

**A critical discourse analysis of student and staff
constructions of their pedagogical relationships in two
UK modern universities in an era of marketisation**

Diane Garside

BA, MA

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Philosophy of Education
(PhD)

Institute of Education (IOE)

University College London (UCL)

April 2020

Declaration

I, Diane Garside confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Signed: *Diane Garside*

Date: *April 2020*

Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks to my supervisors, Professor William Locke, Dr Holly Smith and Professor Lesley Gourlay, who guided me so patiently and expertly throughout this doctoral study. I will always have fond memories of our round-table discussions at IOE.

I am extremely grateful to colleagues and students who willingly gave up their time to participate in my study.

A huge thank you to my family. To my children, Susanna and Matthew, who have grown up and graduated during this period: I hope you will always share my love of learning. Most of all thank you to my husband, Chris, who has been unendingly supportive and patient through this long period of study, and who is waiting with anticipation for me to complete this document.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my colleague, Marilyn, with whom I shared many lively debates about students in higher education.

Abstract

This study in two English post-1992 universities uses a critical discourse analysis approach to examine the construction of student-staff relationships in an era of marketisation. There is little empirical evidence about how students and staff describe their learning and teaching relationships in a marketised environment, and in a period following such significant policy reforms. This thesis addresses the question of how consumerist discourses might open or close opportunities for learning and seeks to find out if, and how, alternative discourses are being deployed.

Qualitative methods were used to gather data in vocational and non-vocational subject disciplines. The research approach was based on semi-structured interviews with staff and students, observations of student-staff interactions and documentary analysis of institutional documents. Student Forum meetings were observed, and they represent important, informal and under-researched spaces where learning and teaching experiences are shared and discussed.

The thesis critically analyses different representations of the student in practice and argues from a social-constructionist perspective that there are multiple constructions of the student which may be deployed concurrently. In recognising different ways to be a student this contradicts the homogenised views on which policy and practices are typically built. The study also adds to the scarce literature on the practicalities of doing discourse work and outlines a phased approach, first identifying constructions of the student and then wider discourses.

In addition to the consumerist 'satisfying the customer' discourse, four additional discourses are identified: 'students under pressure'; 'exercising autonomy'; 'trajectories of student development'; and 'contractual obligations'. The study questions the idea of seeking one enduring discourse for the student and argues for a new framework for understanding pedagogical relationships. This takes account of the complex and competing spheres in which accounts are formed, including family and community, policy environments, academia, day-to-day learning environments and social and moral environments.

Impact Statement

I have worked as a university lecturer in post-1992 universities for over twenty years. My doctoral study aimed to find out how student-staff relationships have been developing in modern English universities against a backdrop of increasing marketisation. More empirical evidence is needed on this topic given that more than half of young people in England now attend university. My study involved interviewing students and staff in two post-1992 universities about their learning and teaching experiences, observing staff-student meetings as well as analysing documents produced by each institution.

Using a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach, my study draws attention to the ways that students are portrayed by universities, staff, and students. Whereas policymakers have positioned the student as a consumer in the 'driving seat' of higher education, the study found that there are many other ways that students understand and describe their role. The study identified five competing discourses: 'students under pressure'; 'satisfying the customer'; 'exercising autonomy'; 'trajectories of student development' and 'contractual obligations'.

The impact of my study will be to raise awareness by sharing with colleagues how, in a competitive environment, the 'student as consumer' discourse was deployed in practice, functioning to position staff as service providers and narrowing opportunities for learning. Furthermore, I will show other complex ways students and staff described their pedagogical relationships.

My work will feed into discussions about curriculum development. Students, in accounts of their university experiences, portrayed themselves as under pressure from the need to hold down part-time work alongside study, under pressure from families to achieve, and concerned about future employability in a competitive marketplace. However, they also wished to exercise autonomy over the ways they navigate through university, and this conflicted with staff ideas about student development. I will also highlight a gap between the language universities use to promote visions of the ideal university and the way that students talk about their experiences in practice. Students did not construct themselves as 'disadvantaged' or talk of going to university to be 'transformed' into successful graduates or improve their 'life chances'.

Based on the findings from my study, I plan to deliver research seminars within and beyond my institution to disseminate my research and publish academic papers around the conceptualisation of contemporary higher education students and the framing of pedagogical relationships. I also propose to work with postgraduate researchers who are interested in using discourse analysis methods to further demystify the process of CDA for others. I have outlined in the thesis further research studies which potentially lead on from this study. Having reflected on my findings I will apply for funding to further explore under-researched discourses such as 'family' and how families influence student-decision making. I am also interested in exploring how a range of students understand the notions of 'community' and how practices promote or deter the formation of learning communities, including peer and online communities. The benefits would be to further understand those discourses which might compete with the discourse of the 'student-as-consumer'.

Table of Contents

Declaration	2
Acknowledgements.....	3
Abstract.....	4
Impact Statement.....	5
Table of Contents	7
Table of Figures	12
Table of Tables	13
Chapter One: Introduction	14
1.1 Background	14
1.2 Aims and Rationale	16
1.3 Context of the research	18
1.4 Focus of the research.....	18
1.5 Summary of research approach.....	20
1.6 Initial statement of findings.....	21
1.7 Initial claims of contribution to knowledge	21
1.8 Organisation of the thesis.....	22
Chapter Two: Policy Context and Literature Review	24
2.1 Introduction	24
2.2 The policy context: the marketisation of English universities	24
2.2.1 Marketisation.....	24
2.2.2 The English higher education policy context	27
2.2.3 The implications of the policy context.....	31
2.3 Pedagogical Relationships in higher education	32
2.3.1 Defining pedagogical relationships.....	32
2.3.2 Describing pedagogical relationships.....	34

2.4	Pedagogical relationships and discourses of learning and teaching	37
2.4.1	‘Transformation’	40
2.4.2	‘Independent learning’	41
2.4.3	‘Employability’	42
2.4.4	‘Research-based learning’	42
2.4.5	‘Student engagement’	43
2.4.6	‘Partnership’	44
2.5	The ‘Student-as-Consumer’ Metaphor	45
2.5.1	Origin of the metaphor	45
2.5.2	Limitations of the ‘student-as-consumer’ metaphor.....	46
2.5.3	Implications for learning and teaching	48
2.6	‘Students-as-partners’ and additional metaphors.....	49
2.7	Rationale and research questions.....	52
Chapter Three: The Research Approach		55
3.1	Introduction	55
3.2	The conceptual lens - a social constructionist approach	55
3.3	A Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach	58
3.4	The Pilot Study	62
3.4.1	Methods.....	63
3.4.2	Evaluation of the pilot study	67
3.5	Selecting data sources within a discourse analytic approach.....	68
3.5.1	Choice of institutions	70
3.5.2	Choice of subject disciplines	71
3.5.3	Selection of staff and students	71
3.6	Ethical considerations	73
3.7	Methods of data collection	74
3.7.1	Semi-structured Interviews.....	77
3.7.2	Observations of staff-student meetings	78

3.7.3	Documentary analysis	80
3.7.4	Reflexivity	81
3.8	Doing Discourse Analysis	82
3.8.1	Defining the outcomes of analysis: Constructions of the Student	86
3.8.2	Defining the outcomes of analysis: Discourses.....	87
3.9	Evaluation of research quality	89
3.10	Conclusion.....	90
Chapter Four:	Findings from University A.....	91
4.1	Introduction	91
4.2	Context and institutional discourses.....	92
4.3	Constructions of students through talk	95
4.4	Discourses in current practices	100
4.4.1	‘Students under pressure’	105
4.4.2	‘Exercising autonomy’	110
4.4.3	‘Satisfying the customer’	112
4.4.4	‘Contractual Obligations’	120
4.4.5	‘Trajectories of student development’	124
4.5	Weaker and absent discourses	129
4.5.1	‘Community’	129
4.5.2	‘Knowledge-creation’	130
4.5.3	‘Partnership’	130
4.6	Relationships between discourses.....	131
4.7	Conclusions	133
Chapter Five:	Findings from University B.....	136
5.1.1	Introduction	136
5.2	Context and institutional discourses.....	137
5.3	Constructions of students through talk	140
5.4	Discourses in current practices	144

5.4.1	'Students under pressure'	150
5.4.2	'Exercising autonomy'	155
5.4.3	'Satisfying the customer'	156
5.4.4	'Contractual obligations'	160
5.4.5	'Trajectories of Student Development'	164
5.5	Weaker discourses	168
5.5.1	'Community'	168
5.5.2	'Partnership'	168
5.6	Relationships between discourses	169
5.7	Conclusions	171
Chapter Six: Discussion		173
6.1	Introduction	173
6.2	Multiple and concurrent constructions of the student	174
6.2.1	New constructions	177
6.2.2	Notable absences	179
6.2.3	Variation in student and staff accounts	182
6.2.4	Variations in constructions between University A and B	183
6.2.5	Findings from other studies	185
6.2.6	Implications for pedagogical relationships	186
6.3	The power of the 'student-as-consumer' discourse	188
6.4	Resisting the 'student-as-consumer' discourse	192
6.5	Additional discourses	193
6.5.1	'Students under pressure'	194
6.5.2	'Exercising autonomy'	197
6.5.3	'Trajectories of student development'	198
6.5.4	'Contractual Obligations'	202
6.6	Resisting discourses	205
6.7	Discourses and the implications for learning opportunities	207

6.8	Differences between the institutions	211
6.9	Differences between the subject disciplines	213
6.10	Towards a conceptual framework for pedagogical relationships.....	214
6.11	Discussion of the conceptual framework	218
6.11.1	Evaluation of the framework	220
Chapter Seven: Conclusions		222
7.1	Introduction	222
7.2	Consideration of the findings.....	222
7.2.1	Research Question One (RQ1)	222
	How do students construct themselves through their talk?	222
7.2.2	Research Question Two (RQ2)	224
	Do higher education staff and students draw on the ‘student-as-consumer’ discourse in their interactions and in accounts of learning and teaching practices? If so, how? ...	224
7.2.3	Research Question Three (RQ3).....	226
	What additional discourses are available for describing and accounting for the pedagogical relationships, and how are they deployed?	226
7.3	Limitations.....	231
7.3.1	Limitation: A limited sample of English higher education institutions.	231
7.3.2	Limitation: Generalisability	232
7.3.3	Limitation: Ethical considerations.....	232
7.3.4	Limitation: Application of findings	233
7.4	Summary of contributions to knowledge	233
7.4.1	Contribution to field of study.....	233
7.4.2	Theoretical contribution	235
7.4.3	Contribution to methodological approaches.....	236
7.5	Implications.....	238
7.5.1	Policymakers	238
7.5.2	Institutions	238

7.5.3	Academics/Programme Leaders	239
7.5.4	Academics/Researchers	239
7.5.5	Students	240
7.5.6	Implications of the proposed conceptual framework	241
7.6	Recommendations for future research.....	243
7.6.1	Extensions to the current study	243
7.6.2	Contribution of families to student decision-making	244
7.6.3	Students exercising autonomy.....	244
7.7	Concluding comments	245
	List of Appendices	246
	Appendix A: Timeline of the Higher Education Policy Context in England	247
	Appendix B: Example of Analysis: Evaluating pilot study qualitative interviews	248
	Appendix C: Example of Analysis: Constructions of students in University A	251
	Appendix D: Example of Analysis: Constructions of students in University B	267
	Appendix E: Example Interview Questions for Students	276
	Appendix F: Example Interview Questions for Staff	277
	Appendix G: Examples of Working Documents	278
	References.....	289

Table of Figures

Figure 1: A three-dimensional framework of analysis (adapted from Fairclough, 2001).....	20
Figure 2: Outline of the research methodology and methods	66
Figure 3: Methods of data collection in Universities A and B.....	69
Figure 4: Data Analysis and Methods	85
Figure 5: Discourses deployed to describe pedagogical relationships	193
Figure 6: Towards a conceptual framework for pedagogical relationships.....	217

Table of Tables

Table 1: Constructions of Students in University A.....	96
Table 2: Discourses - University A.....	102
Table 3: Constructions of Students in University B.....	141
Table 4: Discourses - University B.....	146

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background

I begin this chapter with an anecdote which attempts to pinpoint the start of my interest in this thesis topic. At the start of the autumn term in 2013 I was working as a Programme Leader in a Business School. I overheard two snatches of colleagues' conversations which caught my attention. The first was an Accounting lecturer who was saying that she had reminded students that morning not to skip her classes:

“you're paying fees now and if you miss lectures, don't forget it's costing you about fifty pounds an hour!”

