics and others within higher education whose judgements are now questioned. Tutor C further noted that:

> The time and effort involved does not always bring results, and leads us to question how we measure these results.

An interesting point was raised here in the discussion which brought me to question whose results we are searching for and how valuable we as tutors see these. Another key point worth noting was the impact on staff and the stress this brings, when called to account for their actions.

Theme 5-Power influences

I was mindful when considering the content of this theme as my specific interest area lies in the power relationships within classrooms and the use of power in educational settings. I understood that I would need to be prudent in presenting the experiences of the students and tutors in the most ethical manner and be conscious of and account for my own bias and assumptions. I was aware however that as a qualitative researcher using a critical ethnographic approach I already brought to the study my own histories, culture, gender and experiences. Maynard (2013) describes this

concept as understanding the intellectual auto-biography of the researcher and as such I see myself very much as a subject within the research. I acknowledge that my own personal history is vital in identifying and demonstrating understandings and conclusions. I was conscious that I would need to engage in reflexivity to enable the true (or perceived true) experiences of the participants to be revealed.

I have evidenced my reflexivity this in a number of ways. Firstly, I have introduced memo-writing as a method of acknowledging the influences I brought to the construction and interpretation of the data. Secondly, I employed 'bracketing' described as the researcher attempting to set aside their personal beliefs whilst remaining cognizant of them throughout the study (Speziale and Carpenter 2007). Whilst there is no single set of methods for undertaking bracketing (Gearing, 2004, Wall et al 2004), in this instance, I used my research journal to identify my previously held understandings of key concepts in an attempt to highlight my own values, interests, perceptions and thoughts which might influence the research. On considering these concepts, I was aware that this may however reduce the subjective, creative aspect my analysis, something which I was keen to retain. This brings me to my final point that I wrote myself into the study by acknowledging that it is me who is making sense of the data through thinking, reflecting, writing and interpreting.

The overriding discourse identified within this theme of power influences rides on the understanding that power is evident within the tutor/student relationships for a variety of reasons. Analysis of the dataset has clearly supported the work of Tan (2004) seen within the literature review who suggests that there are three modes of power at work within educational institutions and more predominantly the classrooms. Firstly, Sovereign power, which sees tutors as having all the power within the relationship. Tutors have control over the planning, process and implementation resulting in anxieties faced by students in relation their grades. Final authority on summative grades belongs to the tutor and the only way tutors can enable empowerment for their student is to relinquish some of their power. Secondly, there is epistemological power, which demonstrates that students are aware of the prevailing authority within the relationship with their tutors. It is important to note that within this concept teachers are also subject to power issues within the institution

and may face obstruction and oppression. Thirdly, disciplinary power which does not consider who holds power but concentrates on how power arises without relating specifically to sovereign or epistemological power. Power is viewed as not solely negative or repressive; it relies on knowledge in order to control its subjects. In the context of student voice, disciplinary power exposes the student's thoughts and inadequacies leading to discipline and governance (Fielding 2004). No discussion of power would be complete without an examination the work of Foucault and Freire. It is with these concepts in mind, that I organised my analysis of data to present a more detailed frame which reflects the over-arching definition of power. Further, I have drawn on feminist and critical theory to explain my own position within my analysis.

Sovereign power

Considering how the students view sovereign power was difficult to determine as they did not comment on power explicitly. The tutors however had more of an idea that student voice was part of the widening participation agenda and were using feedback to develop their practice. Tutor A believed that:

> Student voice is 'tokenistic' and 'looks good on paper to satisfy the universities' she also stated that 'It doesn't really matter what they (the students) record, the power is still with the tutors good or bad'.

This appeared to imply that the tutors also think they hold the power and that collecting the views of students will not change this. I wondered at this stage whether given that this is the view of the tutor, are these ideologies transmitted to students implicitly in covert ways? I entered these concerns within my journal with a view to follow up with the tutor I was surprised that tutor B (male) supported this notion by arguing that:

> The biggest problem with the students using their voice is power and control. We (tutors) are the ones who have the degree, masters, PhD, so we are in control as the students don't know what they want at this stage. Sometimes we do not want to give over the power and we should not be embarrassed by this.

Reflecting on this conversation highlights two key points. Firstly, the idea that qualification brings a sense of power and I question whether this signifies the concept that knowledge brings power. In discussing the reciprocal relationship

between knowledge and power, Kogan (2005:9) accepts that the power held by individuals (or groups) 'affects the identification, use and transmission of knowledge' but draws the line at making the assumption that these are determinants within the relationship and that we should remain tentative about generalising about the power-knowledge nexus. Secondly, the concept that we should not always 'give' power highlights that tutors may feel that they are 'bestowing power' on the students rather than them being part of a collaborative community of practice and shared learning (Peltonen 2004).

Epistemological power

Tutor A demonstrated an understanding that there is an underlying idea that tutors hold the power within the student/tutor relationship as she voiced concerns that the students may not be exercising their 'true' voice as questions relating to the programme were asked by the programme leader and that the students may have felt inhibited by this. She argued further that the power issues were evident here and that there are a number of influences on this. Tutor A felt that:

> If the tutors are asking for feedback, they in fact, hold the power merely because they are asking.

This raised an interesting point relating to the underlying concept that there was a hierarchal relationship here and as students they do not hold any power within it. I realised that this would be an interesting avenue to review and I followed this up with the tutor in question. Following a particularly difficult time within the department whereby the staff were encouraged to ask for more and more feedback in an attempt to gain students' thoughts on their experiences, I contacted Tutor A and asked her if she could expand on her previous ideas relating to the idea that students hold the power because we are constantly asking for their view. Tutor A responded that:

> Looking at the concept of student voice now as opposed to before, there is so much more attention given to collecting their voice. There are four ways of collecting voice which is overkill. The students' voice is not being represented effectively if we overdo it like this. Again, this is us (tutors) using our power to coerce them into saying what we want. It is as if the more we ask them for their views, this suggests that we are searching for the answer which suits us.

There is however the argument that by continually asking the students, tutors felt more in control and ultimately hold the power. In fact, students from BACS6 reported that:

> Tutors are always asking for our feedback, when we give feedback it does make us feel valued and in control of our learning.

When I asked the group if this made them feel empowered, they replied that they did, but made the point that it was still up to the tutor to decide whether to address their concerns or agree to their requests. Interestingly this point links well with the relationship theme as Rudduck and Fielding (2006:225) speak of 'rupturing relationships' in collecting the student voice and the team in which I work were very much of the opinion that the more we asked for the voice, the less likely it was to be a true reflection of their perceptions and views.

Tutor C further supported the notion that students accepted their subordinate role easily and argued that:

> Students do not reflect on their voice, they see it as something that is done to them. I think this is because we reflect these values by not providing a collaborative approach to teaching, learning and feedback.

This point can also be seen in the focus group discussions with BAHSC6 who when involved in a class teaching session put forward the notion that:

> I think that students are vulnerable in terms of their grades received. In class it is accepted that the teacher gives us the voice, but we as students decide where, when and how to use it.

I followed this with a question 'So do you think that choices empower you? Is it that the more choice you have the more power it brings?

> Yes, we decide whether to attend, how long to stay and whether to listen, which in essence empowers us. We have the control at the end of our studies as we have a degree.

Clearly this takes us back to the point made earlier which saw the tutor suggesting the very same thing, that knowledge is power. Within the same discussion, the students also reported that they saw power being held by the tutors as they planned the curriculum and the teaching sessions and that tutors had the power to change it.

This group, however, did not see that they held any power to change things as in the end, the tutor will decide if it can be changed and as such holds the power. Thomson (2011) supports this point by arguing that in some cases student voice is tokenistic and is more about the students seeming to be involved rather than sincere attempts to enable students as active partners. One male student suggested that he felt that students held the power within the class discussions as they were sharing their expertise and work related experiences. He stated:

> This is my territory and my power, but if I am expressing my needs to the tutors, it is still the tutor who decides if those needs can be addressed.

The significance of this in terms of producing new knowledge and highlighting significant findings in this area is clear. The power is passed between the tutors and students as they take control through their actions and use this to discipline each other.

Another student within the same group likened the situation to parents and children by suggesting that:

> The parents make the ultimate decisions and that the relationship in the class is like that, the students are being led in the same way as children.

Disciplinary power

As previously mentioned, disciplinary power focuses on how power arises rather than who holds the power (Tan 2004). In this instance, tutor C considered that it was difficult to respond to voice, as we think we are being constructive but this is not always the case. This appeared to suggest that the way tutors responded to students may have determined who holds the power in the relationship, and this demonstrates a distinct feeling of inadequacy on the part of the tutor. Further evidence of this is seen in Tutor C suggesting that:

> We don't have any control over student voice and why should we?

This appears to suggest that there is something else controlling their voice which may or may not hold more power. Perhaps this could relate to the accountability aspect of student voice in relation to the marketization of higher education within a neoliberal society. Tutor C followed this line with a comment which suggests that;

Student voice is 'a fashion', an 'I want approach'. It makes me wonder whether we encourage this behaviour, rightly or wrongly, by continually asking for their views. Perhaps the reason we as tutors respond to this is because of fear of complaint.

Mukherjee et al (2009) conducted a study which explored the modes of complaining in students. This study examines the relationship between students' perceptions of different types of 'educator power' and modes of student complaint behaviour in higher education. Drawing on quantitative data, the study is largely based on Stephens and Gwimmer's (1998) cognitive-emotional conceptual model of compliance and attempts to make links between emotive reactions resulting from consumers understanding of a situation (in this case the use of power). Their aim was to address a research hypothesis that suggests that instructors may exercise their power in a number of ways that have a variety of effects on students' complaining behaviours. Whilst I was unable to draw any solid connections between this study and my own, I was intrigued enough to consider how emotive reactions were perceived by tutors from a qualitative approach and as such added the question to the interview which asked the tutor to consider what the emotional outcomes may be for the students who had not had their views heard or acted upon.

Tutor B (male) responded by stating:

I think they (students) get angry that they have not have their needs met and all too often reflect this in their feedback. Sometimes, it feels like a type of punishment.

Towards the end of my study, I was given the opportunity to meet with a group of tutors and members of management at our validating university in relation to the utilisation of student voice. This was pleasing as I felt that it would give me an understanding of their views as a university as opposed to HE delivery within an FE college. My preconceived idea was that they would be extremely committed to the collection and utilisation of student voice brought about through their constant request for feedback on our courses from the students and evidence of the collection of voice in many forms. This was not how the tutors and management saw the process. They did in fact feel equally overwhelmed with the continuous search for the 'voice'. One member of the group stated that:

The students are holding power and control over us as they are consumers and know that we have to 'play ball, it feels like we have 'accountability' over our heads all the time**.**

These comments were particularly illuminating to me as we are constantly being asked to provide feedback to the HEI and it appears that the policy demands are also upon them through management structures which demand answers which ultimately satisfy the government agenda for promoting a neoliberal hegemony. This concept was further supported by the group from the HEI in saying that:

Within the university we are expected to retain students at any cost, which may suggest that we may be using our power to quash student voice rather than listening to their needs.

The manager further argued that:

It is the students who hold the power as they are consumers and can 'call the shots'.

This appeared to reflect the idea that the university felt that disciplinary power was evident in that they felt disciplined by the students if they did not do as they were asked and this would result in discipline from their superiors. When interviewing a tutor from the validating university, concerns were raised about the accountability in terms of how they manage their classes, for example Tutor D (male from the validating university) argued that:

Attendance is a major problem, however it is difficult to chase up as students may feel singled-out and subject to discipline. However if we allow these things to happen, then they (students) will not learn, which will also reflect in results.

There appeared to be a strong feeling that tutors feel disciplined by students in the same way that students felt disciplined by tutors. In this instance it was the power which determined the concept of discipline. Taking these discussions into account, I see this is a significant contribution to knowledge which was unexpected.

It became apparent at this point that tutors were also the subject of power relations which at times saw them as vulnerable within the relationship. Interestingly, the university demonstrated a clear commitment to the student experience by employing

a member of the team to address student issues, in addition to providing students with valuable information relating to how the institution have addressed concerns voiced by previous students. I felt a sense of sharing concerns at this point as my previously held assumptions were that we (the college and university) were in fact 'on separate sides' when in fact this discussion could result in us working together to provide a more collaborative approach which would demonstrate a more 'bottom-up' method. I felt this to be of particular significance to my study and a demonstration of new knowledge, as I had not uncovered any literature to support the notion of the different perspectives of colleges and universities in the use and purpose of student voice, particularly where the university is validating the degree from the college. This would further suggest the presence of disciplinary power within the relationship which may be addressed through closer working practices.

Foucault and Freire

Foucault (1983: 220) defines power as:

> A total structure of actions…it incites. It induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely.

This quintessential quote draws on the key discourses of power which I raise within my analysis and as such I consider this to be a relevant place to begin my discussion on the work of Foucault in relation to emancipatory practice from a Foucauldian perspective. Foucault (1988) offers the view of emancipation not merely as a process of identifying dominant practices and analysing their impact on behaviours, but also of application of technologies of the self to negotiate a new way of being. In this way, people take actions to improve the situation and move towards emancipation. This being the case, it would seem logical that once dominant discourses are laid bare, then it is my responsibility as the researcher to attempt to change them. It is with this in mind that I use this study to identify ways to improve practice which could reduce dominant practice evidence of which is seen in the implications and recommendations chapter. Manias and Street (2001) put forward the idea that the researcher engages in 'pastoral power' in the role of caring agent. Pastoral power is demonstrated as an accepted expertise. In my study I believe the researcher (myself) to be the caring agent who utilises my expert status to guide others. I have expressed this concept through engagement with participants within

the focus groups and interviews whereby I have supported them in seeing themselves and their actions from a new perspective by helping them to identify dominant behaviours.

Whilst certain overt forms of sovereign power are evident within student voice studies for example, policy writing, curriculum planning and teaching and assessment, Foucault (1983) argues that the most dynamic form of power is that which lives within the social body of society as a whole (Weberman 1995). Whilst it is less visible, it is worth noting that power also has a productive element in securing freedom and facilitating resistance and liberation. It appeared that students did not demonstrate an understanding of this concept and appeared to accept the perceived hierarchy within the teacher/student relationship in terms of them using their voice in class situations.   They did however display a good understanding that society disempowers individuals as tutor group BAGSC6 state:

> If we think about older people, they are often disempowered because they are vulnerable. This is because society treats them as vulnerable….Students are also vulnerable in terms of their grades; we are vulnerable if we don't achieve.

It is with this in mind that I consider the idea raised by Foucault (1980) that power is neither negative and solely vertical, rather power is relational, situated and is continuously negotiated and constructed. In terms of my study this would suggest that power is not an object to possess or to give away, it is something which is taken or relinquished when required relevant to the context. In order to consider how a Foucauldian stance is evident in my study, I needed to draw on the work of Starhawk (1988:10) who advocates that power takes three dimensions, namely, 'power over', 'power from within' and 'power with'. Ultimately my pre-determined assumptions lay within the realm of hierarchal relations of domination and control (power over) with a wish to transform practice which would develop a sense of personal ability (power from within) for the students. They would then utilise this to demonstrate 'power with' through the use of collaborative dialogue and respectful alliances. This concept was evidenced in feedback received from tutor B who questioned the value of students using their power when they do not have the same qualifications as the tutors. The suggestion here was that power can only be exerted by those with knowledge. Tutor B offers a view that:

Sometimes we don't want to give over the power and control and don't think we should be embarrassed by this.

Gabb (2010) supports this notion by offering the view that collaborative dialogue is only possible within a listening culture that enables representation and interpretation of the all the voices. Additionally my understanding that particular discursive formations position the subject in a particular way has identified that individuals are positioned as either students or lecturers. This will obviously frame how they behave in relation to each other and the discourses they engage in (Foucault 1972). This may suggest the possibility that these roles are constant and would need a great deal of work on the relationship, organisational structures and wider concepts to enable a more equitable approach to education.

Links can be seen here in the work of Bernstein (2000) who, within his analysis of what he called 'the pedagogic encounter' proposes a conceptual language and understanding of power and control in the ways in which they influence the educational system. In doing so, voice is represented through communication. Connections are apparent here with the increased attention on student voice as a 'rights based' agenda. In this instance the introduction of the document 'putting students at the heart of the system' (BIS 2011) sees the government attempting to influence the educational system through student participation in their education. It is worth revisiting here that language and communication are determined by the social conditions in use at specific times. Attention should therefore be given to how these are employed within institutional practice and how they may embody assumptions which directly or indirectly legitimise existing power relations and lead to ideological power which projects one's own practice as universal or common sense. Tutor A adds substance to this notion:

Looking at the concept of student voice now as opposed to before, there is much more attention on collecting voice …Again, this is us (tutors) using our power to coerce them (student) into saying what we want them to… we are looking for an answer that suits us.

Again, this quote appears to demonstrate an understanding of the disciplinary nature of power in terms of tutor's opportunities to coerce students into doing what they want them to.

I suggest that this comment from tutor A reflected the idea that the practices currently employed by Universities and Colleges directly legitimise power relations and as argued by Bernstein (1971), the language used in requesting feedback from students is restricted by the expectations of the organisation.

In a similar vein, discussion with tutor A echoed Foucault in terms of truth, knowledge and power. Tutor A argued that:

> If we as tutors are searching for and conceptualising knowledge as a form of truth, then we would need to concede that there are no universal truths and that if we did in fact take the 'absolute truth' out of the our expectations of the students, then the hegemonic relationship between the tutor and student would not exist and would therefore lead to a more equal relationship.

This would appear to support Foucault's (1977:27) view that 'knowledge linked with power not only assumes the authority of the truth but has the power to make itself true'. The importance of this is supported by Foucault's view that power is demonstrated within a wide range of networks and practices. This view was considered to be extremely relevant by Tutor A, who offers the concept of the Panopticon as evidence of regulatory modes of power and knowledge. Tutor A draws on Bentham's architectural design of prisons whereby prisoners were under constant surveillance and links this with the University whereby control mechanisms are in place to discipline tutors in their roles. In relation to this concept Tutor A argued that:

> It is not only the students who are under constant surveillance and accountability, we as tutors are expected to account for our actions without any consideration for our professionalism.

This comment made by tutor A appears to support the work of Lingard and Sellar (2012) who offer the notion that current forms of regulation and accountability are prescriptive and reductive in essence and work to both de-professionalise and re-professionalise teachers. Whilst I had not engaged with tutor A in an official role as researcher and participant on this occasion, an informal discussion had taken place

whilst planning sessions in the role of colleagues and friends. I believed this to be a far more productive format in collecting data, as we engaged in discussion for some time and had the opportunity to delve deep into Foucauldian concepts in terms of power relations.

As I have identified the use of power in a disciplinary manner as a key contribution to knowledge, the idea that students are under surveillance by tutors and tutors are under surveillance by management supports this notion as it presents the idea that surveillance may lead to discipline

This would not have been the case within interviews, as these do not necessarily lend themselves to in-depth synthesis of ideas whereby individual positionality becomes clear and acknowledged as a key determinant for views and perceptions.

For Tutor C this accountability leads to:

> Powerlessness and feeling mistrusted.

This could be seen in the continuous collection of students' voice whereby students engaged in modes of complaining, the power resulting from the knowledge which the university has gained as a result of these actions. This form of panoptic discipline clearly reflects Tan's (2004) work on disciplinary power as the actions of the observer may take a regulatory role within the relationship. Of course it is equally important to note that the managers and leadership team are also monitored within the panoptic structure and they themselves become part of the surveillance.

The notion of powerlessness offers further support for concepts of discipline and control as a significant finding within the study, and one which had not been envisaged in the initial stages of the research.

As previously mentioned, Tutor C expressed concerns regarding accountability and sees herself being monitored as result of collecting feedback, stating:

> The students can say what they want and we as tutors cannot do anything about it; managers are given this information with no background information.

I was concerned when I considered this idea as I felt that the real danger here is the concept that tutors were also acting in a surveillance role of the students and this may result in a penetration of power within their behaviour and relationship.

An exploration of the work of Foucault would not be complete in this instance without examining his theory of resistance and power. Foucault emphasises the concept that where there is power, there is resistance and in the context of my study this would be visible in the students challenging the word of the tutors. In reality however this was not the case as noted in my research diary:

> 'When I told the students that we were unable to agree to a group extension and explained the reasons, I was very surprised as they accepted it and I felt that they felt better having merely asked even though it wasn't agreed'.

I believed that there were two possible reasons for this. Firstly, as Foucault points out, within the dichotomy of power and resistance, then resistance is never in a position of exteriority and may be influenced by a number of other conditions. Secondly, the relationship may well be developed sufficiently for the students to feel that ultimately, they trust the tutors' decision. I was concerned however that, as the students had accepted this point, there would now not be any possibility for change within the unequal structure. My research journal draws further on the critiques of Foucault's theory of resistance and power by stating:

> There seems to be a problem when thinking about Foucault's theory of resistance as it does not demonstrate any notion of emancipation and therefore does not show transformative practices.

Holloway (2002:40) (Marxist theory) argued 'in Foucault's analysis there are a whole host of resistances which are integral to power, but there is no possibility of emancipation'. I was left with the view that as long as these forms of resistance did not lead to emancipation, in this case the inclusion of a diversity of participants, they would remain a mere gesture.

When considering the work of Freire in relation to power and student voice I draw on his assertion that power is based on binary oppositions and as such a person will either have power or not, suggesting that people are either marginalised or not. This concept goes against any notions I hold in terms of power, as I see power through a postmodern lens in that the strength is in the diversity and complexity of the relationships and contexts, not something you bestow or maintain. Tutor C offered the notion in her interview that:

The organisation in its promotion of student voice in fact reinforces the view by idealising the use of voice with the suggestion that it is a new concept which has never been addressed before.

It is with this mind, that she questioned the use of 'empowerment' as the passing of a valuable object which was no longer ours, but belonged to the students. Bland and Atweh (2003:8) put forward the notion that 'coming to power' would be a more suitable term to use in this case in order to demonstrate a more collaborative nature of the relationship. Tutor B (male) was particularly interested in the gender of the students and how he, as a man, responded to them and how they responded to him within the relationship. Tutor B felt that this was an important aspect of student voice work, thus contradicting Freire's work which does not address gender issues in a substantive way (Robinson and Taylor 2007). Further criticism of Freire's theorisation of power is seen in the work of Ellsworth (1989) and Reay (2006) who offer the notion that difficulties lie in achieving ultimate democracy given the power relations which are omnipresent in society as a whole. In terms of my study, this then is seen in the celebration of what Reay (2006:179) calls 'a cacophony of competing voices' as opposed to the one voice, which we as tutors appear to be searching for. Relevance is evident in the continuous search for voices which the tutors referred to as 'relentless' as they appeared to search for the answer which they wanted rather than a 'true' voice. It would seem then that Freire does not address the specificity of people's lives (Weiler 1991) and leads me to consider whether we as tutors were also in danger of missing this vital point. The overarching theme here seems to be that inequality is overcome through heightened consciousness, leading the oppressor to liberation (Freire 1970).

Theme 6- Relationships and Tutor engagement

All participants within my study mentioned the value of the relationships between tutors and students in terms of their engagement with student voice. Interestingly, the focus group with FDYP5 highlighted that:

> We are happy to give our opinions on the end of unit review forms, we can do this without hurting the feelings of the tutors, and we don't want to sound like we are moaning.

This raises a couple of issues, firstly, the idea that students think that if these unit review forms are completed, then it does not hurt tutors' feelings and also they feel

that they are not able to express their thoughts in the group situation. Support for this is given by tutor C as she states that:

> I tend to focus on the negative comments on feedback received which reflect discontent made on the unit reviews.

In answer to the question, why you focus on this, she responded by stating that:

> This is what the college will be looking at and I feel a sense of responsibility and accountability. Also, the fact that students would rather complete these anonymously suggests that they think there may be a consequence of voicing these views.

Tutor B (male) asserted that he was interested in how students saw the unit that he had been teaching as was keen to know what they had learned. When questioned whether he felt that this form denoted what they have learned, he responded:

> It (the unit review) does not dictate what they have learned; I would welcome a more collaborative approach aside from unit reviews and instead, just talk with the students as this would enable a 'truer' voice to emerge.

Again this leads me to question the contradictory term' of the 'true' voice and would relate back to the idea of whose voices are heard and what are the antecedents of these views.

Tutor C took this point further by stating that the relationship is extremely important if students are to use their voice effectively.

She asserted that:

> The use of voice will change dramatically depending on the relationship.

Batchelor (2006) in her work on vulnerable voices argues for the construction of relationships built on trust. In this way, voice is uncovered rather then covered as the student lowers her defences thereby exposing weakness which enables an honesty to prevail as a result of initial vulnerability. On a personal level, I can understand this not only relating to students but tutors also. I recorded in my journal:

> 'The more positive my relationship is with the students is, the more I am able to reveal my own vulnerability in an attempt to develop the relationship'.

Tutor C went on to suggest that:

> We need an equal relationship, so it is a balancing act to enable them to disclose their needs which will ensure that learning takes place.

It is valuable here to review the work of Freire (1978:8) who argues that 'relationships can never be understood except in the light of class analysis'. For example Tutor C puts the case forward for all voices to be heard but questions:

> I am not sure whether this is possible though, as society marginalises minority voices.

Conflicting views were seen, however, in a focus group with BAHSC6 who offered

> Choices empower you, the more we have, the more choices we have.

This quote appeared to suggest that it was choices which empowered them which moves away from the idea that they were marginalised by class; rather they were marginalised by a lack of choices in their education as proposed by Freire (2002).

It could be argued whether the constant demand for the 'student voice' welcomes the inclusion of all voices especially those on the margins in favour of those who hold the privileges. It may be that we have to accept that it will never truly be an equal relationship. It may be that we need to think about voice more in terms of 'remaking of communities' thereby enabling students and tutors to work together to enter into dialogue in order to transform practice (Ranson 2000). As Tutor A purported that:

> There seems to the assumption now that students know what is best for them, they appear to forget that we have done this for a number of years and have the experience to make valid judgements.

The above quote from Tutor A seems to demonstrate that she felt disempowered and that her professionalism was questioned by the rise in student voice. There was clearly an element of frustration in these comments and was considered to be extremely valuable within my study as a significant contribution to knowledge. Further support of this notion was raised by the tutor who talked of feeling 'powerless' as a result of the increased accountability as previously mentioned. The idea that tutors feel disempowered in their work was particularly important within my study as my commitment to equality of opportunity is key to exposing hegemonic practices which devalue the role of both the students and the tutors.

Echoes of the work of Bourdieu are evident here in his assertion that 'it is because subjects do not, strictly speaking, know what they are doing, that what they do has more meaning than they know' (Fairclough 1994:41) and when collecting their voice it may seem difficult to ascertain what they know. It was interesting that the tutor who valued the tutor/student relationship was the teacher of the class who had also valued the relationship. On questioning the tutor on this aspect she stated that she emphasised that:

> Promoting positive relationships within my class are vital within personal, professional and academic forms and I see this as an employability "must".

In addition the focus group with BACS6 supported this idea by suggesting that the relationship held within the class helps and supports them as tutors are flexible thereby suggesting that it is a means of satisfying their needs.