The second was from a Marketing colleague:

“yes, I tell them it's like going to Sainsbury's, paying the bill and then leaving all the shopping at the checkout”.

These are the kind of conversations that first sparked my interest in the topic of the 'student as consumer'. I was surprised by the vivid language and asked myself if these ways of talking were commonplace and how I would respond if I were a student. These conversations assumed that that learning was a commodity to be acquired and learning could be managed through a series of transactions rather than through developing 'educational relationships' (Gibbs, 2001). My own conviction was that education was about much more than customer-service. What had happened to learning for its own sake?

I began to think about other ways that staff-student relationships were being described. For example, there was increasing anticipation of the first Research Excellence Framework (REF) results and alternative ways of describing students were circulating. There was the idea that students should be encouraged to become co-researchers or 'producers of ideas and knowledge' through research-based teaching (Lambert, 2009:304). It was unclear to me, however, how students at university would describe themselves - as researchers or consumers or perhaps something else entirely?

Providing some biographical information might help explain my motivations to undertake this thesis. Education was my second career. After graduating in Modern Languages, I worked

for a decade in the private sector, first for a small technology company and later a large consultancy firm. Moving to working part-time in a modern university Business School was a huge culture change, but one which fitted better with family life. My practitioner experience seemed to be valued but the new environment was initially alien. I completed a certificate of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education and then an MA Education Leadership and Management in a bid to better understand the 'business' of higher education. My research on employability in a Business School gave me the opportunity to conduct qualitative research in a university and later publish an academic paper with my supervisor (Thorpe and Garside, 2017).

My application to be a doctoral student at IOE, London was written in late 2013, and I recently re-read this in order to remember how I initially envisaged the doctoral study. I wrote about the tensions for programme leaders, who were pressurised to adopt increasingly responsive leadership and management approaches and how universities might be playing a significant role in changing staff-student relationships as they responded to new regulatory frameworks. I was concerned about the descriptions of the university experience at open days and in prospectuses, where dream lifestyles replaced aspirations of lifelong learning – the 'holiday brochure' approach (Attwood, 2008). I hoped to understand more about the English higher education policy environment and how that might be influencing learning and teaching practices. Fresh from having completed postgraduate studies in Education where I looked at communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), I was hoping to develop a more collaborative working environment. My first proposal aimed to trace the influence of 'consumerism' on student participation in learning and teaching in a post-1992 university. Looking back, I would now frame these ideas differently given the social-constructionist lens I adopted and my interest in text and talk rather than on attitudes and behaviours (see Chapter Three for more detail on the research approach).

What was clear from my application was that, as a part-time lecturer with over twenty years' experience in a modern university, I was in a position to gain access to universities and participants, gather empirical data and give voice to students and staff about their experiences. I wanted to explore how university responses to the socio-political environment might be having far-reaching and unintended repercussions on both the learning and teaching environment and the relationships between tutors and students. I felt that students were too often underestimated or painted as uniform types and characterised according to the type of institution they attended. I was also concerned that talking out loud in your own

institution can be difficult and that providing empirical evidence would be a constructive way of giving voice to my ideas and concerns about institutional responses to marketisation. Of course, there were other motivations in undertaking doctoral studies: to enhance my professional status and retain my position in a modern university that increasingly valued research, to experience what it means to be an independent researcher, and most of all the desire to challenge myself intellectually.

1.2 Aims and Rationale

The overall aim of this thesis is to explore the development of pedagogical relationships in two English modern universities in an era of marketisation. A 'modern' university is a synonym for a 'new' or 'post-92' university which was granted university status through the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 or since that date, without receiving a royal charter. They are also major sites of expansion of mass education and have remained splintered away from more prestigious institutions (Scott, 2012). Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have devolved legislative powers to change higher education systems according to their national priorities, but it is the English higher education system which has moved most decisively towards a 'student-led, market-based' system (Bruce, 2012). Put simply, marketisation is associated with changes in processes and practices in institutions which are associated with a market-driven ethos. 'Modern', 'new', or 'post-1992' universities were selected due to my long experience of working as a lecturer and programme leader in such universities. 'Post-1992' universities are often associated with being of lower status than pre-1992 universities, and terms such as 'old' and 'new' universities have tacitly been synonymous with 'good' or 'not-so-good' universities (Boliver, 2015).

The data collection for the study took place during the academic year 2016-2017 and followed on from a pilot study conducted in 2015 to test out methods and techniques. For reasons of confidentiality the universities are referred to as University A and University B. This was the period following two important landmarks in the development of higher education policy in England: the Browne Review of 2010 (IRHEFSF, 2010) and the White Paper (DBIS, 2011), which both positioned the undergraduate student as primarily a consumer of education.

The term 'pedagogical relationships' includes student-staff relationships with respect to learning and teaching activities and so excludes interactions relating to extra-curricular

activities or interactions with the university in relation to administration. The focus on 'student engagement' (Trowler, 2010; Kahu, 2013) in response to marketisation in English universities has meant a revival of interest in teacher-student interactions, particularly as a tool for improving student retention and performance. The term 'engagement' in the UK has traditionally focused on student feedback, student representation and student approaches to learning. This is distinct from the wider definition in the USA where the literature is concerned with the use of resources to 'optimise the student experience and enhance the learning outcomes and development of students and performance, and the reputation of the institution' (Trowler, 2010:3). The distinction between the focus on 'engagement' in the two contexts can be broadly described as finding out what students 'think' (National Student Survey(NSS), UK), compared to what students 'do' (National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), North America). The changing landscape of higher education and the introduction in England of the first full year of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) in 2016-2017 (DBIS, 2015) further justifies the importance of examining what is happening in practice.

The aims of the study were to explore how students constructed themselves as students and to examine student and staff accounts of learning experiences. Through a critical examination of texts from institutional documents, transcriptions of interviews and student-staff interactions, I aimed to reveal how relationships were developing and changing in a marketised environment as well as highlighting some of the unintended consequences on learning and teaching practices. I also wanted to identify how far discourses of the 'student-as-consumer' were dominant and how alternative discourses, if any, were being deployed.

This topic is of interest for various stakeholders. There is little empirical evidence about how students and staff describe the learning and teaching relationships in a marketised environment, even in this period following such significant policy reforms. Given that almost one in two students in England opt to study at university and that the burden of finance has shifted towards students, it is important to find out how the participants in this process, staff and students, are experiencing these changes in practice. I will address the implications of the research for policymakers, institutions, academic researchers, programme leaders, and students in the final chapter of the thesis.

1.3 Context of the research

The data for the study was collected during the academic year 2016-2017. It was also a year in which the majority of undergraduates in English universities were paying the increased fees of £9,000. A timeline of the policy context is provided at Appendix A. This was also the first year in which the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) was fully introduced. The TEF embedded the capture of performance measures in higher education and emphasised the role of the student as a consumer and not just a learner (Gunn, 2018). The period prior to the study, from 2010 onwards, was a period of significant change in English higher education. In particular, the Browne Report (IRHEFSF, 2010) and the White Paper (DBIS, 2011) focused heavily on the changing relationships between the institution and the student and reconceptualised the role of the student in higher education as a fee-paying customer, choosing a provider of higher education services in a competitive market.

Naidoo and Jamieson (2005) had predicted that the student would become a mechanism for marketisation and called for a research agenda to provide empirical evidence of the effects of marketisation, which they considered to be 'corrosive'. Importantly, marketisation has been characterised as the state 'steering from a distance' (Marginson, 1997), indicating a period in which universities were being held more accountable through target-setting and performance measures rather than through direct interventions. The response from institutions seemed to require increased self-regulation and performance monitoring to meet targets and remain attractive to prospective students, who were now firmly centre stage.

1.4 Focus of the research

Three main areas will be addressed in the literature review and these relate to the policy context, the conceptual and empirical research conducted previously in relation to pedagogical relationships and the discussion of contemporary discourses in higher education. In terms of the policy context, academics have debated the nature and significance of marketisation and how important a shift in the landscape of higher education it represents. The implications of key policy documents for pedagogical relationships will be considered, in particular, how government higher education policy has prioritised student interests and how students are expected to act as well-informed and influential customers. As well as examining the policy context, the review of literature chapter will identify

contemporary discourses in circulation at the time of the study which were deployed by participants in the study and which represent alternatives to the 'student-as-consumer' discourse. These include discourses of 'transformation'; 'independent learning'; 'employability'; student research'; 'student engagement'; and 'partnership'.

The idea of pedagogical relationships has been addressed in the higher education literature from different perspectives: conceptual, behavioural and even psychoanalytical. For example, Nixon *et al.* (2018) offer a striking psychoanalytically informed interpretation of the 'student-as-consumer' metaphor, representing the student as a narcissistic sovereign customer: 'her majesty the student'. There is a body of literature which aims to conceptualise the student and find appropriate metaphors. Variants to the 'student-as-consumer' have been proposed by academics, such as the student as 'client' and 'customer'. In particular, arguments around the (in)appropriateness of the 'student-as-consumer' metaphor have been discussed (McCulloch, 2009) as well as which new metaphors might be appearing in the sector to challenge consumerism, such as 'students as researchers' or 'students as partners' (Healey and Jenkins, 2009). This study will question the wisdom of relying on a single metaphor for the student.

There is limited empirical data on the topic of the 'student-as-consumer' in modern English universities and it is unclear whether staff and students talk differently about pedagogical relationships, whether subject disciplines make a difference and how far institutional culture is reflected in conversations. An important study by Tomlinson (2015) concluded that there was ambivalence about the way students constructed themselves. This doctoral study explores that ambivalence but accepts from the outset the contradictory nature of students' responses. By focusing on discourse, rather than behaviours, the study aims to better understand the contemporary student and student-staff relationships in the learning and teaching environment.

Three main questions are addressed in the study:

RQ1: How do students construct themselves through their talk?

RQ2: Do higher education staff and students draw on the 'student-as-consumer' discourse in their interactions and in accounts of learning and teaching practices? If so, how?

RQ3: What additional discourses are available for describing and accounting for the pedagogical relationships, and how are they deployed?

1.5 Summary of research approach

This study is a qualitative study using a critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach and employs methods of semi-structured interviews, observation of student-staff interactions in committee meetings, and documentary analysis. Within a critical discourse (CDA) approach, documents, texts of conversations and accounts of practices are all viewed as discursive materials from which individuals can construct the meaning of the world. For example, in CDA, text, discourse practice and social practice can be connected in a three-dimensional framework of analysis to give a coherent account for the reader (Fairclough, 2010).