An interesting point was raised within an informal discussion with Tutor A who also happened to be my critical friend and research partner, that we had both taught the same group at the same level and received opposing feedback in terms of their satisfaction. Tutor A offered the view that:

> Students operate a 'binary' system when assessing tutors; a 'good cop/bad cop' ideology. I think that students think they need to demonstrate an allegiance to one tutor above another.

She related this to Kleinian psychosocial models of attachment where she draws on 'splitting' relating to children who adopt an allegiance with one or other parent. In this way, children are unable to keep two contradictory thoughts in mind at the same time, leading to them connecting with one. Tutor A supports the work of Fairbairn (1952) by noting that:

> Children take this to later life and demonstrate these actions within subsequent relationships in order to make sense of their relationships and this can now be seen in their role as students.

Whilst I acknowledge the fact that only one participant offered this view I felt it to be of particularly important as it clearly demonstrates strong links with the relationship theme. The relationship created within the classroom is vital when judging how and why student voice is used and in this case the use of voice may well be determined

by the students' opinion of the tutor. I believe that the significance of the findings are strengthened by this idea and valuably illuminates discrepancies seen in feedback received. As the tutor who offered this view is my critical friend, I particularly found it useful in pursuing her expertise in this area and relating it to my work on student voice.

When meeting with the partner colleagues from our validating university, they also voiced their concerns that the relationship was 'not what it was' as the students were more and more encouraged to voice their views without any real understanding of the bigger picture of their learning. They spoke of the rupturing of existing relationships as a result of the constant search for voice and the ill-defined roles of tutors and students in terms of teaching and learning. Tutors also reflected on this and argued that their concerns lie in the potential for rupturing of the security of the traditional power relations between teachers and students and redefining the boundaries of this dichotomy.

In summary within this chapter I employed thematic analysis of primary data and interpreted the results to lead into the summary of my findings. I have shown the relationship between the primary data and existing theoretical concepts, empirical studies and relevant literature. I have made use of sociological theories to explain and position the key points made in an attempt to provide a holistic view encompassing a range of theoretical constructs. Whilst I have offered an analysis of all six of the initial themes which emerged from the data, I felt that it was valuable to concentrate on three themes for discussion and implications for practice. These themes are detailed as:

Rights, needs and participation
Relationships
Power issues

These three themes demonstrated a connective element as much of the data interlocked to present a coherent picture of the analysis. An example is seen in the discussions on rights and needs which consequently draw on the relationship between tutors and students to enable their effectiveness. Likewise the power issues

seen within the relationship support and hinder the student participation. I felt that these themes would give me the best chance to present the participants' views and provide meaningful implications for practice. The connections between the value of positive relationships, power differentials and rights, needs and participation became clear as I analysed the data. These links will be demonstrated within the discussion chapter and significant implications for practice.

Within the following chapter which charts an analytic, logical and comprehensive summary of my findings I will illustrate how the findings represent an existing body of knowledge and how my study reveals new knowledge within student voice work in higher education.

I further proceed to explore the potential implications and recommendations for practice in an effort to maintain an approach which effectively draws together the purpose and outcomes of the study.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Introduction

Within my previous chapter I have presented an analysis of primary data sought collected from interviews and focus group discussions and I have shown links with existing empirical studies on student voice. I considered how previous research supported my interpretations and where I felt there were gaps in literature which were evident within my study.

Within this chapter I firstly present a summary of my findings and analyse how other empirical studies have supported my conclusions and illustrate how they account for theoretical assertions and claims made. I then proceed to the implications of these in relation to my professional practice in an individual, institutional and a national terms demonstrating how the significance of my findings may impact on stakeholders (students, practitioners, tutors and the institution itself). Finally I make recommendations for informing and improving professional practices and go on to demonstrate how this could be achieved. Opportunities for future studies will be examined, justified and presented. The previously identified three themes will be addressed in turn to enable a clear discussion on specific topics to be considered:

Rights, needs and participation
Relationships
Power issues

Discussion

Morley (2006) advocates that the discussion is the most complex section of the study as it demonstrates integration and synthesis of ideas, key concepts and understanding of the data. I am mindful that whilst the previous chapters relate to literature, methodology and data analysis this chapter is more demanding as I explore my own thinking to discover in what ways it reflects originality and

contributes to knowledge whilst bearing in mind my own positionality within the study and the limitations and challenges this brings. Within this section discussions are not drawn from a singular source; rather it is an amalgamation of four influences. Firstly, the findings of the study; secondly, considerations of the theories related to the problem identified; thirdly, the empirical experiences and findings of other researchers and finally, my own experiences and findings as the researcher and moderator of the results highlighted (Johnson Nenty 2009).

<u>Analysis of findings in relation to professional knowledge-related studies</u>

As previously mentioned, there are a limited number of studies which explicitly explore student voice from a higher education perspective. Studies appear to concentrate on school initiatives (Cox and Robinson 2008, Nichols 2006) which encourage the inclusion of voices of children. That said, there are a number of studies which do address student voice in a higher education context and have offered a theoretical frame for my primary research.

Whilst the themes identified within my study have all offered valuable insights into the experiences of the students and tutors in relation to student voice, my focus is given to three principal themes previously highlighted.

This is not to say that the other identified themes are not valuable but I believe that they serve more as a support for the above themes by adding depth and clarity to the findings. The three themes analysed and discussed were chosen as I felt that they impacted on each other thereby adding strength to the analysis and provided a platform on which to present the implications for practice in a manner that was manageable.

5.1   <u>Summary of findings</u>

Robinson and Taylor (2007:8) posit that student voice work is 'an inherently ethical and moral practice and that at the heart of this practice lie four core values'.

1. A conception of communication as dialogue
2. The requirement for participation and democratic inclusivity
3. The recognition that power relations are unequal and problematic.

4. The possibility for change and transformation (Robinson and Taylor 2007:8).

I found these core values to be particularly useful when offering a discussion on the value of the data collected. I was specifically interested in their relevance in terms of tutor and student engagement with these core principles to effect change whilst acknowledging concepts of social injustice and equality. Further, it would seem morally justified that engagement with core values would be vital within student voice work in order to protect participants' rights. Robinson and Taylor (2007) effectively call into question the 'bourgeois myth of neutrality' (Williams 2003:21) within educative processes and relationships and as such I commit to these values as a means of addressing this concept.

<u>Rights, needs and participation</u>.
Students appear to understand that the collection of student voice is a means of satisfying their needs and rights to participation in their day to day engagement with their studies. They do not however show any understanding of the wider political agenda which demonstrates a neoliberal approach to the marketization of higher education. This approach sees a move away from traditional pastoral engagement with students towards the accountability of formal learning (Fielding 2004). Whilst students show clear traits of making excessive demands on tutors and have been heard to make comments such as 'we are paying for this, so we should have it', they (students) do not relate to student voice as a means of ensuring inclusion and social equality. The only mention they make of transformation is that they have their needs met. They do not express an interest in transformation as a means of achieving positive changes in their experience. This tends to present a reductive nature of the students understanding to how they may use their voice as previously mentioned (McLeod 2011:181) who reframes voice 'as strategy, participation, difference and rights'.

Referring back to the concept of the neoliberal approach the educator Althusser (1971) argued that the educational apparatus is central to consolidating the influence of the dominant ideology. He draws on the work of Gramsci (1971) who explored the concept of cultural hegemony stating that the institution plays a part in ensuring that

their ideology is accepted as a cultural norm. Althusser (1971) goes on to state that education is not the sole enabler of a neoliberal society, but it does play a part in supporting this ideology through its practices and institutional cultures. It is with this in mind that I have offered an in-depth exploration of dominant practices within the section within this chapter on 'Power'.

Whilst students saw utilisation of their voice as a positive move towards collaborative participation, they also mentioned the overuse of collection of their views and queried the value of its continuous use. This concept was clearly supported by tutors who warned of the excessive collection of student's views and the distortion of their perceptions that this inevitably brought. Interestingly, I was unable to locate any research to support the concerns of the overuse of collection of student voice. Since it is a relatively new agenda put forward by the HE White Paper (Dept. BIS 2011) it is likely that more research will follow as student voice becomes more entrenched within HE processes. It is worth noting that when I initially engaged with literature on the subject of student voice there was very little available and it is only as I worked through my study that more became available. I can only assume that that the ideology of 'students as consumers' is now reaching the public domain whereby academics and students are exploring the consequences of the government agenda. That said the absence of literature was disappointing as I had made the assumption that the increased focus on student voice would lead to a plethora of theoretical explorations.

The lack of theoretical clarification of the overuse of collecting feedback appears to have weakened my study as it led to a feeling of inadequacy when engaging in relevant discussions with students and tutors. I was conscious however that the lack of theoretical sources has enabled an interesting finding to emerge from my study and has identified a pertinent gap in research which has been duly explored within this study. It was at this time that I introduced auto-ethnography as a means of drawing on my own intellectual biography (Maynard 2013). I drew on my own experiences as a previous student. I soon realised that my experiences did not represent what I was searching for and as such I could not make any positive connection between student experiences and those of my own. Possibly this was a result of the current ideologies which see the increase of the marketization of higher

education through performativity which uses 'comparisons, judgements and self-management in place of interventions and direction' (Ball 2013:137).

One specific study, Cook-Sather (2007) did appear to address key issues in relation to the collection of student voice from an impositional viewpoint. Cook-Sather (2007) argue that there was little need to engage in critical analyses of existing social conditions, rather it was more important to consider how to reduce impositional practices which promise to bring liberation through reinforcement of existing oppressions and marginalisation. This would suggest then that concern should be to look for methods of collecting voice which would lead to positive change, highlighted as a core value when engaging in student voice work (Robinson and Taylor 2007). If we consider voice to be about participation in learning and engagement in the democratic process (McLeod 2011) then attention should be given to the possibility that student voice as part of an engagement agenda, if handled badly, may result in the assumption that if students are involved they will automatically be using their voice.

Rudd et al (2007) advocated the value of the relationships between tutors and students as a means of empowering students by providing ways of listening to their concerns. Supported by studies, for example Maynard (2013), which draws on feminist research, arguably my primary research was becoming a genuine relationship rather than an instrumental rapport as I shared my experiences and in some way, made visible my vulnerability. It was at this point I felt the power inequalities were beginning to break down between myself and the students. I am mindful however that this was my opinion and it was impossible to gauge whether the students actually shared this view. Further, I was mindful that power is fluid and changing and I needed to acknowledge that it is not only visible within a top down structure. As argued by Foucault (1980a) power is not a structure, it is a complex association of social relations and contexts. In this way, Foucault (1980) saw power as being produced and reproduced through continuous social interactions from a number of directions.

One direction which I had not previously considered was that of 'power over' (Starhawk 1988) within the tutor group. In this manner Foucault's (1980) view of

power as being reproduced through social interactions is evident in comments from one student from BACS6 who argued that:

> In University, we are encouraged to use our voices, but sometimes, one person in the class can take over and this may not be my view.

There appears to be a lack of literature which examines the use of power within social circles in educational institutions which has led me to propose that this could be developed in future studies.

Extensive literature is drawn upon which explores the aspects of students' participation. For example literature in this area appears to concentrate on how students can become co-constructors of their education through self and peer assessment (Taras 2001, Tan 2008). This provided me with a sound base on which to build my exploration of the concepts which challenges the idea of students as subordinates. To address this I engaged in focused questioning which asked the students how they saw their participation in their studies and whether they saw themselves as active agents in the relationship. Disappointingly, they did not offer any insights into how they may become more involved and whilst tutors see the students as having rights, the students themselves do not question the use of their rights to participation and control over their opinions. Students purely concentrated on having their needs met. Once again I was hoping that the students would have an understanding of the increased neoliberal agenda which encourages individual choice, particularly in relation to their choice of university. Taking this one step further I hoped that they would use this opportunity to offer a critique of their university experiences through requests for feedback. I am mindful that this would require them to have a historic understanding of the agenda which is not readily encouraged within a neoliberal ideology. Students do however in practical terms offer criticism and complaint. They do not necessarily know the route which has been taken to enable them to exercise their voice. I see this again as a weakness in my study from a methodological point of view and realise that I could have developed the focus group to present them with my interpretation of the political agenda and encouraged them to offer and engage in discussion. I was concerned at the time that this could be construed as 'leading' the student's views, but with hindsight this could have been managed with care. Gilgun (2006:215) identified critical points

during which "we can account for our own reflexivity" when conducting research. It is clear in this instance that more attention could have been given to my own reflexivity, both during the design phase and the implementation process, rather than leaving it until the analysis of the data and writing up of the findings.

An array of literature however, does concentrate on student participation and argues for a 'ladder of participation' (Hart 1997) as a means of engaging students in their own learning experiences. Calls for the promotion of collaborative partnerships, for example in research and curriculum planning between staff and students are many (Seale et al 2015, Smit. 2013). Such initiatives lack detail and clarity and there are concerns raised by Seale et al (2015) about how the partnership can remain "genuine" given that the reality of placing students within the partnership in the current higher education climate may be difficult to achieve. I fall back on the work of Callan (2014) here as she promotes an 'ethics of care' approach to make the point that acknowledgement of the students as experts in their own field may lead to a shift in the balance of power within the relationship.

Studies by Mariskind (2012) which explored teachers' perspectives of student participation was particularly interesting when comparing her results with mine as there seemed to be an emphasis on student participation as 'verbal' without any consideration that silence may also represent participation in the process. Clear evidence is seen here in dominant pedagogical discourses that lead teachers to assume that when students do not speak they are not learning (Schulz 2009). Once again, the need for student-centred pedagogies is highlighted where dominant meanings of participation are clearly evident. Students and teachers develop and present 'norms' for participation in classrooms (Roehling et al 2011) and it is only with attention to how students learn the norms and the relevant skills required to participate that they will become proficient in understanding formal rules which govern classroom practices. I draw on the work of Bernstein (1975) here as I consider the idea that what the school or university does in terms of rituals, conduct and authority relations can modify or change the pupil's role in the classroom. Bernstein (1971) offers the view that there are two modes of language codes, these being, restricted and elaborated.

Bernstein (1971) goes on to say that the type of language used reinforces specific relationships with the environment and the significance individuals attach to these.

This is particularly relevant when discussing class relations and the idea that the language used by students symbolises their social class and identity. In relation to my study, this may suggest that engaging with student voice may well not be a part of the language code used and as such may render students as powerless. It is with this in mind that I intend to develop a collaborative approach to participation, listed as a core value within student voice work (Robinson and Taylor (2007). Nonetheless I am acutely aware that this cannot be accomplished without equal attention given to the value of the relationship and the use of power within my planned approach. It is only by engagement with a three-pronged approach that I argue that we can truly re-think the values of higher education and regard students as change agents. I believe it to be appropriate here to engage in discussion around ethics of care whilst exploring the concept of collaborative work. Callan (2014) further examines the use of ethics of care within her work on the ethical practitioner and in the same way this can be related to ethical procedures when pursuing collaborative practices in higher education. Callan (2014) argues that in establishing a personal professional ethical position practitioners must recognise that there may be conflicts between opposing ideologies and that this is grounded in democratic practices.

Relationships
The importance of relationships emerged as a strong thread within my study. Tutors and students alike voiced their opinions that the relationship between students and tutors within the classroom was of utmost importance when using their voice. Interestingly, students appeared concerned that they did not upset the tutors when voicing their opinions and tutors felt that they were being criticised when opinions were given. It is with this in mind, that I embrace a relational pedagogy (Papatheodorou and Moyles 2009) as I believe that it places the value of relationships high on the agenda for student voice work by acknowledging the cultural, social and structural context in which the relationship takes place. Whilst students and tutors champion for positive relationships, concerns raised by students

suggest that there is a lack of trust between them. The fact that students feel that there may be consequences to them using their voice suggests that work would need to be done to develop the relationship more fully. Further details of how this may be achieved can be seen within my discussion of implications for practice. When researching this concept I did not find specific literature which denotes the importance of the relationship, aside from Batchelor (2006) whose work on vulnerable voices argues for the construction of relationships which are built on trust. In fact Sabri (2011) goes so far as to question the value of obtaining student voice, the outcomes of which may result in false promises. Further studies rely on pursuing the value of equal relationships which in essence makes good sense but I draw on the work of Freire (1978) who suggests that if relationships cannot be understood except in the light of class analysis then society may well marginalise minority voices. Indeed, the same could be said for any analysis which marginalises individuals on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality or (dis)ability.

The concept of relationships is also raised in discussions around the operation of 'binary' allegiances to different tutors, whereby students felt that they should demonstrate an allegiance to one tutor above another. This ideology leads me to question what is it about one tutor who listens and one who does not that shapes their views. It was very clear that tutors felt that the relationships were not what they are accustomed to and cite the idea that the traditional power relationships have been eroded by neoliberal ideologies. This concept would appear to suggest that tutors were happy with the relationship whilst they were 'in power' but now the students hold more power the relationship has declined in so much as the modes of complaining (Mukherjee et al 2009) have increased. The indication is that there is less mutual understanding between the tutors and students. Much of the research in relation to the participation of students (Fielding 2007) sees work on student voice as challenging the passive role of students. The aim of which is to redefine student-teacher relationship as a joint endeavour in learning as opposed to structures which reduce students to one of compliant dependence.

As yet current studies do not explore the relationship in relation to student voice and one can only assume that as the drive for an increase in student voice becomes more prevalent that more studies will emerge. That said I am pleased that I have

generated what I consider to be valuable data which sheds new light on student voice in terms of the relationship. I had not expected to identify that there may be discrepancies between what tutors say and how they act with regards to power issues. They clearly see the students in power but suggest that the relationship is better if they (tutors) are in power. Tutor C supported this notion as she offered the view

> Student voice is very powerful. They are consumers now, it is sometimes used as a power tool.

This was apparent within interviews conducted with tutor B as he stated that power is passed on to students but also believed that this is not always the right course of action and it is tutors who should hold the power. This was also demonstrated in the way in which feedback was collected as in some instances students were not given the time or encouragement to complete unit reviews. Two tutors rushed the task and did not show any interest in the results when collated. Particular attention is drawn to the concept of tutors and students feeling disciplined by each other and is raised within my discussion on the significant contribution to knowledge

Drawing on the core values of student voice work mentioned above (Robinson and Taylor 2007), positive relationships appear need effective communication in order to lead to transformative practice. The requirement for participation and democratic inclusivity is vital then if relationships are to become more positive and enriching. Once again, I am drawn to the idea that tutors are not able to address the need to develop relationships without firstly considering the use of power and effecting transformation (in this case positive changes in the student experience) through 'true' collaboration and participation thereby demonstrating democratic inclusivity (Robinson and Taylor 2007).

Power inequalities

As power inequalities remain an overarching constant within my study I expected this theme to be the most lucrative in terms of valuable data. It is only when considering this point that I realised that my own bias may well have contributed to over emphasis within this theme. Further engagement with reflexivity has enabled me to

consider where my biases lie and how these can be reduced. However my own personal biography is equally valuable and it is with this in mind that I remain within the study whilst keeping 'an eye' on my subjectivity.

Students presented a clear understanding that tutors had control over their experiences as they plan, implement and assess the curriculum leaving the final authority on summative grades as belonging to the tutors. It is this point that led me to explore the idea that student and tutors alike feel disciplined by each other. I have highlighted this as a significant finding and one which demonstrates the inclusion of new knowledge to student voice work. Interestingly, students drew on the 'over-collection' of student voice as a means of holding power over them, even suggesting that tutors 'hold the power merely because they are asking for feedback'. Tutors offered an understanding that in order to give students power they would need to relinquish some power themselves. Further, tutors speak of being disciplined by students in the process of receiving feedback and the processes by which they supply this.

This adds to the body of literature which explores how best to relinquish power and when, if at all, it should be relinquished. Peltonen and Lamsa (2004) supports this notion by suggesting that the concept of bestowing power would benefit from a more collaborative approach. Whilst I believe this to be a valid concept, it would appear that Peltonen and Lamsa (2004) assume that the student group and indeed the tutors are homogenous bodies as opposed to individuals within a group who will encounter their experiences in discrete ways. The data showed that tutors did in fact experience this differently and suggested that they 'worry' about the collection of voice and how this was perceived by management in the organisation. The accountability felt by the tutors was palpable as they considered themselves to be judged on the feedback received and negative consequences were perceived.

The data showed instances when either tutors or students felt threatened by the relationship. I did not come across research which explored this concept and as such I see this as vitally important in progressing student voice work. As previously mentioned the emergence of an increased marketization of higher education does open the door for more studies in this area to be developed. I was interested to

explore literature which examines hierarchal relationships in terms of the use of student's voices but sadly there does not appear to have been many studies which address this issue. Again, I believe that once the marketization of higher education the actuality of rising fees becomes more visible, it is likely that more focused studies may emerge. In terms of how my study adds to existing knowledge on this point it is clear that there is a lack of engagement with student voice. This may suggest that in the current neoliberal climate it has not been thought through in terms of the outcome of such political ideologies.

I was surprised by how passionate tutors were about the way they felt when collecting students' views and how they voice their concern at feeling students were in power as tutors were accountable and at the mercy of complaints. It is interesting to report that students valued the opportunity to ask for changes to be made but, state that in the end, end believed the tutors were the ones who decided what could be changed. This would appear to suggest that students did not see these opportunities as worthwhile and as such did not attach importance to them.

I draw on the work of Foucault within this discussion who suggests that the fluid nature of power is constantly being negotiated. I believe this to be a good place to start when looking for a way forward and within the implication chapter. With this in mind, I brought into play the work of Starhawk (1988:10) who explores 'power over', 'power with' and 'power from within' as a means of developing transformative and collaborative practices.

Within the analysis of data I encountered disclosures which represent the view that knowledge brings power and the view that disciplinary power relies on knowledge to control its subjects. I refer back to an interview with Tutor C who was concerned that as tutors we are disciplined by who holds the power (in this case the institution), leaving her with a feeling of inadequacy. Again, I see this as a sign that the push for student voice within higher education needs careful, sensitive attention if the relationship is to flourish with the inclusion of collaborative practices,

In the same way Harre's (1985) explanation of Wittgenstein's work assumes that language provides a way of understanding ourselves. Harre (1985) purports that

language constructs meanings and subjectivities and drawing on the historical-cultural world of the participant and these cannot be separated from knowledge construction. Whilst examining literature I identified studies which reflected the ideas of knowledge as power (Kogan 2005) leading me to consider the negative aspect of this concept in the work of Foucault once more. Foucault argues that knowledge linked with power not only assumes the authority of the truth but has the power to make it true. Tutors argued this point putting forward the ideology that we need to move away from absolute truth in our engagements with students to avoid hegemonic relationships which demonstrate power imbalance. Some tutors deemed that knowledge is power in the sense that academic qualification brings power, I believe that work needs to be done with students and tutors on the generalisation of the power/knowledge nexus. It would seem to suggest that as students acquire more knowledge they are more likely to oppose the views of tutors in an attempt to take control of the relationship.

My study clearly adds to the body of knowledge within these studies in that tutors and students both seem to believe in the value of knowledge both in terms of qualification and its use in disrupting power relationships. I had not initially considered the idea that the relationship may well be difficult between the tutors and student and in fact the tutor and the organisation. I had naively assumed that I could 'fix' the relationship and as a result the issues surrounding the disciplining of tutors and students would be solved. Although literature does explore the value of the relationship (Fielding 2014) the depth of the discussions within this study goes further in so much as the 'power over' concept gives meaning to the idea that one party holds the power and makes choices as to how this is used.

Evidence within my primary data demonstrates a clear idea that students are aware of the disciplinary power which tutors hold resulting in discipline and governance. This is seen in their view that how tutors respond to them determines who holds the power thereby suggesting that the response is validated by discipline and governance. Interestingly, tutors feel that the 'students as consumers' ideology leaves them vulnerable and accountable. Links can be seen here with literature which introduces the HE White paper (Dept. 2011) and subsequent initiatives which encourage the voice of students. It is the exploration of the underlying ideologies

held by students and tutors that makes this concept interesting in terms of how to address the concerns raised. More specifically the fact that both tutors and students feel disciplined by each other says more about the underlying problems with the relationship and collaborative participation than the actual hard evidence to support this view.

I further explore the opinion that I have previously held that my institution and the validating university were on separate sides when once again the collaborative partnership requires consideration in terms of the relationship. It is my opinion that this concept of 'binary' options which sees either one or the other has the power will need some work to restore harmonious relationships which see power flowing between tutors and student in a collaborative manner. This is not a new idea in terms of existing literature, for example Bland and Atweh's (2003) approach of 'coming to power' goes some way to dismantling the idea of empowerment as a means of passing power to others whilst leaving the 'other' as powerless. In fact, Keddie (2014) argues that it is imperative to avoid misappropriation of student voice to align with existing power relations or to 'fit' with school improvement as framed by narrow and reductive measures. An example of this can be seen in the idea that we as an institution believe ourselves to be responding to student voice merely because we ask for feedback which is measured in quantitative terms.

In terms of adding to existing literature within my study I identified a number of studies which explore power on a theoretical basis but sadly studies which explore the perceptions of the students and tutors in relation to the utilisation of student voice and power differentials were lacking. I feel pleased that my study not only has explored this but has made vital links between 'relationships' and 'participation' as a means of transforming practice. This would seem to demonstrate a more equitable approach to collaboration between students and tutors whilst recognising the competing ideologies within ethical positions (Callan 2014). The significance of discipline and power within student voice work and indeed in everyday practice is substantial and as such it remains a meaningful contribution to knowledge in this area.

5.2   Implications and recommendations for practice

It is clear that my study supports the work of Robinson and Taylor (2007) in that my findings underline the need to adhere to the four core values inherent in student voice work as already discussed at the outset of this chapter. It falls to me as the researcher to ascertain how to promote these values in order to present a more valuable, ethical and moral approach to working with students in collecting their voice. Figure 1 demonstrates how in devising an action plan I have matched my implications for practice to the core values identified by Robinson and Taylor (2007) and thereby embedded existing literature into my study. I see this as a key finding as I make these connections using a theoretical framework whilst providing a justification for carrying it out. Once the action plan is completed I will revisit the students as a means of 'member checking' to ascertain their understanding, take their advice and consider how to move forward with this project. I am mindful however that as the researcher I promote my own bias and have addressed this through a lens of reflexivity whereby I have engaged with journal writing, member checking and writing myself into the project. The use of an action plan is valuable here in determining the opportunities and tasks open to me (Figure 2 page 155).

Core values and implications for practice

Core value	Implications for practice
Communication as dialogue	Develop positive relationships
Participation and democratic inclusivity	Engage in collaborative partnerships
Power relations are unequal and problematic	Awareness and appreciation of power relations
Transformation and change to effective positive experiences	Effect positive changes

Fig 1 Adapted from Robinson and Taylor (2007:8)

Figure 1 demonstrates how I have drawn on the work of Robinson and Taylor (2007) to create an action plan which reflects their core values when engaging in student

voice work. The following discussion shows how I have interpreted these values and how they reflect the data collected to develop a framework for future practice.

The objectives when planning for my recommended changes in practice provide a frame of reference and measurable outcomes. That said, the objectives could be utilised within further studies and in this instance they merely act as a guide to direct my discussions.