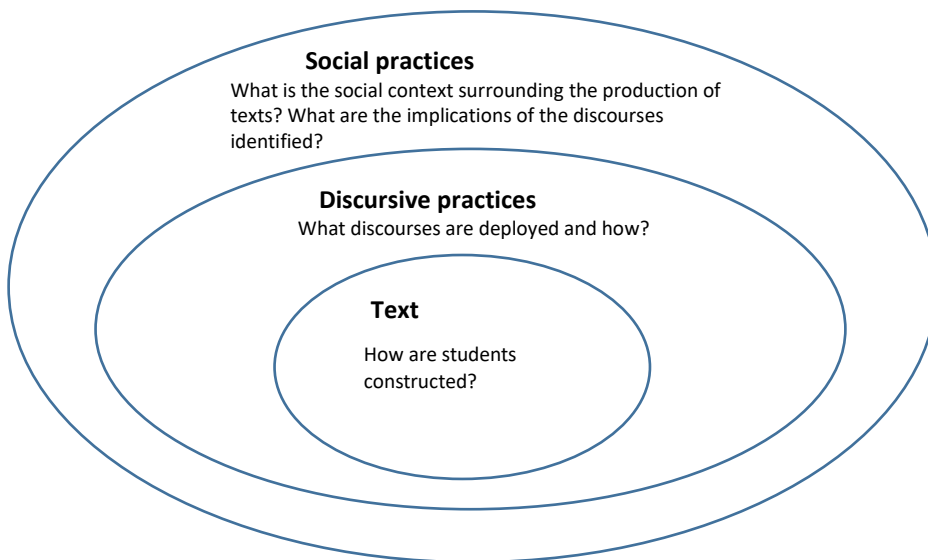


Figure 1: A three-dimensional framework of analysis (adapted from Fairclough, 2001)

The design was influenced by two important decisions, first, to adopt a social constructionist philosophy (Burr, 2003) and second, a critical discourse analysis approach (Parker, 2013; Gee, 2015). My role can be characterised as one of sceptical listener, reporting and interpreting what is said, but not accepting words as 'truth'. This approach was appropriate as a key question for the study was not a behavioural one – not whether students *are* consumers but how they *can be* consumers and what it means to talk about students in this way.

At a micro level, meaning can be derived from the way a student, in speaking, constructs their individual identity in relation to being a student at this time. My interest is also simultaneously in the wider social and cultural context. The focus therefore will also be on the recurring elements of talk in this wider context. A discourse analytic approach can facilitate the analysis of both the constructions of contemporary students and the consideration of the wider conversations happening in university settings. Gee's (2015) notion of 'small-'d' and Big-'D' discourses' and Parker's (1992) advice on discovering discourses provide the theoretical basis for the analysis of discourses. A critical approach is appropriate as it can explore how discourses are representing current practices and how they may be intentionally or unintentionally widening and/or shrinking possibilities for pedagogical relationships.

1.6 Initial statement of findings

The study found that the construction of the 'student-as-consumer' was just one of multiple and concurrent constructions deployed by staff and students. My argument is that these constructions matter because the acceptance of these constructions as 'realities' in universities has implications for how learning and teaching can happen. Based on the evidence from this study, the way pedagogical relationships are constructed in practice through discourse differs from the published visions of relationships in selected institutional documents and in policy documents. The identification of five discourses which were deployed in both universities suggests that the dominance of the 'student-as-consumer' discourse may be overstated and overshadows other important discourses which describe pedagogical relationships. Furthermore, the complexity and diversity points to a need for a new conceptual framework for the pedagogical relationship. This is discussed further in Chapter Six.

1.7 Initial claims of contribution to knowledge

The study claims to contribute to knowledge in three areas: a contribution to the field of study, a contribution to methodological approaches and a theoretical contribution. First, by adding to the literature on how students are conceptualised through the gathering of empirical data, the study will add to the knowledge base by identifying how students may be constructed in talk and by identifying additional discourses which compete with the discourse of the 'student-as-consumer'. Second, the study will extend the critical discourse analysis

approach into new areas by analysing student-staff interactions in university committee meetings. Furthermore, by combining analysis of discourses in documents with the analysis of text from conversations, discourses can be traced across institutions and subject areas. Third, the study will propose a new conceptual framework which takes account of the dynamic nature and the complexity of pedagogical relationships.

1.8 Organisation of the thesis

This current chapter has introduced the research topic. Chapter Two sets out to contextualise the research and outlines the key changes in policy impacting on the English higher education environment. Key literature on the topic is discussed including policy documents and the idea of the 'student-as-consumer' in relation to marketisation (Molesworth *et al.* 2011, Williams 2013, Brown and Carasso 2013). Alternative metaphors for the student are considered as well as their implications for learning and teaching relationships.

Chapter Three details the research methodology and explains the research process, including issues of ethics and my position as researcher. The chapter includes a review of the pilot study and how it influenced the main study.

Chapters Four and Five present the findings from University A and B and include a summary of the constructions of students and a presentation of the discourses deployed by students and staff in the interviews and the Student Forum meetings. The chapters follow a similar structure and there is necessarily some overlap and repetition as these two chapters are designed to be read independently of each other rather than sequentially.

Chapter Six discusses the findings from University A and B, the constructions of students in the research and the discourses identified. It focuses on the dominant and additional conceptualisations of students as reflected in both talk and learning and teaching practices. The discourses identified are: 'satisfying the customer'; 'students under pressure'; 'exercising autonomy', 'trajectories of student development'; and 'contractual obligations'.

Finally, in Chapter Seven the main conclusions are drawn from the research. In giving a full account of the discourses deployed, the study paints a complex picture, showing not only that there were strong discourses, but also weaker ones such as 'community', 'partnership' and 'knowledge creation', which were not frequently or strongly taken up in student talk.

Furthermore, there are variations between institutional discourses and discourses deployed in practice and tensions between the ways in which discourses were deployed by staff and students. I have therefore argued for reconceptualising pedagogical relationships in a way which takes account of their dynamic complexity as revealed through discourses. There then follows a critical evaluation of the work undertaken before discussing the contribution to knowledge and considering suggestions for future research. Finally, the research concludes with a discussion of the implications for key stakeholders in higher education and a reflection on the study with a view to how it might free up thinking and widen understanding of pedagogical relationships.

Chapter Two: Policy Context and Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I aim to locate the study, conducted during the academic year 2016 to 2017, within the policy context in English higher education and to critically review the literature relevant to this research study. I present the review of literature as a narrowing down process, starting with the higher education policy context and ending with the identification of specific research questions.

Section 2.2 focuses on the higher education policy context in which pedagogical relationships are constructed. A discussion of the debate surrounding marketisation and the purpose of universities is included. In the following section, section 2.3, I discuss how pedagogical relationships between staff and students are defined and described and consider contemporary discourses of learning and teaching in higher education. In section 2.4, I begin my focus on the portrayal of students through a close consideration of the 'student-as-consumer' metaphor. I then consider, in section 2.5, other metaphors for the student which have been proposed as alternatives. In the final section of the chapter I evaluate existing research studies on this topic within the higher education literature and conclude by setting out the three research questions for this doctoral study. Literature relevant to the research methods and the social constructionist philosophy which informs this study will be critically discussed in the next chapter, Chapter Three, the Research Approach.

2.2 The policy context: the marketisation of English universities

2.2.1 Marketisation

'Marketisation' is a term which has been used to indicate perceptions of processes and practices in institutions which are associated with a market-driven ethos based on 'business ideals' (Ek *et al.*, 2013:1306). In higher education this typically involves a fee-paying regime and the operation of customer relationships, with the institution acting as a service provider. Marketisation is nothing new and it has been a feature of higher education in the United States of America since the mid-1990s (Williams, 2013). It might therefore better be described as a shift in the landscape rather than an entirely new climate. Macfarlane (2016:107-8) traces back the 'collective hand-wringing' about student consumerism even

further back through neo-liberal policies of the Thatcher era after 1979, James Callaghan's questioning of the value and purpose of higher education in 1976 and J. F. Kennedy's speech in 1962 which discussed increased consumer protection for citizens for costly purchases, including education. Many questions have been raised in relation to the marketisation of universities, including debates about the purpose of a university, the definition of higher education as a market, the role of institutions, staff and students within it, as well as the unintended consequences it brings (Collini 2012, Holmwood 2011).

Universities have traditionally served numerous different purposes, including the promotion of learning and teaching, research, engagement with the local community and partnerships with commercial organisations. The focus necessarily changes in line with government initiatives or policies, which in turn are influenced by political factors. An example would be the compromises made by the Cameron-Clegg coalition government (2010-2015), which meant that the Liberal Democrat promises to abandon university tuition fees were not kept. There are limitations to the operation of higher education as a competitive market – some of which can be imposed by governments themselves, such as caps on fees and student numbers, and the accessibility of the market to private providers.

The issue of marketisation is, at first glance, a highly politicised debate with a division between those who actively defend public universities as public institutions and those who are convinced by the need to change to a more 'business-like' model. Kalafatis and Ledden (2013:1540-1) identify two contrasting academic camps – those who view marketisation as 'a kind of hegemony that has undermined the very essence of pedagogy and devalued scholarly society' and those who view of marketisation as offering 'a new paradigm for engaging with institutional audiences' (see section 2.2.2 below). However, the debates about the marketisation of higher education are more complex than comparing two ideological standpoints. Williams (2013) argued that the diminishing respect for knowledge as intellectual heritage to be passed on to the next generation has resulted in the purpose of a university being publicly expressed in terms of either an economic or a social agenda. Collini (2012) argued that universities have a remit beyond the economic purpose and that universities should not be driven only by student financing arrangements. The focus on use-value is reflected in the favouring of skills development for employability, as opposed to a focus on personal transformation through learning. He also argued that it ignores the value accrued to a democratic society in having educated citizens and focuses on the student's personal return on investment (See sections 2.5 and 2.6 for a discussion of the metaphors

for the student). According to the Manifesto for the Campaign for the Public University (CFPU), the government invoked the 'Big Society', but its primary figure was the 'private individual' (CFPU, 2010). Collini's (2012) work provoked contrasting responses (Conrad 2012, Newby 2012), but both note the rhetorical nature of the writing. Indeed, the rhetoric of binaries described above (employability versus personal transformation; democratic citizens versus 'useful' graduates; economic versus social agendas) emphasises the tensions and unresolved debates about the purposes of higher education at the level of the individual student, institutional practices and wider society.

In the face of competition in a marketised system, concerns have been voiced about the impact on curricula, student choice and information provision to students and families, for example, in league tables. These three areas are now briefly outlined.

In terms of curricula, there has been a concern that universities might decide to offer what they think students (and their families) want, rather than what students or academics think they need. Rationalisation of curricula could affect non-STEM subjects more than others and there might, overall, be a reduction in programmes available in universities, with increased focus on popular programmes. Making the universities market-oriented 'greatly weakens the position of the arts, humanities and critical social sciences' (Lynch, 2006).

Furthermore, Brown (2014) talks of 'dysfunctional' expenditure: 'this is in things that have little or no educational merit but which are believed to attract students: residences, cafeteria, shopping malls etc.' Lifestyle, alongside institutional reputation, may be influencing student choice alongside financial decisions. According to HEPI (2012), students are 'continuing to select their institution for reasons that are often good ones but which do not follow economic orthodoxy'. The decision-making process is complex and there are attempts to fill this gap in understanding of the student perspective (McManus *et al.*, 2017).

The choices prospective students would make in selecting an institution was a focus of the Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance (IRHEFSF, 2010), chaired by Lord Browne (see section 2.2.2 below). The notion of 'choice' for university applicants is, however, somewhat illusory – the choice of institutions is for some students necessarily constrained by both geography and circumstances, for example, their need to access paid work locally and sustain commitments to their families and communities. Nonetheless, greater transparency through publication of details about contact hours and

destinations of leavers has led to increased focus on information collection and provision in universities. Survey data from the National Student Survey (NSS) had been available since 2005 and the publication of league tables has meant a closer focus on demonstrating reputation in universities. The introduction of Key Information Sets (KIS) in 2012, involving the establishment of a public facing website of data from each university, aimed to help students make informed decisions about choice of university course by including the following: information on NSS results and summaries of the nature of learning experiences and assessment regimes; information on course fees, accommodation costs and financial support offered; and information on graduate employment rates, destinations of leavers and salaries. Concerns have been highlighted about the implications of the league tables and the NSS and how universities are responding to increased competition in the market. Locke (2014:88) argued that not only have ranking systems shaped the marketisation of higher education but that universities are now engaging with marketisation as a way of 'surviving, prospering and managing status anxiety in changing and challenging environments'.

2.2.2 The English higher education policy context

The question of how to pay for an expanding higher education sector and how to reform the sector have been key questions for recent governments. The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) (DBIS, 2015) was fully introduced in the academic year 2016-2017 after a trial year where providers were simply required to achieve a satisfactory assessment (see the timeline of the policy context at Appendix A). Preparation for the introduction of the TEF embedded the capture of performance measures in higher education processes and required universities to provide statements which contextualised information about their institutions. Prior to the introduction of the TEF there were several landmarks in the development of UK policy which mark the move towards a marketised university sector in England. The publication of the Browne Review (IRHEFSF, 2010) influenced the Coalition Government's reforms which were set out in the White Paper called 'Higher Education: Students at the heart of the system' (DBIS, 2011). Callender and Scott (2013) provided a detailed account of the post Browne reforms and analysed what these might mean for the sector. Key aspects are discussed below, specifically in relation to pedagogical relationships.