Aims and Objectives

- Create opportunities for collaborative approaches to education to ensure positive transformation of practice which enables equality of voice and student empowerment.
- Establish a safe egalitarian learning space.
- Employ student-centred pedagogies that stress active participation, respect and inclusivity.
- Collect qualitative data from students as a matter of course throughout the year in class (as detailed in action plan) This may take the form of general discussion around shared ideas, future planning, lesson review, collaborative activities.

Detail relating to how these objectives may be achieved is set out within the following pages of this chapter.

Much of the work surrounding the development of student voice relies heavily on collecting data which reflects experiences in a statistical format. Whilst informative as a basis for further exploration, the use of qualitative date would satisfy a number of key concepts when considering student voice. Firstly, qualitative data enabled the tutor and student to enter into a dialogue whereby communication was found to be more positive. Emphasis is placed more heavily on how changes can be made from a collaborative approach as opposed to reflecting on what students have written about the tutors without explanation (Grebinikov2013). I refer back to the words of Tutor A in this instance to support the introduction of a more qualitative approach to collecting feedback.

Feedback which relies on quantitative data is 'dangerous' as it merely provides a surface level knowledge of the patterns of their behaviours.

My study clearly revealed that collection of student voice in a way that does not involve a collaborative approach was short-sighted and meaningless and that any dedication by universities to policies which promote this, for example HE White paper (Dept. BIS 2010) are missing the point by claiming that students' views are respected, empowering and trusted. Attention to this led me to consider the validity of this practice in terms of accuracy, value and impact. Further discourse analysis of the above policy coupled with examination of Quality Code for Higher Education (QAA), Teaching Excellence Framework (2015) and Higher Education Review (2015) demonstrate a commitment to working in partnership with students in order to improve their experiences, but they do not say how this will evidenced.

My commitment here is to the consistent use of dialogue within classes which enable free discussion where boundaries are clear and respected. As Robinson and Taylor (2007:8) detail 'communication as dialogue', I believe that developing positive relationships would enable effective communication to take place and as such I have included this and one of my implications for practice.

Continuous monitoring of such occasions and discussions would need to be evidenced and action substantiated. Only then can we begin to acquire a clearer picture of the needs, experiences and thoughts of our students. My study has uncovered the importance of the relationship between the tutors and students in ensuring that we can in fact engage in egalitarian processes and has led me to contemplate how this could be accomplished. Limited numbers of studies concentrate on the relationships between students and tutors as a means of supporting the collection of student voice, a point which is acknowledged within my study and as such adds significant information to be considered.

It is only with continued commitment to the needs of students that tutors can form positive, mutually respectful relationships which acknowledge the power relationships at work within the class. This commitment requires tutors to consider all aspects of their practice with a view to creating an inclusive, equal and open environment. Suffice is to say that it is only with training, information sharing and

peer observing that tutors would be in a position to have a good understanding of practices which serve to render students as powerless and to make a commitment to change where relevant. This to be a difficult task as my original study focused on observing power relationships within classes but was found to be too intrusive and did in fact emphasise power between myself as the researcher and the tutors in question.

Many studies emphasise the importance of working collaboratively with students in order to develop the relationship and it is only with authentic engagement with students that this can become a reality. Studies which press for working with students as co –researchers (Smit 2013, Fielding 2001), in assessment (Tan 2008, Taras 2001, Sadler 2013), in curriculum planning/course design (Bovill et al 2011, Fink 2003), and student involvement with quality assurance (QAA 2015) go some way to address this issue and praise for these reflect true engagement with pedagogic practices. The danger however appears to lie in surface engagement which still leaves the tutor as holding the power. This was evident within my primary data as students reiterated that they felt empowered when asked to engage in collaborative activities but were clearly aware that the final decisions lay with the tutors and the institution. It is only authentic engagement with student voice that will lead students to trust tutors and strengthen the relationship. Perhaps, we as tutors need to 'take a chance' on students through demonstration of trust.

The value of participation has been well-defined within my study, specifically in terms of democratic inclusivity seen as a core value when engaging in studies which research student voice (Robinson and Taylor 2007). In support I have addressed engagement with collaborative practices as a means of improving participation through my action plan for recommendations for practice.

Whilst searching studies which have addressed the implications for practices in these cases, I note that there are very few which go on to create opportunities with which to develop collaborative learning. Interestingly Bovill et al (2011) suggested embracing characteristics which may enable developers to begin to effect this change. Bovill et al (2011) suggest embracing the four following characteristics to effect changes which are meaningful:

- invite students to become partners
- support dialogue across differences of position and perspective.
- Foster collaboration through tutors and students taking responsibility for reaching and learning
- serve as intermediaries to facilitate new relationships between staff and students.

5.3 <u>Challenges and limitations of implementation of the recommendations</u>

Not surprisingly, challenges are outlined, one being the difficulties in staff relinquishing their power in favour of a more democratic pedagogical process. It may be, as reported by Frowe (2001), that tutors are unwilling to take risks when engaging with creative, collaborative practices and could opt for a quieter life. I believe however that if the relationship has been developed to become respectful, sincere and secure then staff would be able to be honest about their discomfort when adopting new radical pedagogies, described as 'radical collegiality' (Fielding (1999:1) brought about through change. Fielding (2004: 296) goes so far as to suggest that 'transformation requires a rupture of the ordinary'. Consideration has to be given however, to the notion that teachers are caught between their social roles within the organisation and serving students (Bastian et al 1985).

The fact that tutors are acting within an environment which places importance on the views of students may well leave them feeling that they do not have a voice themselves, specifically in terms of the recommendations. It would therefore be unethical to present them with recommendations which they had not agreed to or did not feel committed to.

My first consideration would therefore be to ascertain if tutors felt committed to making changes in practice and were persuaded by the arguments presented for the implementation of the changes. This may be particularly problematic as the tutors are colleagues and in some cases, friends; they could feel obliged to follow my ideas. This is a particular problem when engaging in ethnographic study as it highlights difficulties when negotiating internal relationships and my positionality within the tasks.

Secondly, given that a number of the tutors reported a lethargy and lack of value in collecting student voice through feedback, I would need to work with them to develop innovative ways to gather the voice of students in a manner that was meaningful both to them and the students. I would attempt to build a working party to create a plan which tutors could comfortably commit to.

Finally, I would need to consider how I could empower the tutors both at the outset and throughout the process and facilitating the changes. This could mean the introduction of a number of sessions whereby the process was reviewed and changes made where it was felt necessary.

Attention would need to be given to the necessity to provide 'quick wins' within the change process in order to demonstrate success or non-success. A number of business models which seek to make organisational change rely on these to promote enthusiasm and engagement. I have reviewed these and drawn on Lewin's model (1947) which sees the unfreezing, changing and refreezing as a way to work through problems encountered. I would need to review the process regularly to ascertain progress and reflect on the positive and negative effects on the process and the experiences of the participants within this.

I would also need to accept the idea that the tutors might not feel able to engage in the changes identified and would accept this as a decision taken having reflected on the findings of the research and the possible outcomes of the implementations of changes being made.

After careful consideration I suggest the following recommendations for tutors.

- Consider carefully the appropriate opportunities for co-creation of practices with students.
- Consider taking the task outside of the usual environment to create a more congenial atmosphere.
- Do not force students to participate as false claims of participation may lead to student alienation (Mann 2001).

- Ensure that the diversity of students and staff are acknowledged. If we believe that students and tutors are not homogenous groups then we need to value their input and treat them as individuals and equals. Consideration of which voices are represented is vital if we are to address Ranson's (2000) work which recognises the pedagogy of voice as part of a community whereby equal resources are distributed to provide conditions of equal participation.

Attention to these key criteria would likely bring about a change from early stages of participation whereby no involvement is evident through a passive stage, active role and lead on to a more directive role whereby students are immersed in their learning through taking an active role in design and research (DfE 2007). Further studies support the engagement with a 'ladder of participation' metaphor as a means of measuring success in terms of moves from traditional hierarchal relations to more collaborative ones (Hart 1992, Fielding 2001).

It would be naïve of me as researcher to assume that once these tasks have been followed all would run smoothly and transformational practices would be evident because change is a difficult task not only for tutors but also for students. The ladder of participation metaphor (Hart 1992) previously highlighted can only be as strong as the willingness to engage in new practices. I consider that reflection on every step within the process in terms of students and staff. Whilst the staff report that they are committed; the everyday reality of engaging in this process may prove problematic and it is only with a willingness to change throughout the process that I believe that they will support the actions taken.

The students may also feel that the recommendations are not valuable and refuse to engage in the new methods of collecting data and time allocated for them to use their voice in a way which best suits them. Again, I will employ 'quick wins' and opportunities for them to see the positive outcomes. These would be seen in opportunities for tutors and students to review progress and consider the next steps. I am conscious however that this could be seen as a misuse of power if they are not interested or unwilling to take part in the perceived improvements. I will take every opportunity to reflect on the process and be willing to make relevant changes as the introduction of new methods moves forward.

It is only when the issue of collaborative participation has been addressed that students can become 'agents of change'. Fullan (2002) argues that cultural change within the organisation must precede any organisational change for it to succeed and it with this in mind that I return to power and empowerment. It is noticeable that student voice studies on the issue of power relationships are relatively quiet (Seale 2010) and few pieces of literature give consideration to equality and empowerment. Hampton and Blythman (2006) attempt to link their discussion on student voice with the work of Freire and his ideas on conceptualisation and oppression. This is where I consider that my study adds a great deal to existing knowledge in that I have considered how students in higher education may feel oppressed through the continual engagement with an academic culture which could be seen to promote inequalities.

My previous discussions which problematize 'power' as a means of creating exclusion are vital in viewing how these concerns could be addressed. The first consideration has to be the language used within these discussions. As previously discussed "empowerment" is not a positive word to use in that it suggests that power has been bestowed by someone who has the power to do so led me to move away from practices which demonstrate such within my implications and recommendations. If the assumption is that 'power-over' relates to a hierarchal sense of power which demonstrates domination, then this issue could not be solved. As an alternative, 'power with' suggests a much more positive approach which relies on dialogue and coalition to reach objectives (Starhawk 1988). It has to be said however, that attention would need to be given to the idea that dialogue and communication processes are not unproblematic or transparent as suggested by Bakhtinian and Habermasian models which uphold the values of communicative action and interpersonal communication. Rather, any action taken would benefit from accommodating difference by incorporating it into existing power relations to avoid reproducing hegemonic-normative practices rather than transforming them. As previously mentioned, Robinson and Taylor (2007) advocate that power relations between tutor and student are unequal and problematic and this is clearly recognised within my study but it is an awareness of this that informed my recommendations which look at how power may be equalised. Discussions around developing practices in this area are two-fold. Firstly, students should be empowered

where relevant by increasing inclusion and equality of practice. Secondly, the current collection of student voice by tutors has been described as "disempowering" on the part of the tutors and as such implications for practice needs to be considered by both parties in the relationship.

In creating the action plan (Fig 1), the work of Robinson and Taylor (2007) was instrumental in shaping decisions relating to implications for practice. Their core values reflect my own and could successfully enable me and others to make changes in an ethical way involving students in the decision making.

This leads me into an exploration of how tutors and members of institutions facilitate transformation by examining the concept of students as change agents. I have previously discussed how students can be involved in curricula design, research, assessment and quality assurance and draw on the work of Kay et al (2010) who press for tutors in higher education to look for new ways to move away from the passive role of students in utilising their voice. Kay et al (2010:1) demonstrate an argument that collection of student evaluation can be 'disempowering, governed and operated by the institution'. Arguably this can be seen as reinforcing the notion that students are consumers. In fact Schwartzman (1995) goes so far as to suggest that if students are considered to be consumers, then educators become panderers who seek immediate satisfaction rather than promoting independence. I was particularly interested in this idea as a clear thread within my primary data supports this concept which I believe makes a valuable contribution to existing knowledge and empirical studies.

Within their study Kay et al (2010) provide a valuable framework with which to engage students. Firstly, students as evaluators, examples being completion of NSS, unit reviews. Secondly, students as participants, representing a more student led approach which makes use of committees, working groups and councils. Thirdly, students as partners and co-creators emphasising collaboration. Finally, students as change agents, whereby students take on an active role in bringing about change through effective leadership practices.

Taking the above principles into account, I have drawn up an action plan (figure 2) with which to develop student voice work.

Action Plan

Action	Task	Responsibility	Quality measure	Time completion/review
Engage in the collection of qualitative data	Class discussion Collect data from email/telephone calls in form of feedback, requests, and queries. Develop unit reviews to collect qualitative data Close the loop on feedback to create a more feedforward approach.	Dean Assistant Dean All tutors	Policy Standardisation of formats used Unit review meetings with students Review feedforward practices to ensure rigour and authenticity	April 2016 Bi-annually (March/June) June 2016
Encourage students to become participants in shared practices	Students as co-researchers. Students as co-creators of their learning via curriculum and feedforward Embed into	Tutors Programme leaders	Policy Standardisation of research process. Review quality with team Review for	June 2016 2017

	programme specification		revalidation	
Acknowledge that power relations are difficult and require attention	Training sessions for all staff relating to student voice. Create communities of practice to address specific problems.	Researcher Tutors Senior Leadership team	Regular review of difficulties experienced. Peer observations	Monthly meetings to be arranged

Fig 2 Action plan relating to implications for practice

It would seem valuable at this stage to address the significance of these implications in terms of students, tutors, stakeholders and the institution itself. Students, it is hoped, will benefit from these changes as they become more involved in the organisation of their learning and the processes this inevitably entails. In turn, this should lead to an improved relationship between students and tutors resulting in equality and inclusion where respect is paramount and active listening becomes the key to collaborative practice. Placement and workplace mentors would become more involved in the learning of the students and more equitable practices would be evident and views respected. In the changing face of higher education the institution needs to continually review ways of capturing students and retaining them, and it is only with demonstration of an open environment which values their voice that these can be fulfilled.

In conclusion, I have analysed the findings in terms of existing studies and shown how my research has both reflected and taken these studies a step further by strengthening theoretical assertions. Where studies have not supported my work I

have analysed the reasons why and suggested alternative ways in which I could have approached the collection of data.

Importantly, I have created an action plan with which to address the implications for practice and demonstrated how these could be achieved successfully. The use of objectives has supported me in this endeavour by presenting me with measurable outcomes seen as vital in closing the loop between expectations and results.

5.4 Benefits, challenges and limitations of student voice in relation to my study

I believe it to be pertinent at this stage to offer a critical analysis of the benefits challenges and limitations of student voice work in the context of my study. Firstly, I will evaluate the effectiveness of the study in relation to the initial objectives. Secondly, I will consider the challenges and limitations I have faced during the course of my study.

When completing a piece of work it is important to refer back to objectives identified at the outset of the study. These are detailed as:

- To collect perceptions and experiences of the utilisation of student voice from students and tutors.
- To analyse these perceptions by employing a rigorous methodology, an authentic data collection process and an ethically solid analysis of said data.
- To present findings with integrity in an emancipatory manner that acknowledges the value of the participants' responses.

I would argue that the objectives of my study have been realised and evidence provided to support this. However the challenges and limitations I have faced whilst conducting the study in relation to student voice work need to be addressed.

The benefits of conducting student voice work are plenty, for example it has given me the opportunity to draw on the data collected to present an action plan which should develop collaborative practices. Further, engagement with the study has

enabled the students and tutors to use their voice to represent their views, opinions and concerns. This has drawn together the participants in a common goal in working towards transformative practices which value inclusion, the relationships and the professionalism of all concerned.

I have faced a number of challenges whilst engaging in student voice work, notably the lack of engagement of the students and tutors at varying times throughout the study. Assumptions were made that the participants would be interested in offering their views when in fact it could be said that by driving them towards engaging they may well have resisted in non-compliance resulting in apathy towards the subject.

I had fully expected the participants to engage in a range of discussions around the value of student voice and the varying ways in which they could use their voice. It was particularly disappointing as both students and tutors focused on 'feedback' as being the key method of using their voice. On a number of occasions I attempted to introduce a range of ideas, for example students as co- creators of the curriculum and co- researchers, but they pointedly returned to the more comfortable notion of feedback. I felt that by trying to provoke a discussion relating to these areas I was in fact taking away their voice by dominating the discussion with my ideas.

I believe that student voice is an extremely complicated concept which requires a strong understanding of the complexities of it in relation to practice and at times I felt that participants were merely responding to satisfy me. With hindsight, my 'insiderness' may well have affected the outcomes in this instance as I was very much visible within the study.

Finally, my work on student voice prompted negative and emotional responses particularly with the tutors who at times saw it as an inconvenience, a controlling process and a means of accountability. This raised serious issues in terms of the way forward for student voice work as it will always be politically sensitive. It does however, offer interesting opportunities to explore these ideas in depth within future studies.

The final chapter within my study will offer a conclusion in terms of bringing together my ideas, findings, implications and judgements. I will present a final word on the

significance of my work in relation to empirical studies and will show how my study has impacted on my personal and professional ideologies with regards to student voice.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 Comprehensive conclusion of findings

As previously mentioned in the introduction at the outset of my study, I began by attempting to identify a problem I perceived within my institution regarding the use and misunderstanding of student voice. The aim of which was to firstly increase mine and others' knowledge of the subject and secondly to improve experiences through transformative practice, which enables students to make better use of their voice (Selamat 2008). Initially I was particularly reticent to identify the problem as I felt that it would begin the study on a negative stance, however subsequent examination of the utilisation of student voice has indeed raised a number of concerns which would benefit from further examination and actions to be taken if positive transformation is to take place.

During the study my title 'Student voice in Higher Education: Students' and tutors' perceptions of its utilisation and purpose' began to feel constricting in so much as my discussions delved much deeper into 'why' 'how' and 'so what'. Subsequently, this led me to examine the reasons behind the thoughts and views of the participants to explore the justification for their answers, the basis on which their answers were given and how these discussions led me to look into my own perceptions, judgments and expectations more closely. Interestingly, I expected to unravel the concept of student voice as unrealistic (in generic terms) of how students use their voice and in some ways this was the case, particularly in relation to collaborative working and student participation. What I had not expected to find was the underlying use of power by students and tutors and how this was manipulated to address needs and to satisfy accountability. Empirical studies by others supported the notions of the interplay of power within student/teacher relationships but I have explored these ideas further by suggesting various actions to take. It is with this in mind that I believe I have added to the body of knowledge on the subject of student voice by firstly identifying the gaps for further research and showing how my study could be developed further with an action plan to address issues raised.

Meaningful, authentic student participation and co- construction of learning featured heavily in my study and I have demonstrated how this might be achieved through actions which should lead to effective change in terms of student voice being heard and more importantly 'listened to'. It was evident within my study that students wanted to be heard and changes to be made. I am unsure however whether the suggested changes would result in emancipation, or whether it would merely lead to more expectations of tutors by students.

As previously mentioned Foucault's view of the nexus of resistance versus emancipation would promote this idea. Similarly, a key concept identified within the study was the power of the relationship and dialogue between tutor and student in either promoting student voice or suppressing it. If language and communication are determined by the social conditions in use, attention should be given to how this is used within institutional practice which may embody assumptions which directly or indirectly legitimise existing power relations and lead to ideological power which projects one's own practice as universal or common sense. Recommendations for transformative practice would need to include reference to the social conditions which impact on the use of student voice. It may be considered valuable to draw on the work of Rogoff (2010) as she asserts that culture is vital to human development and that an understanding of cultural variations and similarities would allow teachers to engage in collaborative learning. As Rogoff (2010:410) states, 'culture is best understood historically, examining how current practices reflect past circumstances and ideas'. It is only with this in the forefront of our minds that we as tutors can truly address concepts of power and control by ensuring the inclusion of vulnerable voices and taking pains to eliminate alienation (Mann 2011).

In general it was felt by the participants in the study that the relationship can only be manageable if respect is shown between the tutors and students. Power differentials would need to be considered carefully with the acceptance that power is fluid and changing depending upon the context and situation. Foucault's view that power is not linear is evident and practices should represent authenticity and inclusion (Rudduck and Fielding 2006). In this way tutors are encouraged to engage in practices which would see them 'relinquishing' power in an attempt to support students in becoming active agents in their learning whilst recognising that tutors

may have concerns relating to their surrendering of the security of traditional power relations.

6.2   Contribution to knowledge and significant findings

At the outset of this study, I identified the desire to explore power relations through the examination of student voice in higher education. I had expected to unravel the intricacies of power used in the language and practices seen in everyday pedagogic practices. I had not, however, expected to discover that tutors and students felt disciplined by each other as a result of processes and practices within higher education. This discovery became important as I considered the effect this had on the participants in terms of their understanding of student voice and the way in which it was used. As previously explained, tutors felt that they were under scrutiny from both the organisation and the students. They felt that they were governed and disciplined by student responses and the prevailing consequences of these. Students felt that they were controlled by the organisational structures and the hegemonic practices being demonstrated. I had not identified any research surrounding this topic and can only assume that the call for increased student involvement in their educational experience will in time reveal a deeper knowledge of the power interplay in tutor-student relations. In the meantime, I am keen to develop my own research in this area.

6.3   Final word on the significance of the study

It is valuable to return to the significance of my study in relation to empirical studies and related literature and I am satisfied that it demonstrates a move away from traditional studies which present student voice as a means of developing participation and democratic inclusivity. My research presents a shift towards studies which not only identify the components of students' voice but offer an explanation for their validity. An example is presented which shows how ideas of 'power' and 'empowerment' impact on the use of voice and the challenges brought about through unequal practices. A significant contribution to knowledge is clearly highlighted in findings which relate to tutors and students feeling disciplined by each other resulting in challenges experienced in the relationship. This had been unexpected and was extremely valuable in exploring the complexities of the relationship between tutors

and students. Previous studies tend to concentrate on the relationship in relation to engaging in collaborative practice but do not examine beneath the surface to ascertain how and why the relationships may be problematic.

The initial critical discourse analysis conducted prior to this study of the HE White paper entitled 'putting students at the heart of the education system' (Dept. BIS 2011) has provided a solid basis on which to explore hegemonic practices. From this point, explorations of power inequalities visible through unequal relationships provided me with a platform on which to base my suggestions for future practice. Other current studies cease once key discussions have been made. An example is seen in studies which discuss the popularity of student voice but fail to propose potential solutions to problems and challenges identified. I believe that my study takes the outcomes one step further by detailing how issues can be addressed through emancipatory, transformative practice.

I have successfully drawn on studies which explore student voice from a number of perspectives, and shown how these relate to my own study. I have examined political agendas which serve to support or address inequality and have related these in practical terms to how the practices within higher education could be facilitated.

6.4   Summary of recommendations

In making recommendations for future practice value is given to a positive transformation of practice to collect voice which is qualitative in nature and offering students the opportunity to explain their comments through dialogue via a number of channels. These include within lessons, unit reviews, student surveys and through all communication channels. In order to facilitate these changes, engagement in collaborative working was identified as a catalyst in reducing power relations. Further, opportunities to enable student engagement which supports positive relationships between tutors and students is vital in order to address issues of power inequalities. Acceptance that power is evident and can be positive in addition to a negative experience will require commitment through honesty, sincerity and respect.

In this way the relationship is vital if we are to promote equality through genuine shared practices.

As previously identified educational policy, legislation and the government's neoliberal agenda goes some way to nurturing inequalities. Common sense on the part of the tutors would enable them to consider sensible reforms which will actively transform practice for the better through their position as 'street level bureaucrats' (Lipsky 2010). Lipsky (2010) further argued that policy implementation, in the end, comes down to the people who actually implement it as they exercise their discretion and autonomy. Simplistically put, tutors could use their own judgements in making positive decisions regarding enabling student voice to be visible and heard.

6.5   Further Study

There are a number of ways in which I believe that my study could present a platform for further studies. Given that I have identified how student voice could be developed in higher education by providing more opportunities for collaborative practices, improved relationships and positive participation, I would like to undertake an action research project which sees the introduction of an intervention. In this case, a planned joint research project would be valuable. I would be interested in following this with an analysis of the perceptions of students and tutors of their experiences of the intervention in order to ascertain if there had been an increase in positive relationships. This would subsequently direct me to examine the evidence of power through the lens of collaboration.

Given that I have identified how power is used to discipline students and tutors, engagement with this current study has led to a renewed passion for research into power and inequality in education. I would like to follow this investigation with further examination of power disparities within higher education. My intention is to conduct an evaluative study which explores and examines the role of power within institutional practices, paying particular attention to the use of discipline in creating hegemonic practices. I would particularly wish to conduct a critical discourse analysis of practices which take place in universities. I believe that the ideology of the organisation can directly or indirectly legitimize existing power relations as people draw upon practices without thinking and embody these as 'the norm'. As primary

data gathered from my study identified language as a key determinant for power struggles, critical discourse analysis of the policies which are in place within the university would enable me to identify inequalities in power with regards to language and structure and how these can be seen to present a specific picture. Ironically, the initial critical discourse analysis I undertook on the White paper 'Putting students at the heart of the system' raised concerns about what and how power would be distributed and by whom. I believe this would still be the case if I engaged in a critical discourse analysis of further policies as I would still be the person analysing the document and attributing the power and control in response to the findings. Disciplinary power has been identified as a significant contribution to knowledge. I would like to undertake further research into the concept of tutors and students feeling disciplined by each other. I believe that a critical discourse analysis of the Teaching Excellence framework would give me this opportunity. It would also enable me to make comparisons and correlations between the White paper mentioned about the new TEF to ascertain if the initial intentions have been realised.

A rigorous analysis of the policies in the University such as the complaints policy could identify the overuse of power in terms of the language used and the overarching ideologies which are being presented within the policies. Including students in this process may go some way towards developing a discourse of collaboration advocated by Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2015) in a move away from students as a data source towards a student-teacher partnership. Returning back to the concept of completing the policy analysis, Fairclough (1989:43) purports that 'power, whether it be in or behind discourse, is never definitely held by any one person, or social grouping, because power can be won and exercised only in and through social struggles in which it may also be lost'. So, if language represents the discourse and a social practice then analysing the text critically in terms of description, interpretation and explanation for evidence of ideological power would seem fundamental within student voice work. My study identified language and power as a key concern in student voice work and as such I believe this to be an interesting continuation of my study.

Towards the end of my study, the proposal for the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF, Dept. BIS 2015) became apparent. This document is designed to give

students a significant input into shaping the metrics that measure the quality of teaching in higher education. Positive moves towards recognising students as partners in the education process are clearly visible within this document. Whilst still in its infancy its impact is unclear. It would appear that students may become an integral part of the independent peer review that will be reviewing the data and institutional statements following the success of student involvement in quality assurance panels. The introduction of the Teaching Excellence framework (Dept. BIS 2015) would seem timely as I consider how I commence further study. I believe that I could bring my two key foci together by conducting a critical discourse analysis of the Teaching Excellence framework' (Dept. BIS 2015), and apply the results to an action research project whereby I could analyse the perceived success or non-success of the said criteria in creating positive experiences for staff and students alike.

6.6   Personal and professional reflections

On completion of my study, it would seem fitting to explore reflections in terms of my personal and professional practice.