Policy documents can be viewed as carefully negotiated texts, products of varying degrees of collaborative discussion, analysis of research evidence and as rhetoric aimed at convincing the reader of a particular standpoint. There are therefore limitations of drawing on policy documents in isolation to describe the context of a study: like all texts, they are not neutral

documents and, in particular, reflect the influence of generic conventions of policy documents and the espoused ideologies of their authors. The aim here is not to provide a full historical account of government policies but to explore the context in which institutions were operating at the time of this study, a context which is considered as a complex and dynamic environment, rather than a static backdrop. In doing so, topics of conversations circulating in the macro environment will be highlighted, which may potentially be drawn upon by institutions, staff and students during the research study.

The Browne Review (IRHEFSF, 2010) proposed new principles around higher undergraduate fees and a new student contribution system, based on the belief that in the creation of a market would be the catalyst for improvement: 'student choice will drive up quality' (IRHEFSF, 2010:14). The implications of the Browne Review have been extensively considered and although it was not successful in achieving all its aims, its importance has been defined in terms of stimulating the development of the 'managerial' university (Callendar and Scott, 2013). Managerialism or 'new-managerialism' is associated with 'using techniques and structures of management more typical of organisations in the for-profit sector' (Johnson and Deem, 2003: 292). The assumptions of the Browne Review (IRHEFSF, 2010) included the ideas that higher education should drive innovation and economic growth and increase human capital; that competition should lead to efficiencies, with prospective students accessing timely information in order to exercise choice; that new competitors (including profit-making organisations) should enter the field, and that the money should follow the student.

The Browne Review (IRHEFSF, 2010) concluded that in an age of austerity it was difficult to sustain levels of public spending on higher education. A university education should therefore be viewed by students as an investment: 'a degree is a good investment' (IRHEFSF, 2010:5) and the job of a potential student was to weigh up the known costs against the hypothetical returns. The backdrop to the Browne Review (IRHEFSF, 2010) was the aftermath of the financial crisis and the need to cut public spending to reduce the debt levels. Browne offered the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (DBIS) a cut of £3bn, which meant the desired savings target could be met in one go. This was achieved by employing an accounting approach whereby student loans would not count as public expenditure and would not therefore count as debt. This 'fiscal illusion' has been subsequently challenged and overturned (Romei and Giles, 2019). Decisions to effectively withdraw state funding for teaching contrasted starkly with the actions taken in support of the failing banks during the

financial crisis of 2008. There was very strong support amongst academics for state funded higher education. However, there were those who considered that going back to previous times was unthinkable and who highlighted the inevitability of change because the current system was regarded as (financially) unsustainable. The latter point of view was supported by the revelation of the black hole in student funding (HEPI, 2012), estimated at more than one billion pounds per year, although this 'unishambles' was contested by the Minister of Universities and Science (Willetts, 2012). The ideological thrust of the Browne recommendations was in essence accepted by the government. The marketplace was seen as a way of driving up quality and driving down costs through a focus on student choice: 'student choice will drive up quality' (IRHEFSF, 2010:14).

The White Paper, 'Students at the Heart of the System' (2011), published by the Coalition Government, capped the undergraduate home/ EU student fee at £9,000 and established a 'Core and Margin' system to regulate student numbers. The thrust of the paper was to 'put students in the driving seat' (DBIS, 2011:2) and create a competitive market with the triple aims of improving the sustainability of higher education, enhancing the student experience and increasing social mobility. The following extract illustrates one way in which it was anticipated that students would drive the market:

'Students will increasingly use the instant communication tools of the twenty first century such as Twitter and Facebook to share their views on their student experience with their friends, families and the wider world. It will be correspondingly harder for institutions to trade on their past reputations in the present. Better informed students will take their custom to places offering good value for money. In this way, excellent teaching will be placed back at the heart of every student's university experience.' (DBIS, 2011:32)

In other words, students using social media are portrayed as well-informed and influential customers who, without mention of input from university staff, will drive change and restore a perceived deficit in teaching excellence.

From this policy context, themes of choice, competition, investment, employability and social mobility can be discerned and ideas about the student at the centre of university life, driving change. This vision has been strongly contested by some academics. For example, Barnett (2013) provided a detailed critique of how the student is presented in the White Paper (DBIS, 2011). He questioned the assumptions that students wish to be understood as customers and that as much as possible must be made explicit for the student, arguing in favour of

higher education as an 'unfolding process' which cannot be determined in advance (Barnett, 2013:73).

Three agendas for reform were highlighted in the White Paper (DBIS, 2011) and are discussed below: financial sustainability, a better student experience and increasing social mobility.

McGettigan (2013) highlighted the inefficiencies of the contemporary student funding arrangements and pointed out that the proposed arrangements would incur additional costs such as the increased resources needed to be devolved to marketing and recruitment. This view was shared by Brown (2014) who suggested that 'we also need to keep a watch on the increasing amount of resources that universities are committing to marketing and branding' and made a strong case for greater transparency about the uses of student fee income. The discussions highlighted the construction of the student as an important economic unit and the sense that universities would be subject to increasing scrutiny.

The definition of what is meant by a high quality student experience remains contentious. The Browne Review (IRHEFSF, 2010) heralded a diminishing emphasis on the intellectual purpose of universities and a lack of clarity about what constitutes 'success' and 'failure' in this new environment. Reforms meant that potential students were expected to assess a plethora of data on the 'quality' of teaching, staff, support, and facilities as well as learning opportunities: 'institutions must deliver a better student experience; improving teaching, assessment, feedback and preparation for the world of work' (DBIS, 2011:4). For a continuing student it was less clear what would constitute a high quality learning experience and how this should be assessed. The implication of treating the student as a 'consumer' would be that there would be a more transactional arrangement between the student and the university as a 'service provider'. It might also mean that the students as 'consumers' would have influence as users of goods and services and could press for short-term changes from which they might benefit.

The Browne Review (IRHEFSF, 2010) proposed fair access to all those with the talent to benefit from higher education and the White Paper (DBIS, 2011) placed responsibility on institutions for increasing social mobility. However, Holmwood (2011:13) argued that the mechanism of the market was 'set to reproduce and solidify inequalities, rather than dissolve them'. In particular, the danger was that the introduction of differentiated fees would reinforce participation from students with middle-class backgrounds and lower participation

from students with working-class backgrounds. For example, information about the quality of university programmes was more likely to be accessed by those from favoured backgrounds (Brown, 2014).

Have students responded to fee changes in the ways expected? A recent report, written following the period when this research study was conducted, found that UK students surveyed did not appear to be price-sensitive when choosing courses and are mostly not in favour of differentiated fees (HEPI, 2018). An increase in reference to the rankings by students and their families has been noted (Locke *et al.*, 2008). A range of other factors influencing student decision-making have been identified, including social class, views of family and friends (Brooks, 2003) as well as prestige (Baker and Brown, 2007). The complexity is underlined by McManus *et al.* (2017) who devised a new methodology to understand student decision-making and amongst their findings concluded that employment characteristics were twice as important as teaching satisfaction for students choosing institutions. Despite being portrayed as consumers, students seem not to have responded to fee changes in the ways that policymakers expected. Overall, this complexity suggests that it is unwise to construct students narrowly as decision-makers with an economic rationale.

2.2.3 The implications of the policy context

Pedagogical relationships cannot be understood in isolation from developments in government policies, current political pressures and from the overhang of past visions and ideas, even from previous decades. For example, Robbins (1963) recommended a massive expansion of higher education provision to cater for all who had the necessary ability, marking a shift away from institutions serving an elite towards concerns about access. The Dearing Report (1997) argued strongly for lifelong learning, citing Boyer (1990):

‘great teachers create a common ground of intellectual commitment. They stimulate active, not passive learning and encourage students to be critical, creative thinkers, with the capacity to go on learning after their college days are over’. (Boyer, 1990:24)

The student as a lifelong learner continues to be an important construction of the student and is portrayed as being in tension with the discourse of the student as an active consumer (Tomlinson, 2015). In contrast to the idea of lifelong learning, the White Paper (2011) firmly concluded that it would be students as customers at the forefront, driving excellence in teaching:

‘better informed students will take their custom to the places offering good value for money. In this way, excellent teaching will be placed back at the heart of every student’s university experience.’ (DBIS, 2011:32)

In these brief extracts there are important variations in the construction of the student. Also notable in the latter example is the portrayal of institutions, and by implication the staff members, as deficient in the delivery of excellence and under a moral pressure to better respond to student needs. However, it cannot be presumed that the language deployed by policymakers will automatically be directly reflected in conversations in institutions. Staff may deploy competing discourses, for example, from subject disciplines or philosophies of learning and teaching. There is much more to be known about responses to a marketised higher education environment:

‘there is very little clear evidence about the impact of these changes on the quality of student education (something that in itself is worthy of note)’ (Brown, 2014).

Barnett (2011:48) argued optimistically that marketisation ‘might have precisely the effect of heightening the pedagogical relationship for there is now more at stake’. However, in 2013, he concluded that the policies outlined in the White Paper (2011) were liable to lead to an ‘impairment’ of the student experience (Barnett, 2013:86).

2.3 Pedagogical Relationships in higher education

Having discussed the policy context, three main questions are addressed in this section: firstly, what can be understood by the term ‘pedagogical relationships’, how are these relationships described, and what are the implications for the conduct of this research?

2.3.1 Defining pedagogical relationships

The term ‘pedagogy’ refers back to the Greek meaning of pedagogue, referring to a slave paid to walk a child to school (Smith, 2012). From this emerges the contemporary idea of leading and guiding towards learning. There are comparatively few studies on ‘pedagogical relationships’ in higher education compared to the school setting. The term has been discussed by psychologists interested in relationship behaviours, for example, to refer to theories such as self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci and Ryan, 2002) and attachment theory (AT) (Cassidy and Shaver, 2008). Other terms have been deployed to mean something

similar to the pedagogical relationship, including ‘teacher-student relationship’ (Fraser and Walberg, 2005; Wubbels and Brekelmans, 2005; Hagenauer and Volet, 2014), ‘teacher-student interaction’ (Beutel, 2010) or ‘staff-student interaction’ (Richardson and Radloff, 2014). Ideas about pedagogical relationships refer to understandings of child development and this idea is taken up in higher education as referring to the relationship between a mature and a developing person.

Spiecker (1984:208) refers to the pedagogical relationship as distinct from other relationships, and a relationship which is ‘fundamental to making human development possible, and which makes it possible to become a person’. Over thirty years later, in a digital age, pedagogy is still described as being ‘about guiding learning, rather than being left to find your own way’ (Beetham and Sharpe, 2007: xvii). Spiecker’s argument rests on the idea that the pedagogical relationship is one-sided, it is not a relationship based on reciprocity and is experienced differently by each party. At the same time, he suggests the relationship has self-liquidating qualities as it gradually ceases to exist as the developing person matures. A further element which is essential to the relationship is a set of concepts which guide the educator, and which vary according to local and national conditions. Because of the engagement of the educator in this way, pedagogy is described as involving ‘ways of knowing as well as ways of doing’ (Beetham and Sharpe, 2007:2). It is perceived as involving an important dialogue between theory and practice which allows the educator to construct understandings about learning and teaching. This is discussed further in section 2.4 below.

In a higher education context, it may be more appropriate to talk about multiple pedagogical relationships as students are not reliant on one source of guidance. Activities in which such relationships might be important are where there are interactions between staff and students such as lectures and teaching sessions, tutorials, assessments, and also activities beyond the classroom such as online learning, staff meetings with student representatives, personal tutoring and email correspondence. These activities may be considered as separate from the relationships students have directly with the university, its managers and support staff, although the context and culture of the institution is an important backdrop. The boundaries of these academic roles are not always clear, particularly in respect of personal tutoring (McFarlane, 2016). Maintaining a connectedness between staff and students has been highlighted as problematic in a mass education system (Stephen *et al.*, 2008).