Personal reflections

In his study Wood (2006:53) makes a significant point when discussing the experience of research. This is that the researcher 'changes as a person' as a result of developing awareness of the phenomena explored. This is visible within my increased competence in looking at student voice in new ways and being able to consider the concept from diverse viewpoints. I view this study as a personal journey, emphasising 'personal existential issues and dilemmas' (Brew 2001). During the study, I have encountered moments of discomfort in terms of collecting data which challenges my values and beliefs. Engaging in personal reflection has evidently supported me in recognising my positionality within the research and how this has led to realising that there are differences in the nature of learning and also in professional practices. Attempting to present findings in a way that frames the voice of the participant was difficult at times, especially where it conflicted with my own values. Again reflexivity helped me to demonstrate a relational nature of learning through rigorous attention to the interpretation of data. Support of the notion

'changing as a person' as a result of research is further supported by Forbes (2008), who questions whether doctoral study learning changes previous identities. When searching within myself for evidence of change, I highlight the following as valid reflections. Firstly, I had assumed that it would be relatively easy to collect data which reflected the views of participants in a collaborative way. It is only now that I understand that I had made assumptions about the needs of the participants and had placed them into homogenous groups which reflected a collective view. These challenged my view of how individual knowledge is created and how certain forms of knowledge are privileged above others. I believe that I had not considered the identity of the participants in individual terms but concentrated on questioning the 'identity of the research' (Usher and Scott 1996: 37) rather than the identity of the participant.

Careful attention to reflexivity however enabled me to move away from a view that subjects and identities were universal and fixed to a view that could in fact be changed where appropriate, myself included. This was particularly evident in my discussions with tutors who constructed multiple identities during my research depending upon their role, for example, their role as a programme leader, tutor, unit leader, critical friend or research advisor. O'Farrell (2005: 453) speaks of the 'fixing of the status quo and attaching people to specific identities that could never be changed'. Initial engagement with data led me to fall into this trap as I wrestled with conflicting feedback from individuals. The juxtaposed positions duly represented directed me to reflect on the subjective nature of data and the agency of the participants in order to move away from the reductive nature of collecting and analysing data from a positivist standpoint. This concept appeared to reflect a move away from a modernist approach which adheres to a set of universal rules and principles which demonstrate how knowledge is created. Reflecting on this point prompted me to consider how I had presented this within my study rather than repositioning myself in an attempt to view the world through the eyes of the dispossessed (Apple 2012). Satisfied that I had in fact presented a postmodern perspective whereby I had accepted that it is was not possible to develop a true and certain knowledge of the understanding of the tutors and students, I relaxed into a drawing on social and cultural approaches to knowledge creation. I achieved this by considering whether I was collecting 'knowledge about' or 'knowledge of' (Ball

2013:13) whilst distancing myself from the idea that the answers are now 'known' given that knowledge is constantly shifting depending upon the context.

Secondly, I had reflected upon my expectations in relation to the data received. I had made the assumption that students would be willing to offer their voice and would engage in dialogue relating to this. I had mistakenly considered that this was uppermost in their needs. Again, reflexivity enabled me to re-examine previously held assumptions and taken for granted habits. In such examinations, I engaged with Foucault's concept of 'technology of the self', described as that which 'permits individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies, souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves' (Foucault 1988: 18). Reflecting on Foucault's ideas I engaged in multiple identities through reflective practice and recognised my 'researcher self', 'practitioner self' and 'writer self' within my repositioning during my study. I felt this to be an uncomfortable task at times as the move away from a 'unitary, stable self' (Forbes 2008:457) led me into fragmented, less predictable encounters. It did however open my mind to uncharted pedagogical learning tools with which to work and an acceptance that previously held 'truths' were merely linked to my identity within the immediate context are were open to scrutiny and critical review.

I refer back to my introduction whereby I explained my initial intention was to conduct a study into the power inequalities in higher education practices and reflect upon my thoughts once the study was completed. As previously mentioned my passion surrounding the inequalities faced by students and staff at universities directed me towards conducting a study which explored these in depth; however this was felt to me to be intrusive and ethically not sound. My disappointment initially was palpable; however it is only with completion of this study that I am able to reflect on the outcome and to show how my study has addressed this issue without presenting a concept which is judgmental. Tutors and students have been able to express their concerns of power inequality and the implications of this in a way which does not render other participants as disempowered or present them in a negative manner.

Professional reflections

The value of practice-based doctoral study is evident, no more so than in the closer cooperation between higher education and workplaces. Winter, Griffiths and Green (2000) offer the view that this could be as a result of the opening up of higher education to a wider range of people who subsequently engage in a broader range of employment. In the same way, my study which focuses on the voice of students encourages cooperation and partnership within higher education and as such addresses graduate attributes seen as valuable within the workplace in terms of academic, skills, engagement with society and employability.

My own engagement in my study has enabled me to combine academic and professional knowledge to consider learning which has taken place and link this to my professional development. Such professional development is clearly integrated within the analysis of wider policy developments in higher education today. No more so is this seen in the use of reflective learning through the recording of personal development. In this case this is evidenced through the use of journal, memo writing and continued engagement with reflexivity throughout my study. Demos (2005:7) describes this process as 'learning to learn' or 'reflecting on one's learning and intentionally applying the results of ones' reflection to further learning'. The value of reflection within my study cannot be overstated. It was only when I became earnestly engaged with reflexivity that I became immersed in the dialogue and narrative produced through criticality which embraces critical thinking, critical action and critical self-reflection (Barnett 1997) of the explicit and implicit components of the discussions and subsequent data. This led me to search within myself on a number of occasions to ascertain how and why I had made specific assumptions.

As a result of conducting this study I have learnt a great deal about the research process and the value of this, not only in terms of developing relationships and encouraging collaborative systems, but also in uncovering practices of inequality, unethical customs and practice which cannot be described as emancipatory. A key concept which I have taken from this study is that human existence is fundamentally social (Thompson and Pascal 2011: 16l), so it would follow that the social context may reflect human 'reality'. The emergence of collaboration and participation as vital

skills are therefore seen as both developing student voice and within the promotion of professionalism amongst students and tutors.

I have presented implications for practice which includes an action plan. This was felt to be extremely useful in planning for transformative practice. I am mindful however that these recommendations are a personal suggestion which has not been shared with the students. I believe that this would however be a valuable task in terms of sharing the outcomes of the research and demonstrating the potential positive changes which may take place as a result of their engagement with the study. This feedback and further engagement with the students would go some way to closing the loop between their experiences and the potential outcomes in addition to responding to ethical considerations when undertaking research. I did however disseminate the findings to the students and tutors. Tutors and management were interested in viewing my recommendations for practice and stated that they felt these concepts represented their ideas of what would constitute transformative practice. Both management and tutors did voice their concerns over the time constructs of completing these tasks along with trepidation about the structure that these proposals would take.

My initial intention for my study was to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of tutors and student in relation to their application and utilisation of voice. I was committed to exploring ways of developing these experiences to present a positive approach to shared practices and collaborative relationships.

I believe that rather than situating students as recipients of wisdom, I have endeavoured to position students in a more central role which enables them to make judgements about their own learning and teaching. The increased focus on capitalising on student feedback as a result of the marketization of education has directed me to consider new and creative sources of knowledge. It is with this in mind that I have moved away from traditional teacher/student relationships towards a more democratic, inclusive partnership which sees the students as active agents in their learning. Inevitably, this has led to questions relating to who holds the power in the relationship and as such I have explored power in terms of ownership, identity and authority at work within student voice work and higher education practices. This

journey has inevitably led to some challenges which pose contradictions, misconceptions and inconsistencies which have caused me to reconsider my own role in pedagogic practices.

It is clear that student voice work is not without its problems; indeed this study has highlighted my own use of power in attempting to address issues raised and directed me to consider the fact that student voice work may be manipulative and oppressive if not conducted with integrity, honesty and ethically. It is with this in mind that I conclude with a final word from Freire (1970:53) as he advocates that:

'Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students.'

APPENDICES – CONTENTS

FOCUS GROUPS

Student voice in higher education: Students' and Tutors' perceptions of its utilisation and purpose.'

You are being invited to take part in a research study as part of My Professional Doctorate in Education at The University of Central Lancashire. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

- **What is the purpose of study?**

I am particularly interested in researching the use of 'student voice' in higher education from the experiences of both the tutors and students. I am interested in learning what you thoughts and experiences are in relation to this. I would therefore very much welcome your participation in this research so I can explore student perceptions of this idea.

- **Why have I been chosen?**

You have been invited to participate in the project because you are currently studying on the BA (Hons) Childhood Studies degree BA (Hons) Health and Social Care or Foundation degree: Working with Children and Young People and as such

your views would be valuable in demonstrating the perceptions of students in relation to the utilisation of student voice.

- **Do I have to take part?**

There is no obligation to take part I the project; participation will be on a purely voluntary basis. Your studies will not be affected.

- **What will happen to me if I take part?**

If you do agree to take part, you will be asked to take part in focus group discussion to determine your views on the above mentioned topic. Your name will not be recorded on any documentation. If you are happy to take part, please complete the attached permission form, which covers the focus group discussion.

- **What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

We do not consider that there are significant risks to taking part. Care will be taken to ensure confidentiality and your anonymity throughout. The study will be subject to a rigorous ethics procedure to ensure that you are not disadvantaged in any way.

- **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

A benefit of taking part will be that you will gain a greater understanding of the use of student voice within higher education.

- **What if something goes wrong?**

Is something goes wrong or your become concerned, you should contact Sandra Shaffi (Researcher). Alternatively, you may contact the Dean of School of Education and Social Sciences at UCLan, Preston. You may withdraw from the project at any time without any prejudice to yourself. If you wish to withdraw from the study, you may request any information already given be withdrawn.

- **Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?**

Yes. Focus group transcriptions will be dealt with in strictest confidentiality and anonymised;

- **What will happen to the results of the research study?**

As part of the research we are intending to analyse the data received in order to answer the given questions. This will be used to reflect on practice with a view to developing positive experiences for students and tutors.

The findings of the project will be reported in conference papers and articles in order to inform the development of UK practice in the studies of student voice in higher education.

- **Who is organising and funding the research?**

The research is partly funded by the college and the remainder is privately funded.

- **Who may I contact for further information?**

If you wish to find out more about the project itself, you can contact Sandra Shaffi at. She can be contacted by email at or telephone.

(Confidential data has been removed from the original document in order to address ethical considerations)

Thank you for your interest in this research.

Consent form

Title of Project:

Student voice in higher education: Students' and Tutors' perceptions of its utilisation and purpose.'

Name of Researcher: Sandra Shaffi

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the
    participant information sheet for the above study and
    have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary
    and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without
    giving any reason and without my professional work or legal
    rights being affected.

3. I give permission for my dialogue and views about utilisation of
    student voice to be recorded and to be used in publications
    following the research study, and I understand that they will not be
    used for any other purposes.

4. I understand that any transcriptions or recordings will be securely
    and anonymously stored according to the requirements of the
    Data Protection Act.

5. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____

Name of Researcher   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____

APPENDIX B

Focus group discussion frame

Student voice in higher education: Students' and Tutors' perceptions of its utilisation and purpose.'

Focus Group Template

What led you to apply to university?

(Prompts: better career, future prospects, peer pressure, family expectations)

Why did you choose Stockport?

(Prompts: particular course, local, cheaper, recommendation, family connections)

How did you research your choice of university?

(Prompts: websites, recommendations, UCAS, open days)

What information were you looking for?

(Prompts: Length of course, campus life, cost of living…)

Did you receive all the information you wanted, why not?

What do you understand by the term 'student voice'?

(Prompts: Rights, Equality, participation, collaboration, needs met)

Develop the discussion by giving examples of the meaning of student voice

Can you think of examples of students using their voice in an effective/positive way? Where was this?

When do you use your voice?

(Prompts: Student survey, programme board of studies, in class, union activities, complain)

What is it that enables you to use your voice?

(Prompts: relationship, opportunity, time, culture of organisation)

How do you see your position within the relationship, are you an 'active agent?'

How are you enabled to use your voice?

When are you not able to use your voice?

Why do you think this is?

(Prompts: Encouragement, confidence, opportunity etc.…)

How would you like to use your voice in university?

(Prompts: work with tutors, collaborative decision making, highlight needs)

What do you think would make you feel more able to use your voice in university?

Participant information sheet interviews

INTERVIEWS

Student voice in higher education: Students' and Tutors' perceptions of its utilisation and purpose.'

You are being invited to take part in a research study as part of My Professional Doctorate in Education at The University of Central Lancashire. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

- **What is the purpose of the study?**

I am particularly interested in researching the use of 'student voice' in higher education from the experiences of both the tutors and students. Whilst interrogating literature surrounding the focus of my study it has become apparent that there are a number of common and overlapping uses of student voice in higher education and I am interested in looking at the ways in which these are experienced. Additionally, the meaning of 'student voice' is debated in higher education, but definitions appear unclear and consequently, I am interested in examining this concept.

- **Why have I been chosen?**

You have been invited to participate in this project because you are a tutor on the BA (Hons) Childhood Studies degree and as such your views would be valuable in demonstrating the perceptions of the tutors in relation to the study. I would therefore welcome your support in researching this issue.

- **Do I have to take part?**

There is no obligation for you to take part in this study. Participation will be purely on a voluntary basis.

- **What will happen to me if I take part?**

If you do agree to take part, you will be asked to take part in semi-structured interview to determine your views on the above mentioned topic.

Your name will not be recorded on any documentation. Nobody else will know you are taking part in the study. If you are happy to take part, please complete the attached permission form, which covers the interview.

- **What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

We do not consider that there are significant risks to taking part. Care will be taken to ensure confidentiality and your anonymity throughout. The study will be subject to a rigorous ethics procedure to ensure that you are not disadvantaged in any way.

- **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

A benefit of taking part will be that you will gain a greater understanding of the use of student voice within higher education. It may give you an understanding of the key terms and help you to consider your feelings in relation to these.