2.3.2 Describing pedagogical relationships

In response to the portrayal of the university as an economic engine of society, academics working in the field of higher education research have emphasised the role of universities not solely as creators of private goods but public ones (Marginson, 2011; Nixon 2011). Williams (2014) argued that the 'public good' is being reconceptualised along increasingly individualistic lines, which suggests that the aim of developing pedagogical relationships is to achieve 'success' for the student. It is unclear how far the discourses of policymakers have permeated conversations amongst practising academics in the field and how these discourses might be being reflected in representations of relationships in universities.

Maassen (2014) has argued that arrangements between the state and institutions have been overtaken by a contract which is increasingly based on economic agreements and that there is a need for new interpretations of the social contract with appropriate sets of rules for behaviour and a mutual understanding of obligations to replace what he described as a traditional 'gentlemen's agreement'. The popularity of Student Charters in universities might be seen as an attempt to clarify responsibilities, but Naidoo and Williams (2014) argue that in practice they work to reinforce the idea of the 'student-as-consumer' by regulating student expectations and identities. However, Regan (2012) asserts that there remain important moral role obligations between lecturers and students regardless of the tuition fees arrangements and that these arise from the functions and roles voluntarily undertaken by each party. This research will consider how far there are mutual understandings of obligations and whether they are reflected in interactions between staff and students.

From a policy perspective, a key feature of both the Browne Review (IRHEFSF, 2010) and the White Paper (DBIS: 2011) was that they largely portrayed the student as an empowered individual autonomous decision-maker, rather than as a member of an academic community. This research study will therefore consider the prevalence of individualism or collaboration in contemporary accounts of pedagogical relationships. Concerns about the individualism of the 'student-as-consumer' discourse have been echoed beyond English universities. Accounts of student-staff relationships in higher education from a Swedish study suggest that the 'the vital concept of relationship' is lacking in global educational discourse (Aspelin 2011:10). Academics elsewhere have called for new ideas to counter the individualism. Pearce and Brown (2011) in Australia argued for the recognition of relational pedagogy in the face of universities which they described as servicing the interests of corporate culture and consumer demand. Relational pedagogy is distinguished by its emphasis on inter-human,

personal encounters. They also contended that a relational pedagogy was crucial to the wellbeing of students from under-represented social groups. Thus, counter discourses have aimed to move the attention away from relationships in universities as primarily self-serving economic ones, however, there is disagreement about how far alternative discourses are prevalent or recognised. Naidoo and Jamieson (2005:272-5) observed the 'distortion of pedagogic relations' and the 'erosion' of positive qualities such as trust and risk-taking. They also claimed that 'vulnerable' institutions, such as post-1992 universities, might be more affected than the elite universities, although they contended that these assertions need to be verified by empirical evidence.

Both policymakers and academics have argued, from different perspectives, that staff-student relationships make a difference in universities. According to Richardson and Radloff (2014:613), students and staff should be considered 'allies in learning' and interaction between students and teaching staff is 'a critical element, one that is too-often overlooked'. In a case study examining two cohorts of students attending a post-1992 university in the UK, Groves *et al.*, (2015) identified the quality of student relationships as being the most important factor in encouraging engagement with learning. Hagenauer and Volet (2014) not only suggest that teacher-student relationships might be explored further as preconditions for excellence in teaching and learning in universities, but also argue from a wellbeing perspective for the importance of research in this area because good relationships might be positive for staff as well as students. The authors' overriding conviction is that a good relationship is important for the university as 'it clearly affects students' successful study progress, including factors such as course satisfaction, retention, learning approaches and achievement' (Hagenauer and Volet, 2014:382).

Arguments for researching pedagogical relationships seem to rest on the idea that the frequency and quality of interactions are a precursor to good relationships rather than constitutive of them (Hagenauer and Volet, 2014). Furthermore, good relationships are assumed to promote 'good quality' learning. For example, a quantitative study by Guerrero and Rod (2013) investigated the correlation between staff-student interactions and achievement, in this case between office hours attendance and academic performance, with the authors recommending strategies to encourage engagement with students in office hours. In Australia, research on teacher-student relationships and learning using the Questionnaire on teacher interaction (QTI) also seemed to show an empirical link between teacher-student relationships and student achievement, and especially attitudes (Fraser and

Walberg, 2005). In a school environment, Pearce and Down (2011:483) assert that pedagogical relationships play a pivotal role for students of low socio-economic status and 'whilst positive relationships help students to remain engaged, negative experiences work against continuing participation and engagement'.

Overall, it seems that interest in pedagogical relationships has frequently been related to the potential contribution to successful student performance. Interactions between students and staff have been seen as the observable events or indicators of relationships (for example, classroom interactions, personal tutorials, online discussions). Although performative aspects of relationships have been foregrounded in research, Beutel (2010) also points out that there are links between positive student-teacher relationships and improved social outcomes for students as validated by the OECD (2005). A growing area of economic research is now addressing how far education, including higher education, offers a wide range of benefits such as lowering crime, improving health, and increasing democratic participation (Lochner, 2011).

Alternative perspectives emphasise benefits arising from interactions in communities rather than pedagogical relationships. McFadden and Munns (2002) argue from a sociological perspective that cultural groups are powerful structures, particularly for disengaged learners who remain resistant to learning opportunities due to their affinity to their peer groups. Another alternative perspective is a communities of practice approach (Wenger, 1998) which views learning not as an individual activity but as a practice happening in a social context. However, staff and students in higher education might not necessarily portray themselves as communities, even if developing a 'communities of practice' approach might be a helpful approach to encourage the sharing of knowledge. Therefore, this doctoral research study does not make assumptions about the existence of communities in universities. It focuses on how students talk about their learning relationships with staff, but it will also be attentive to alternative ways students talk about their learning and how they describe themselves, for example, as belonging to peer groups or subject groups.

The extent to which academics or students from certain subject disciplines might draw on different discourses was considered by Lomas (2007), who tentatively concluded, based on a small study, that business and management academics might be influenced by the regular discussion of markets and customer needs and that lecturers with a professional healthcare background such as dentistry and nursing would have a similar customer-orientation. It could

be argued that lecturers who have worked in multiple industry sectors or have studied for a teaching qualification are likely to have encountered discourses drawing on differing philosophies of education depending on their individual experiences and knowledge. Students, similarly, might be influenced by other factors such as family and background or culture, which might emerge in their descriptions of the student and the university. As mentioned in the earlier discussion of policy documents, different discourses may be drawn upon in response to the economic and political climate.

This section has discussed examples of how pedagogical relationships have been described, for example, as performative, as moral and social interactions, as encounters occurring within a subject discipline, or as vehicles for learning and teaching. There is evidence in the academic literature of a willingness to resist the idea of the student as just an economic unit in a global market. The moral and social aspects of relationships and associated obligations have also been addressed (Regan, 2012) as well as alternative structures such as communities of practice.

2.4 Pedagogical relationships and discourses of learning and teaching

Having defined and described pedagogical relationships, this section explores literature about discourses of learning and teaching which might potentially be drawn on by participants in the study. The term 'discourse' needs some explanation at this point and is also discussed further in Chapter Three, The Research Approach. From a social constructionist perspective, the purpose of a discourse is for a speaker to construct a credible position and thus the spoken words can be regarded as a performance (see Burr, 2013: 132-135). For example, this might include justifying a decision, accounting for success or failure, or constructing oneself as a particular sort of person, such as an experienced teaching professional or a keen student.

Exploring discourse is not about explaining inner motivations or attitudes of individuals, as 'such essences have no place in a social constructionist understanding of the person' (Burr, 2013:65). A person such as a lecturer or student is considered as working within specific rules and conventions in a local environment and as such there are limitations as to what can be said in different environments. Mann (2001) described the contemporary student as an estranged individual, as alienated by culture and practices, both 'from the subject and process of study itself' (Mann, 2001:7). This study adds to the picture, aiming to better

understand pedagogical relationships in context, by also considering students' autonomy and self-positioning and the changing ways in which they talk with others about their learning experiences.

The concept of big 'D' and small 'd' discourses (Gee, 2015) is useful at this point in explaining that all discourses emerge from somewhere and represent strands of conversations which emerged in a previous historical context and will continue into the future, whilst also setting the context for smaller conversations amongst participants:

'The notion of "Big 'D' Discourse" ("Discourse" spelled with a capital "D") is meant to capture the ways in which people enact and recognize socially and historically significant identities or "kinds of people" through well-integrated combinations of language, actions, interactions, objects, tools, technologies, beliefs, and values. The notion stresses how "discourse" (language in use among people) is always also a "conversation" among different historically formed Discourses (that is, a "conversation" among different socially and historically significant kinds of people or social groups). The notion of "Big 'D' Discourse" sets a larger context for the analysis of "discourse" (with a little "d"), that is, the analysis of language in use'. (Gee, 2015)

In terms of this section of the chapter, the aim is to identify potential "Big 'D' Discourses", discourses relevant to learning and teaching relationships which might be circulating in English higher education institutions. Sections 2.4 and 2.5 will address smaller stretches of language in use, or 'small d discourses', by examining metaphors.

There has been an increasing emphasis on pedagogy in higher education as evidenced by the development of a standards framework for teaching in higher education in 2006, which was updated and became known as the 'UK Professional Standards Framework' (HEA, 2011). There has been a growing expectation that lecturers will have engaged in pedagogic development and therefore there is likely to be a growing awareness and discussion amongst staff about educational pedagogy. For example, 'theories' or 'models' of learning and teaching are typically presented to new teaching staff during their academic development at higher education institutions as ways of understanding how students learn. Typically, an introduction to different theories of learning would be included in a learning and teaching course for staff new to higher education and these concepts therefore may become part of the discourses of learning and teaching. From a social constructionist perspective, 'knowledges' about higher education represent particular versions of reality that have been given the 'stamp of truth' at a particular time (Burr, 2003:68) and are deployed to describe

current or desired practices in higher education by institutions, staff and students. For example, pedagogies of 'partnership' could function to resist prevailing consumerist discourses by adopting language which works to change the pedagogical relationship through adjusting the power imbalance between staff and students.

The reasons why students and staff deploy particular ways of talking are complex. Gee (2015) argues that discourses are deployed by individuals in order to be recognised as a certain type of person in a particular context. For example, in the doctoral study being an 'independent learner' was described by some students as an identity prized by their former schools and associated with being a successful student in higher education, whereas being a 'critical thinker' was rarely mentioned by students but more frequently deployed by staff. 'Critical thinking' has associations with a higher order of thinking as exemplified by the top levels of Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom, 1956), a model still referenced by staff training to be teachers in higher education. Staff might deploy terms such as 'critical thinking' or 'Bloom's taxonomy' in a bid to be recognised as a knowledgeable teacher in higher education.

Trowler (2001) explored the question of how far academics are 'captured' by contemporary discourses. The author concluded there is 'discursive struggle' or 'accommodation' which characterises the process (p. 196). There are implications here for the assumptions made when analysing how staff and students deploy discourses. The positions adopted by speakers in conversations can better be considered to be multiple, complex and transient, rather than fixed, positions.

There are many discourses available to be drawn upon by staff and students, depending on their experiences and background. It is unclear how far these discourses are strongly adopted or promoted by institutions, how far discourses of learning and teaching are drawn on by staff in practice, or indeed how far students may be aware, if at all, of differing philosophies of learning and teaching. Staff, similarly, may be unaware of the power of discourses they deploy. For example, Carless (2006:221) argues that discourses can be a means by which tutors wittingly or unwittingly exert power over students.

The language deployed by academics might be influenced by their environment as well as their pedagogical principles. Similarly, representatives of institutions may be promoting and reworking particular forms of pedagogical relationships and discrediting others, and are thus making interventions that may be perceived as political by representing relationships in a

particular way. For example, Macfarlane (2016:115) argues that adopting the slogan of ‘student-centered education’ intentionally portrays students as units of achievement:

‘the idea of student-centered has been adapted and distorted in serving organizational objectives that are focused on efficiency and effectiveness to meet government-funded performance targets’ (Macfarlane, 2016:115).

It also functions at the same time to overshadow other potential forms of relationships, for example, those based on independent learning.

In the next section I present six discourses which are provided as examples of discourses that are relevant to the discussion of pedagogical relationships. This cannot represent an exhaustive overview of all discourses circulating in the sector. The examples selected recurred in the review of higher education literature and feature in the analysis and discussions in the later chapters of this thesis.

2.4.1 ‘Transformation’

‘Transformative learning’ constructs adult learners as capable of learning how to learn, understanding their experiences and making sense of them through critical reflection in order to become more autonomous thinkers. The idea of the ‘disorienting dilemma’ is key to understanding this transformation process as a student learns to negotiate ‘his or her own values, meanings and purposes rather than to uncritically act on those of others’ (Mezirow, 1991:11).

Howie and Bagnall (2013) compare the ‘Surface/Deep approach’ theories which offer two metaphors – the ‘deep learner’ and the ‘transformative learner’ as exemplified by the Biggs theory of ‘Constructive Alignment’ (Biggs, 2003), with the transformation approach of Mezirow (1991) in relation to adult learners. The transformation theory is orientated towards the staff member as facilitating self-development in the student whereas the Surface/Deep theory of learning is orientated towards the staff member as a designer of pedagogical activities. In both theories knowledge and meaning are seen as privately constructed and the position of the learner at the heart of learning is as an ‘autonomous, largely self-directed individual’ (p. 356). Both theories also conceptualise the teacher as potentially playing a significant role in ‘promoting, fostering or encouraging a person’s learning’ (p.357).

The authors argued that, despite their popularity, ‘neither theory has generated telling research or critique to establish its validity’ (Howie and Bagnall, 2013:361). However, historically they form part of the cultural influences on the context of higher education and permeate its discourses. For example, Ashwin *et al.* (2013) contrast a transformation-oriented discourse with a market-oriented discourse in a review of discourses in a set of policy documents.

The idea of a learner as necessarily involved in the negotiation of obstacles and on a difficult path, but supported by others, contrasts with a market-oriented discourse which focuses on the staff member creating a standardised, unproblematic ‘high quality’ student experience. By removing pedagogical relationships from the picture, ‘transformation’ can be deployed as a rhetorical device whereby institutions construct themselves as creators and guarantors of student success. Cribb and Gewirtz (2013) warn that with a focus on impression management rather than a strong social and ethical purpose what remains is the ‘hollowed out’ university which can be engineered for any purpose.

2.4.2 ‘Independent learning’

Within policy and practice in UK higher education, independent learning has been constructed as valuable for both the individual and society (Leathwood, 2006) as students develop skills which will benefit them in their studies and in their future careers. The qualities of the ‘independent learner’ are strongly associated with the development or acquisition of positive graduate attributes (QAA Scotland, 2011). More recently, government policy documents have undermined the idea of independent learning as a poor substitute for face to face teaching (Hockings *et al.*, 2018). Meanwhile, arguments have been made for students to have more freedom to learn as autonomous adults and for more emphasis to be placed on the importance of independent learning (Macfarlane 2015, Macfarlane 2016). Regardless of the terminology, the idea of student autonomy here contrasts with policy discourses which portray the student as vulnerable. In a study of English policy documents, Brooks (2017) identified constructions of the student which highlighted their vulnerability, emphasising their status as ‘thwarted consumers’, and concluded that such constructions functioned politically to legitimise contemporary reforms and excuse previous failed government policies.

2.4.3 'Employability'

The debate amongst academics surrounding student employability is a continuing one. Holmes (2001) described employability as a process where students learn to understand and manage their graduate identities. Harvey and Morey (2002) also portrayed employability as a process, a process of development which encompasses opportunities for student engagement in a wide range of extra-curricular activities with an emphasis on opportunities for reflection on learning. In contrast, from a critical management perspective, Boden and Nedeva (2010:49) described employability as a 'performative function of universities, shaped and directed by the state' which potentially changes the pedagogical relationship by making lecturers accountable for student performance and narrowing students' perspectives on learning.

The increasing burden on students in recent years, a burden of individual expenditure on higher education and debt, may have made it more likely for students to frame their time at university as an economic 'investment' with an expectation of improved employability. With increasing numbers of graduates and a competitive job market, there are increasing perceptions that a degree is not enough (Tomlinson, 2008) and that students need to actively manage their future careers through discourses of 'self-responsibilisation' (Tomlinson 2007, 2012). Furthermore, Tomlinson (2012:415) argued that students look to higher education as a 'literal investment' to raise their 'absolute level of employability' in a competitive market. It might be assumed that discourses of employability undermine other discourses, particularly discourses of lifelong learning. However, further research by Tomlinson (2012) has indicated that graduates are still deploying discourses of lifelong learning. This co-existence is accounted for by suggesting that students may be approaching the management of their careers as a long-term learning project.

2.4.4 'Research-based learning'

Healey and Jenkins (2009) presented a conceptual framework for undergraduate research and inquiry, which ideally positioned students as researchers actively involved in a research community and mirroring the activities of staff conducting disciplinary research. Analysis showed students typically experiencing research in a combination of four ways (research-tutored, research-based, research-led, research-oriented) depending on their level of participation and the emphasis on either gaining knowledge of research content or the involvement in the processes of research. Positioning the student as researcher may be

helpful to universities at a time when claims of institutional excellence are being based on the connections between research and learning and teaching. Initiatives to mainstream undergraduate research have been conducted not only in research-intensive but in non-research intensive universities (Gresty and Edwards-Jones, 2012). However, there is a lack of clarity about the relationship between staff and student researchers and their practices and what is meant in practice by research-led teaching (Zamorski, 2002). Furthermore, discourses around research-based education have been deployed as part of a claim for transformation of the student through the development of critical thinking skills. Claims made by institutions about future benefits and transferability can be wide-ranging. However, Hughes (2019) has questioned the unthinking assumptions about such transformational claims.

2.4.5 'Student engagement'

Discourses of 'student engagement' can describe the relationships between staff and students, but can also describe wide-ranging aspects of relationships with the institution., Trowler (2010) presents a substantial review of literature on student engagement and, as highlighted in the introduction to the thesis, argued that the term 'engagement' in the UK has traditionally focused on student feedback, student representation and student approaches to learning. This is distinct from the wider definition in the USA where the literature is concerned with the use of resources to 'optimise the student experience and enhance the learning outcomes and development of students and performance, and the reputation of the institution' (Trowler, 2010:3). More recently, Gourlay (2015) has critiqued narrow definitions of student engagement and argues for the centrality of texts and for taking a socio-material approach. Kahu (2013:758) identifies a typology of four different approaches to 'student engagement':

'the behavioural perspective, which foregrounds student behaviour and institutional practice; the psychological perspective, which clearly defines engagement as an individual psycho-social process; the socio-cultural perspective, which highlights the critical role of the socio-political context; and, finally, the holistic perspective, which takes a broader view of engagement'.

Despite its common usage, a wide range of understandings are evoked by the discourse of 'student engagement'. Each of these perspectives would require a different research approach and a single study is unlikely to combine all these four perspectives. However, reflecting on the above categorisation of approaches highlights the alternative frameworks within which pedagogical relationships may be described. This doctoral study does not focus

on behavioural, psychological or emotional perspectives when considering pedagogical relationships but does refer to wider political and social debates.

2.4.6 'Partnership'

Attempts to reframe the pedagogical relationship in higher education are evident through the development of new collaborative metaphors for the student such as 'partners', 'citizens', even 'allies' in learning (Richardson and Radloff, 2014). This changes the power balance of the relationship from that of unequal partners - 'carer and child' - to a more equal relationship, one between adults. Working as 'allies' can only be possible if the pedagogical knowledge is shared between teacher and student. For example, where students work on projects as partners there would need to be a sharing of the philosophy of 'students as partners' at the outset. In contrast, 'independent learning', for example, rests to some extent on the notion of distance from those providing guidance. The idea of 'student as partner' is discussed further in section 2.5 below. This doctoral study will consider how discourses of 'partnership' function, for example, as rhetoric deployed to enhance the attractiveness of institutions to students or as language which signifies changes in the underlying ethos of universities towards collaborative working.

In summary, the discourses of 'transformative' and 'deep' learning examined emphasised an individualist perspective which considers teachers and students as bounded, autonomous and rational-thinking beings who are responsible to themselves and which downplay the relational aspects of educational practices. The discourse of 'employability' also attends to the career concerns of individual students. Other discourses attempt to rebalance teacher-student relationships to put the student-teacher relationships on a more equal footing, for example, developing special relationships such as 'partnerships' or developing research communities. Discourses of 'student engagement', which focus on performativity, contrast with ideas of lifelong learning. Attempts to provide 'high quality' education and improved 'engagement' may have the unintended consequences of depersonalising relationships, for example, through the routinisation and standardisation of the learning environment and the setting of minimum service levels. Macfarlane (2015) critiques student performativity, which functions to evidence the footprint of engagement, as a focus on the mechanics of interactions performed in the public sphere rather than human development in the private sphere. Barnett (2011) argues that, in contrast to this individualism, pedagogy for higher education needs to take into account a focus on human qualities and dispositions. In other words, the development of pedagogical relationships is about becoming a human being.

Having presented examples of discourses, the next section discusses the metaphor of the 'student-as-consumer', which is prominent in the higher education literature, in order to reveal insights into the constructions of the student and to provide further insights into contemporary discourses which were circulating at the time of the study.

2.5 The 'Student-as-Consumer' Metaphor

2.5.1 Origin of the metaphor

Consumerism is often quite loosely applied in relation to higher education but can be defined as 'the central tenet of the free market in which business success depends almost entirely on satisfying customer needs and exceeding their expectations' (Maringe, 2010: 142). It is associated with transactions or financial exchanges and draws on associations from the worlds of business and services marketing, although often in an unsophisticated way (Scott, 1999). Although the term moved into more prominent everyday usage with the introduction of student fees in UK universities, the discussion of the metaphor long predates this and connects with a broad political discussion which had been ongoing in the United States (McMillan and Cheney, 1996) and Australia (Scott, 1999). The increasing deployment of the metaphor may be the result of a large number of factors, including the massification of higher education in response to government policy, the sharper focus of the media on university performance, more active marketing by universities themselves and closer involvement of parents in their children's selection of universities. Students themselves have become more aware of the burden of debt that they are taking on as the main responsibility for funding has shifted towards individuals (McCulloch, 2009). However, when used metaphorically in relation to students, the metaphor encompasses a broader range of associations including customer service and consumer rights. Williams (2013) argued that it is not just about student fees:

'if university tuition fees were ended tomorrow, the assumptions that educational success is a right irrespective of intellectual endeavour, and that the purpose of a degree is to make people employable, would remain' (p.7).

The idea of the 'student-as-consumer' is not new and rights can be traced back to Bologna in mediaeval times when masters charged what the market would bear and collected their own fees (Rudy, 1984).

McCulloch (2009:171) views the 'student-as-consumer' metaphor as partial and 'not appropriate to the realities of contemporary higher education', whereas Ng and Forbes (2009) argue from a marketing perspective that the student behaves like a consumer of an educational experience that is delivered by the institution. Others suggest that there have also been changes in universities resulting from the shift towards the acceptance of the 'student-as-consumer' metaphor. These changes include expectations of improvements in quality and greater access to staff by students (Emery *et al.*, 2001) as well as improvements in the efficiency of processes in universities (Scott, 1999). McCulloch (2009) further argues that the market paradigm has given a new perspective from which universities can be examined, managed and strategically developed, and has helped improve some aspects of the student experience. These positive benefits mainly relate to the institution by:

- encouraging universities to respond to changing social/cultural environments
- encouraging universities to maintain financial stability
- encouraging universities to recognise the reality that, for many students, study represents an investment from which the desired pay-off is a well-paid job
- contributing to the university's long-standing role in developing the student's confidence and enabling them to find an authoritative voice. (McCulloch, 2009:173)

2.5.2 Limitations of the 'student-as-consumer' metaphor

Metaphors, like theories, attempt to understand one experience in terms of another.