- **What if something goes wrong?**

Is something goes wrong or your become concerned, you should contact Sandra Shaffi (researcher). Alternatively, you may contact the Dean of School of Education and Social Sciences at UCLan, Preston. You may withdraw from the project at any time without any prejudice to yourself. If you wish to withdraw from the study, you may request any information already given be withdrawn.

- **Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?**

Yes. Interview transcriptions will be dealt with in strictest confidentiality and anonymised;

- **What will happen to the results of the research study?**

As part of the research we are intending to analyse the data received in order to answer the given questions. This will be used to reflect on practice with a view to developing positive experiences for students and tutors.

The findings of the project will be reported in conference papers and articles in order to inform the development of UK practice in the studies of student voice in higher education.

- **Who is organising and funding the research?**

The research is partly funded by the college and the remainder is privately funded.

- **Who may I contact for further information?**

If you wish to find out more about the project itself, you can contact Sandra Shaffi at. She can be contacted by email at or telephone.

(Confidential data has been removed from the original document in order to address ethical considerations)

Thank you for your interest in this research.

Sandra Shaffi

Consent form

Title of Project:

Student voice in higher education: Students' and Tutors' perceptions of its utilisation and purpose.'

Name of Researcher: Sandra Shaffi

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the
participant information sheet for the above study and
have had the opportunity to ask questions.
☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary
and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without
giving any reason and without my professional work or legal
rights being affected.
☐

3. I give permission for my dialogue and views about the utilisation of
student voice to be recorded and to be used in publications
following the research study, and I understand that they will not be
used for any other purposes.
☐

4. I understand that any transcriptions or recordings will be securely
and anonymously stored according to the requirements of the
Data Protection Act.
☐

5. I agree to take part in the above study.
☐

Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____

Name of Researcher   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____

APPENDIX D

Interview frame

'Student voice in higher education: Students' and Tutors' perceptions of its utilisation and purpose.'

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

<u>Interviewer – Sandra Shaffi</u>

<u>Interviewee –</u>

<u>Introduce Study</u>

'An analysis of the experiences of students and tutors in relation to the utilisation of student voice in higher education'.

In order to address this issue I will explore the following questions with the individual tutors;

- What is the tutors' understanding of the term 'student voice'?
- What is your perception of how students understand this?
- What do tutors see as the purpose of 'student voice'?
- How is the student voice seen within the Higher Education classroom?
- What are the benefits and challenges of facilitating the 'student voice'

<u>The purpose of the Study</u>

I am particularly interested in researching the use of 'student voice' in higher education from the experiences of both the tutors and students. Whilst interrogating literature surrounding the focus of my study it has become apparent that there are a number of common and overlapping uses of student voice in higher education and I am interested in looking at the ways in which these are experienced. Additionally,

the meaning of 'student voice' is debated in higher education, but definitions appear unclear and consequently, I am interested in examining this concept.

<u>Ethical considerations and Informed Consent</u>

Before I begin with this interview, I would like to clarify that you have received and read the procedures surrounding informed consent to take part in this study and that you understand that you may withdraw at any time. (See attached confirmation of consent). In addition, all personal details will be removed from the transcript of the interview in order to assure anonymity and confidentiality.

During this discussion, please feel free to interject at any time and seek clarification of points where necessary. With your permission, I would like to record this interview in order to transcribe the details at a later date. All data will be confirmed with yourself before inclusion in my study.

<u>Key topics to be covered- Semi-structured interview</u>

What is your understanding of the term 'student voice'?

What do you consider to be the students' understanding of 'student voice'?

What is the interviewee's understanding of how 'student voice' is incorporated into learning and teaching?

Can you give some examples of when you have felt that students have exercised their 'voice'?

Do you think that students should be given more opportunities to use their voice, if so how?

Are there any occasions when you think that students should not be given the opportunity to use their voice? Why?

What if any do you consider are the benefits of 'student voice'?

What do you consider could be the challenges of the use of 'student voice'?

Can you give any examples of when you have seen the student being considered in practice?

Close the interview

Are there any further points the interviewee would like to make?

Thank interviewee for their time and advise that they should contact me if they have any questions or seek further clarification.

Confirm that the data from this interview will be kept confidential, stored in a safe place and all names and personal details will be removed from the transcript. All data will be made available to the interviewee.

APPENDIX E

Data coding and analysis grid

Broad theme	Sub-themes	Evidence	Location/page numbers
Rights, personal feelings and experiences		I think it's about students having their say, sharing their feelings and experiences.	A 1-7
		I think it is about give them the power and control over the process by giving them a say.	B 4-5
		I ask the students how they would like to do the unit, this gives them ownership.	B 8-9
		As a male, I feel that I need to take care to empower women. I acknowledge that there are inequalities between men and women and I try to avoid this. Sometimes though it comes to bite me on the bum and I end up in an awkward situation.	B 25-31
		Well it's about listening and being able to change things. We put forward our ideas; these were listened to and changed. We listened to other students and this helped.	FDA5 11-15
		It is important that we are recognised as degree students and we are professionals in our own right	FDA5 32-35
		I think it is important that we are respected as we are told feedback on assignments will be on a set day and then it is not ready. Tutors say sorry and explain why.	YP5 49-53
		We are only allowed to participate when asked by the tutor. It should really be on an ongoing basis, so we can ask at any time.	BACS5
		Student voice is about being able to give opinions, like assignment hand in problems.	BACS 6 4-6

		If we are not at the student rep meeting, we cannot comment on things, it would be good if we could listen to others but cannot always attend	BACS6 13-16
		An example of when we have used voice is when we got the exam time changed. This is responding to our needs.	BACS6 46-48
		We also asked if we could have extra time in sessions to work o presentations and this was OK.	BACS6 53-57
		If I had a problem, I can go to the tutor and this is me using my voice.	BACS6 69-71
		We asked for career advice and this was arranged, this is responding to our needs	BACS6 125-127
		Student voice is about our needs and responding to them, like when we asked for WIFI we didn't get it but tutors explained why	BACS6 24-27
		Student voice is about anything rights and equality; it's about opinions views and having control over them.	C 1-2
		Sometimes I worry about what feedback I will get, I don't always know where to signpost if they have needs, even if they are crying they are using their voice.	C2 1-3
		Student voice is led by expectations from us in response to policy.	C2 30-32
Different types of voice		The voice is captured individually, but they also have a group voice which is different.	A 9-19
		If you give a student the chance to use their voice individually, this is more valuable than a group whereby stronger members	A 23-26

		transform that voice.	
		Some voices are more vulnerable and may just want to be quiet you need to take care as they are all different. Race, class, experience	**B 86-89**
		Well our voice is used in a positive way, like when I was a student rep in the 1st year, I was able to gather everybody's voice and put forward their ideas. **Q Were all voices heard then? Yes, they gave me all their ideas. The tutor always encouraged us to share ideas and give honest feedback to the units.**	**FDA5 29-32**
		As student rep I am able to pass on the views of the group, this represents the views of individuals and group.	**BACS6 8-14**
		Student voice is about commenting and discussing in sessions especially in year 3.	**BACS6 32-36**
		We are asked to go away and research something and share with the group.	**BACS6 49-50**
		We really like to research and to show the tutors what we have achieved, it makes me (us) feel part of the learning process **We are able to use our voice in emails if we need feedback**	**BACS6 118-122**
		We have tutorials with the groups and 1:1 with the tutor, we are encouraged to say what we are thinking and feeling	**BACS6 76**
		HE voice is more heard maturity	
Different types of feedback/	Types	**Student surveys, end of unit reviews, feedback about lessons**	**A 15-21**
	Content	**The content of the feedback depends on the hidden agendas and only part of their voice is heard.**	**A 30-32**

		If students are not asked appropriate questions, there is a danger that students will provide opinionated value judgements.	A 35-39
		It is dangerous when feedback is given as a percentage, it should be about content.	A 40-43
		There is a challenge with the use of Facebook where students are using their voice	C2 9-10
		It's like the methods used are geared towards encouraging the students to complain.	C 36-38
		We should really look at how we can collect it from an unbiased approach in terms of both inclusive practice and also the value of the methods which we utilise in collecting their voice.	
		Well that's different, it is the college which wants the information, not us choosing to give it, it's like the college is interfering in our way of doing things.	BACS6 41-46
Temporal factors		It depends on the times you ask about voice, what has gone before may influence it	A 27-28
		What has gone before has a real impact on the feedback given. For example, if a student has not received the grade they expected or felt they deserved, their feedback may reflect this as they react to the disappointment. Conversely, if the student received a higher grade than expected they may rate the teaching and assessment as more effective	A 31-36
		The timing of the request for voice shapes what you receive.	C 11-12
		The time it takes to collect student voice is frustrating, formal and informal meetings take a lot of time. Emails and telephone calls	C 13-15

		are not recognised when students are demanding.	
		Time and effort does not always bring results, how do we measure it? Takes its toll on staff	C 18-19
Power/influence		Depends on who is giving their voice	A 23-26
		May not be true voice as delivered by programme leader. Power issue here and many influences on it.	A 30-37
		Teacher asking for feedback, the power is clear.	
		Looking at the concept of student voice now as opposed to before, there is so much more attention given to collecting their voice. There are four ways of collecting voice which is overkill. The students' voice is not being represented effectively if we overdo it like this. Again, this is us (tutors) using our power to coerce them into saying what we want. It is as if the more we ask them for their views, this suggests that we are searching for the answer which suits us.	A 40
		I believe it is tokenistic and that it looks good on paper and satisfy the universities. The power is still with the lecturer, good or bad.	B 33-39
		The biggest problem with students using their voice is power and control. We are the ones who have degree, masters, PhD, they don't always know what they want at this stage, and sometimes we don't want to give over the power and control and don't think we should be embarrassed by this.	B 58-72
		I think that stronger members of the group influence others, so it is not clear whose voice is heard.	C 9

		I think it is difficult to respond to voice, we think we are being constructive but not always the case.	C 21-23
		Confidence is an issue when exercising voice, it depend on understanding of the topic. Some cultures address voice in different ways.	C 34-38
		Student voice is very powerful. They are consumers now, it is sometimes used as a power tool by the students	C 39-43
		We don't have any control over student's voice, but why should we?	C2 5-6
		Is it just a fashion? I want…, do we over encourage it, yes. I think we do.	C2 23-25
		Students do not reflect on their voice, they see it as something which is done to them. We should make it more collaborative.	C2 8-9
		If we think about older people, they are often disempowered because they are vulnerable. This is because society treats them as vulnerable, Are students vulnerable then? Only in terms of our grades, we are vulnerable if we don't achieve. It is like our class, you give us our voice, but we decide whether and how to use it. So do choices empower you? Yes, choices are power, the more choice you have, and the more power you have.	BA HSC 6
		In college we have choices about whether to attend, how long to stay, to do work, to listen. We make those choices through thinking about the end product. You have control in the end	

		because you have a degree.	
		If we think about power then within the classroom, who holds the power?	
		You, the tutor, you have the knowledge.	
		So do you see knowledge as power?	
		Yes, because that will give us a future	
		Does your future depend on it?	
		Yes, if I don't pass, I don't get a good job, more money, more power. Well. Do you think you hold power as a consumer?	
		No. I don't see it as something I have bought.	
		Why not?	
		Because I can't see it.	
		What about in the planning and the curriculum?	
		No, you do that, you hold the power to change it	
		Can't you change it?	
		Sometimes, but you will decide what and if we can change it.	
		Do you hold any power when sharing things in class?	
		Yes, because I am relating to my practice which is my territory and therefore my power.	
		Using my voice is expressing my need.	
		Who decided who satisfies the needs and whether they are satisfied?	
		Well it is like parents and children, parents decide what the children can have even though the children choose, the ultimate decision is with the parents.	
		Do you see the relationship in the classroom as like parent/child?	
		Yes, in a way, you are leading us, but the relationship helps that.	
		Looking at the concept of student voice now as opposed to before, there is so much more attention	**A 2**

		given to collecting their voice. I know that there are 4 ways of collecting voice which is overkill. The students' voice is not being represented effectively if we overdo it. Again, this is us using our power to coerce them into saying what we want. It is as if the more we ask we are searching for the answer which suits us. There is the idea however that by keep asking them, they feel more in control and ultimately hold the power.	
		In the university things are about just the keeping the students at whatever cost. That is us using power in a negative way. \if they want to leave, they are persuaded to stay so that our stats stay the same, the students hold the power, it's the marketisation that's the main thing. The students are holding power and control, over us as they are consumers and know that we have to 'play ball'. It feels like we have 'accountability over our heads all the time.	D (Ext)
		(interesting as we are trying to satisfy university but they feel the same, the policy doesn't reflect the views of the staff, university do not seem to be used to accounting for themselves in the same way that college does,)	Research journal
Tutor engagement with the feedback given		I am interested in how they see the module I am teaching. I want to know if they have learnt. I think it would be better put aside the unit reviews and just talk to the students, it would enable a truer voice to emerge	B 11-14 B 40-49

Relationship		The end of unit forms are good because we can give our opinion without hurting the feelings of the tutor. I don't want to sound like I am moaning	FDA5 44-48
		See student voice as a form of respect between the tutor and student.	BACS6 79-93
		It is not the same in the college though as we are treated like FE students and we don't like this. The tutors don't tell us off because we are mature students	
		It is not good when you cannot use your voice, like in FE, it's really about a good relationship with the tutors will enable us to use our voice. If we were at a big university I don't think we would be able to use our voice in the same way because it is bigger.	BACS6 94-117
		Tutors tend to pick up on negative feedback communicating discontent.	C 19-21
		The relationship is important it will make it easier to use their voice. It can change depending upon the relationship.	C 30-32
		We need an equal relationship so it is a balancing act to enable them to disclose their needs to enable learning.	C 34-35
		Need to include all voices but difficult society marginalises minorities.	
		The relationship we have with our tutors helps us as they are flexible	BAHSC6

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