Metaphors enable the connection of information about a familiar concept to another familiar concept, leading to a new understanding where the process of comparison between the two concepts acts as generators for new meaning. (Jensen, 2006:6)

Nordensvard (2011:158) considers that, if dominant, they could potentially limit thinking – the adoption of one metaphor is the exclusion of another, a sort of 'prison of mind'. For example, the idea of the 'student-as-consumer' could eclipse other ideas about the student, such as the student as a 'lifelong learner'. This highlights an issue that metaphors are not only useful and important in clarifying thinking but may have consequences for practices if they are accepted as a valid way of thinking about the world.

The notion of 'student-as-consumer' tends to be seen as problematic in a number of ways. In the literature these often relate to a mismatch between academics' understandings of the meaning of education and the processes through which students engage with education in

universities. Critics of the metaphor address three main areas: the role and concept of a university, the role of a student and the effect on learning and teaching.

Firstly, the concept of the 'consumer' is multi-faceted and deployed as an 'umbrella' term, encompassing, for example, the role of 'customer' in relation to 'service provider', ideas of consumer rights and notions of value for money. It draws on the language of commerce and attempts to transfer or incorporate these ideas directly into the world of education. Academics contend that the resulting metaphor fails to adequately describe both the student's role and the university's mission (McCullogh, 2009). For example, students may not actually be in a position to make well-informed choices about their education as they are likely to have insufficient knowledge: 'customers typically assess value by relating price to perceived service. Most students do not have the proper frame of reference with which to do this' (Bay and Daniel, 2001:3).

Naidoo *et al.* (2011) further claim that the marketing model upon which the metaphor is based assumes a product-driven rather than a service-driven culture, and is based on an approach which is outdated:

'many higher-education institutions have adopted an older style consumer model based on the production of goods rather than services. This framework when combined with rising instrumental approaches to higher education on the part of students has negative and unintended consequences for student learning'. (Naidoo *et al.*, 2011:1150)

The metaphor foregrounds the transactional nature of the relationship between the student and the institution or its representatives, tending to characterise the relationship as one consisting of customer/service provider. As discussed earlier in the chapter, this foregrounds the economic transaction at the expense of the learning experience and does not emphasise the role of the student in their own education. It also portrays education as an individualistic pursuit rather than as contributing to a community.

Even if this metaphor is helpful in drawing attention to shifting aspects of the higher education landscape, a metaphor is limited in timeframe and, in terms of the context it aims to describe, metaphors are inevitably updated as situations change. Rather than reflecting a permanent state of being, metaphors for the student are constructed temporarily according to changing circumstances: 'we do not claim here, for example, that students *are* customers

but, rather, that they *can* be customers' (Woodall *et al.*, 2014:51). To portray all students as a homogenous entity is to underestimate their diversity. However, this narrowness is both a defining feature and a limitation associated with all metaphors.

2.5.3 Implications for learning and teaching

Molesworth, Nixon and Scullion (2009) assert that the consumer metaphor supports the notion that education is about 'having' a degree rather than 'becoming' a learner. The passivity inherent in the metaphor is disliked by authors such as Barnett (2011:44) who suggests 'the student has to educate herself'. Halbesleben *et al.*, (2003) also highlight that lecturers do not simply cause education to happen. As well as being a facilitator, the lecturer as assessor, examiner or programme leader also has an evaluative role which complicates the dynamics of the educational relationship.

Embedded within criticisms of the metaphor is frequently an assumption that the University's historic mission has somehow been disrupted and that education is no longer about transformation of the individual but about employability, preparing the student 'for a life of consumption by obtaining a well-paid job' (Molesworth *et al.*, 2009:278). There may be a false certainty in the idea that students are denied transformation into scholars in favour of becoming consumers. A student might seek a degree qualification, wish to gain employability skills whilst also wanting to become a critical thinker and becoming a graduate. The problem here is that a university experience is necessarily individual and often does not fit the stereotypical uniform view of the student and their university experience as suggested by a single metaphor. Furthermore, according to Bay and Daniel (2001), the adoption by institutions of a narrow metaphor has resulted in a short term focus on customer satisfaction at the expense of longer term goals and encouraging 'deep learning'. Taking this a step further, Bailey (2000:353) assumes that the power of the metaphor is such that a whole generation in American universities has shifted its behaviour, resulting in the demand for a new metaphor:

'classes become popularity contests. Pedagogy becomes entertainment. Student desires drive programs. Grade inflation runs rampant. Professors become subservient to their customers. And these are but a few of the many problems and costs associated with acceptance of the student-as-customer perspective' (Bailey, 2000:353).

McCulloch (2009:177) summarises the limitations of the consumer metaphor as follows:

- (a) overemphasises one aspect of the student's role and of the university's mission
- (b) suggests undue distance between the student and the educational process, thereby de-emphasising the student's role in learning
- (c) encourages passivity on the part of the student
- (d) fails to encourage deep learning
- (e) implies in the student a level of knowledge and information, and the possession of tools to use them, that are unlikely to be present
- (f) serves to deprofessionalise the academic role and encourage the 'entertainment' model of teaching
- (g) compartmentalises the educational experience as 'product' rather than 'process'
- (h) reinforces individualism and competition at the expense of community.

In summary, the metaphor is a sophisticated construct, but is deceptively simple and always open to criticism for what it does not reveal. Metaphors for the student have been discussed in the literature by academics as a means to generalise about the state of higher education and devote less time to examining the circumstances behind this. To rely on the analysis of metaphor alone is a limited approach unless it takes into account the context in which the metaphor is deployed and the particular circumstances of the speaker. In relation to this doctoral study there is also a need to consider absences, or how students are not described in a particular context, as well as how the metaphors are deployed. A number of alternatives are discussed below.

2.6 'Students-as-partners' and additional metaphors

The 'student-as-consumer' is just one of a wide range of metaphors which have been used to describe students. These include student as 'customer' and 'client' (Bailey, 2000), 'co-producer', 'apprentice', 'pawn' (Tight, 2013), 'apprentice academic' (van der Velden, 2012), student as 'product' (Mark, 2013), 'co-creator of value' (Kalafatis and Ledden, 2013) and student as 'partner' (Taylor and Wilding, 2009).

Whilst some writers suggest adjustments to the 'student-as-consumer' metaphor, other authors have sought to replace the metaphor. For example, Bay and Daniel (2001) suggest that students might be seen as 'collaborative partners', thereby creating a sense of mutuality and greater value for both student and lecturer. As well as being important for describing the position of a student, the choice of metaphor can reflect the educational philosophy or a position towards recent policy drawn on by the speaker. The following section discusses four examples ('client', 'investor', 'explorer' and 'partner') which highlight alternatives or

additions to the 'student-as-consumer' metaphor, and discusses the implications for pedagogical relationships.

'Client'

A 'client' relationship places special emphasis on the input of the 'client' into the learning process as an 'active service user' (Tomlinson, 2014) with the student taking pleasure in the attention, and anticipating a certain standard of service, and a good lecturer being one who might delight the customer. This represents a reframing of the original consumer metaphor with new customer-service oriented connotations. It shares some of the same components – the undertaking of a transaction, the passivity of the student role as a learner and an active concern for consumer rights.

Adopting the 'client' metaphor might lead to generally 'paying more attention to students' existing skills and interests' (Tight, 2013:303) and an institution might offer a wide range of curriculum options and flexibility within timetabling and tutoring arrangements. This might create resource issues in a mass higher education system following a period of economic austerity, particularly with regards to providing individual face-to-face support such as personal tutoring.

The possible implications for learning and teaching relationship of a 'client' approach would be the foregrounding of student views about matters such as the organisation of the curriculum and timetable and the expectation that assessment should be tailored to the specific needs of students. Disappointment at the levels of service could lead to a lecturer being perceived as a 'faulty provider', thereby resulting in the breakdown of the pedagogical relationship (Tomlinson, 2013:127).

'Investor'

In adopting an 'investor' metaphor, the uncomfortable idea of being a debtor is side-lined. The investment is described not only in monetary terms, but in terms of personal commitment with the expectation of self-development. It thereby justifies the payment of fees by focusing on the potential future benefits such as a well-paid job and by a distancing from alternative unattractive scenarios such as being out of work. The 'investor' metaphor moves away from the idea of the consumerist transaction which provides immediate gratification and instead there is an expectation of a longer term gain. Research by Tomlinson

(2014) concluded that students are more comfortable with 'investment' metaphors than 'consumer' ones. They allow the co-existence of softer values such as personal development alongside more utilitarian values.

The implications for learning and teaching of seeing students as 'investors' might be to focus less on building knowledge and more focus on skills development, personal development and practical applications of knowledge which are perceived to be beneficial at some point in the future.

'Explorer'

Although the student as 'explorer' is not a common student metaphor in the UK literature, in a study by Emerson and Mansvelt (2014) in New Zealand where lecturers suggested alternatives to the consumer metaphor, many focused on the student as pro-active: 'we should encourage our students to be adventurous explorers' (p.477). The metaphor does overlap with the idea of the student as 'independent learner', which is frequently an expectation of students in higher education, entailing notions of personal responsibility and learner autonomy, where students are pro-active 'explorers' of their subjects. However, the discourse of the 'independent learner' tends to emphasise self-reliance and frown upon individuals seeking guidance and support: 'dependence is individualised and becomes an individual failing' (Leathwood, 2006:616).

The implications for the pedagogical relationship are that tutors would act as guides and mentors: 'they are seekers, explorers. We are mediators, mentors, guides' (Emerson and Mansvelt, 2014:477).

Also on an outdoor theme, Huxham *et al.* (2015) chose the 'mountaineering' metaphor, comparing the uncertainty and inherent risk involved in a climb with that of the learning journey and contrasting this with the outcome-driven notion of constructive alignment (Biggs, 2003) which is underpinned by the engineering metaphor. The study by Leathwood (2006) conducted in a post-1992 university problematises the idea of the 'independent learner', arguing that student need for support varies with some students articulating support as a right, whilst others seeing support as a transitory need. However, the 'student-as-adventurer' metaphors assume a fluctuating level of student guidance that does not fit well with institutions who are planning learning and teaching according to tightly structured frameworks of provision and have limited levels of support available.

‘Partner’

Students working alongside staff in a collaborative fashion has been a popular idea amongst academics (Clayson and Hayley 2005, Tomlinson 2014). This contrasts sharply with the individualism of the ‘consumer’ metaphor. Clayson and Hayley (2005) refer to a ‘partnership’ model which includes a broad range of stakeholders including peers, parents, alumni and industry representatives. This wider perspective contrasts with the more individualistic negative aspects associated with a ‘consumer’ model, in particular the suggestion of a short-term need for gratification. Dickerson *et al.* (2016) draw attention to the potential of staff-student partnerships with undergraduates to develop pedagogic practice.

Metaphors of ‘partnership’ which attempt to adjust or equalise pedagogical relationships, and which are proposed in the higher education literature as a counter to the marketised environment, may not necessarily be embraced by students who can lack the confidence and the opportunities to engage with staff in this way. Additionally, the role of staff as assessors sets a distance between them which might change the nature of those relationships. For example, students may be unwilling to give honest feedback to lecturers as they fear it might adversely affect the relationship between themselves and the tutor, or affect the grade awarded.

In terms of learning and teaching, a ‘partnership’ approach depends on a degree of faculty consensus about the conceptual framework within which staff and students work together. Where institutions are driven by instrumentalist views of higher education, staff may be working in tension with policies that they may not condone (Smith, 2016). Given academics’ diverse interests and perspectives and students’ different concepts and experiences of learning, ‘partnership’ may be an ambitious vision, unless there is a strong institutional strategy, such as that based around ‘student-as-producer’ (Neary and Winn, 2009). However, ‘partnership’ working, if it retains an emergent quality, remains a positive contrast to the imposed, institutional-driven change which has become associated with a ‘consumer’ model.

2.7 Rationale and research questions

In the above sections I have considered the policy context as a shifting landscape in an increasingly marketised environment. I have also considered how pedagogical relationships are defined and described in higher education and have examined examples of contemporary

discourses and metaphors. I will now consider the implications for my research and identify the research questions.

This thesis is, in part, a response to key literature in the field which has provoked my thinking. Tomlinson (2015) has pointed out the ambivalence of student attitudes towards 'consumerism' in higher education and Nixon *et al.* (2018) have taken a psycho-analytical approach to the idea of the 'student-as-consumer', portraying the student as a majestic and narcissistic figure: 'her majesty the student'. Rather than looking for consistent attitudes or mental states, I will analyse the contradictions in student and staff talk. Little is known about the range and weight of competing discourses deployed in practice in higher education and the interconnectedness of the macro and micro environment, particularly with regards to learning and teaching:

The first tendency is for in-depth studies of student learning to be conducted in isolation from the macro context, and the second is to focus on the structural conditions and social effects of higher education while relegating academic practices to the proverbial black box. (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005:269)

I will explore, for example, how discourses are deployed, and, for example, how students are constructed in practice, whether, for example, as autonomous or 'alienated' (Mann, 2001), as empowered or 'vulnerable' consumers (Brooks, 2017).

The research questions are as follows:

RQ1 How do students construct themselves through their talk?

RQ2 Do higher education staff and students draw on 'student-as-consumer' discourse in their interactions and in accounts of learning and teaching practices? If so, how?

RQ3 What additional discourses are available for describing and accounting for the pedagogical relationships, and how are they deployed?

In order to study pedagogical relationships, I will include a focus on representing the text of staff-student interactions and gain insights into the practices in which staff, students and

institutions are engaging. This contrasts with Murphy and Brown (2012) who take account of inner emotions and feelings in student-staff relationships. In social constructionist approaches, language is not assumed to be a transparent window into the inner person. The research will examine conceptions of the student (RQ1), which in a social constructionist epistemology are seen as dynamic constructs, notably the 'student-as-consumer' which emphasises the transactional nature of learning. This approach, focusing on accounts of learning and teaching practices (RQ2), may indicate different discourses which are being drawn upon by staff in universities to inform their practices. Rather than students and staff consistently drawing on any one single framework, a variety of resources may be being drawn upon at different times depending on the context (RQ3). Social constructionist approaches stress the performative nature of language and talk and regard the aim of such performances as complex but 'primarily one of accounting for our conduct within a moral framework' (Burr, 2003:135).

The next chapter, Chapter Three, the Research Approach, further discusses the strengths and limitations of adopting a social constructionist research approach and the critical analysis of discourse through the examination of text.

Chapter Three: The Research Approach

3.1 Introduction

Following on from the Review of Literature in Chapter Two and the identification of the research questions, I describe in this chapter the research approach and methods chosen for this study. The chapter starts with a description of the philosophical approach underpinning the study. I explain and justify the decisions that were taken about the research design. The design was influenced by two important decisions: first, to adopt a social constructionist philosophy (Burr, 2003) and second, to adopt a critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach (Parker, 2013). Gee's (2015) notion of "small-d" and "Big-D" discourses and Parker's (1992) advice on discovering discourses provided the theoretical basis for the analysis of discourses. I explain these aspects in turn below and where I locate myself in the research.

The chapter then continues with an explanation and justification of the qualitative methods which have been selected to best answer the research questions. In doing so, I draw on my experiences of conducting the research, highlighting the decisions made. I aim to show rigour in the research not only by demonstrating a systematic approach and the steps taken, but by acknowledging changes in direction and adjustments made. Insights from the pilot study I conducted in 2015 contributed to the research design through the evaluation of methods and techniques and testing of research instruments. I will show how ethical issues have been considered before discussing the three qualitative methods used: semi-structured interviews, unstructured observations of student-staff meetings and documentary analysis. The chapter finishes with discussing how the quality of the research will be evaluated.

3.2 The conceptual lens - a social constructionist approach

In approaching this study, I was influenced by a social constructionist perspective (Burr, 2013) and this had important and far-reaching implications for the research design as well as methods of data collection and analysis techniques. The approach developed from thinking about the assumptions behind the research topic, namely that exploring the idea of the 'student-as-consumer' was not about whether students behave like consumers, but about considering how students construct their identities and experiences differently at different times. For example, within the same conversation a student may portray themselves as *both* a 'paying customer' and an 'engaged learner'. In acknowledging differences in ways of talking

and the possibility of multiple realities I questioned realist approaches and excluded methods which sought primarily to quantify attitudes and behaviours. In taking a relativist view, social constructionism acknowledges that language generates different representations of the world. In terms of this study, a realist approach would be more interested in how terms such as the 'student-as-consumer' have come to be fixed or dominant, whereas a relativist approach explores how constructions of the student might be different in different contexts.

There are different lenses through which social constructionist writers have focused their views. Gergen (1985) distinguishes between social construction as a metatheory, a general orientation to life, and social construction as a specific set of constructed ideas and practices. As a metatheory it aims to provide an alternative to the 'positivist-empiricist philosophy of science' (Hibberd, 2005:1). It questions the idea that knowledge can be gained directly from unbiased observation of the world. On a secondary level, it focuses on language and social interaction and contrasts with mainstream psychology which might traditionally focus more on behaviour and attitudes. A focus on language and social interaction has an important impact on the type of questions it is possible to ask. Burr (2003:2-5) describes a set of four key principles underlying a social constructionist approach which I explain below in relation to this study.

The first principle is a 'critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge'. The study problematizes the notion of the 'student-as-consumer' and its unquestioned position as the dominant metaphor for the contemporary student of higher education. The second principle of 'historical and cultural specificity' indicates that any knowledge gained from the study is necessarily bound in time to the current context and therefore necessarily limits the potential ability of the research to describe and understand practices elsewhere. Developing an all-encompassing universal theory was not the aim of this study. This would be impossible within the social-constructionist approach where there are perceived to be multiple truths arising from the social interactions which are being concurrently created. For example, interviews are regarded as conversational interactions rather than as a research instrument designed to reveal a set of opinions or beliefs. From a social-constructionist perspective, conclusions drawn from research can necessarily only be regarded as one view of the world that is being put forward. This has implications for the kind of conclusions that can be drawn from this study.

The third principle of 'knowledge sustained by social processes' points to language as a pre-condition for thought in that concepts and categories are acquired through social interaction. It follows from this principle that the use of language is seen to have practical consequences and is not just a vehicle for the expression of emotions. Research questions were worded therefore such that they were not concerned with behaviours, feelings, attitudes and motivations, but with how people interact and engage in social practices, in this case how students and staff interact in learning and teaching.

The fourth principle refers to 'knowledge and social action going together'. One of the main assumptions of social constructionism is the constructive power of language. If experiences are constructed, then alternative representations of experiences are possible. The work of discursive psychologists such as Potter and Edwards (1992), for example, focuses on the situated use of language, asking 'how speakers manage to build accounts that have particular effects within an interaction, as well as constructing and legitimating particular identities for themselves' (Burr, 2003:202). My interest revolved around how students and staff talk about learning and teaching and in doing so associate themselves with particular constructions of the student, which in turn have implications for the relationships between staff and students. For example, a construction of the student as a 'novice' would imply a relationship where there was a need for staff to provide academic guidance.

In relation to this study this approach was appropriate as my interest was not in whether students are technically consumers but what it means to talk about students in this way. Adopting a social constructionist approach had wide-ranging implications for the choice of methods. For example, I ruled out methods such as structured interviews, as standardised questions might overly restrict the talk of participants. I also ruled out structured observations, as a narrowing of focus might inhibit the scope of what could be observed.

Following this approach meant that, rather than seeking to find out more about the inner student, I would look at the way the student is a product of social processes. This meant that the way students and staff talked about their day-to-day experiences became central. From this focus on talk, I anticipated that what might emerge from the study was a sense of how the language of consumerism might enable or restrict certain relationships and therefore open or close opportunities for learning.

It is important to recognise the limitations of any proposed lens through which a study will be conducted. Burr (2003) provides a useful critique of social constructionism. In particular, the absence of a concern with subjectivity and the absence of the 'self' can be considered to be a psychological gap as people are viewed as negotiators of positions and whose subjectivity is formed by discourses (Burr, 2003:179). Alternative perspectives on this topic focus on behaviours, attitudes or subjectivity. For example, Kahu and Nelson (2018) present a psychosocial theory of relationships within educational settings which seeks to identify the 'mechanisms' of student success. This conceptual approach, which seeks to identify the mechanics of what makes the student 'tick', is at odds with my proposed approach to the study of relationships in higher education, which assumes the existence of multiple realities rather than a universal truth to be discovered. Whilst I acknowledge the absence of a psychology of the self, I do not consider this to be an obstacle in relation to this study, which is not concerned with motivations of individual staff and students or their life histories. Of greater relevance to this study is the potential offered by a social constructionist lens for critical consideration of the connections between language and context, in particular the reciprocity of the way, like two mirrors facing each other, 'language both constructs and reflects "reality"' (Gee, 2014a:120). This lens facilitates discussion of discourses at different levels: in the context of the policy environment and at the institutional and the local levels.

3.3 A Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach

There are many different schools of discourse analysis and the term 'discourse' is used in different ways by qualitative researchers across different subject areas. Discourse analysis has been defined simply as the close study of language in use (Taylor, 2001a). Whilst this is a useful starting point, I aim to clarify the theoretical standpoint which I draw upon, as well as the practical implications of adopting a critical discourse analysis approach. Before doing so I will briefly outline the position of critical discourse analysis in the field of higher educational research and the challenges it raises.

Discourse analysis, although currently applied in interdisciplinary fields, does not have high visibility in higher education research despite the interest in discourses in this field (Sousa and Magalhães, 2013). A review of published CDA-related higher education research articles highlighted the relative infancy of CDA in this field and the small number of articles published each year (Smith, 2014). Examples of empirical discourse studies include Fairclough (2002) and Saarinen (2008) which draw on documents such as university prospectuses and policy

documents as relevant discursive materials. Rogers *et al.* (2012) concluded that, by bringing CDA approaches into educational contexts, educational researchers are reshaping the boundaries of CDA. In this study I extended the application of CDA by combining the analysis of documents, interviews and naturalistic conversations in committee meetings, thereby allowing discourses to be traced across institutions and subject areas.

Furthermore, detailed accounts of how studies have been operationalised in practice are limited, with the result that for a less experienced researcher this presents both the necessity and freedom to tailor an approach rather than copy a pre-existing approach. I aim in my accounts to share some of the challenges faced in doing so.

Defining what constitutes discourse analysis was a first and complex step. Parker (2013) identifies different categories of approaches to discourse analysis and discusses a range of techniques which can be applied, including conversation analysis, ethnomethodology, narrative analysis, thematic analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA). These carry with them differing theoretical assumptions about the nature and purpose of discourse. On a practical level, my concerns in selecting a particular frame of reference were to allow reduction of the data, to facilitate comparisons across transcripts, to make links to the social and cultural environment and have the potential to make some generalisations about the content.

Parker (2013) distinguishes four levels of discourse analysis, of which CDA is at Level 3. These are named 'Little Things in Context' (Level 1), 'Grounds of Experience' (Level 2), 'Beyond Interaction' (Level 3) and 'Production of Analytic Phenomena' (Level 4). This type of analysis is characterised by the identification of discourses which are described by Trowler (2001:186) as 'language in social practice conditioned by social structures' and 'more than text' but 'less than culture'. Parker (2013) refers to Level 3 studies as a level of analysis which goes beyond a focus on the individual person or group and takes into account the wider social context whilst still emphasising the human agency of individuals. This mode of analysis falls between a focus on the micro analysis of language at level 1, as would be seen, for example, in Conversation Analysis, and the much broader analysis at Level 4 offered by approaches such as Semiotic Analysis (Chandler, 2007) and Political Discourse Theory (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985).

My choice of analytic approach was dependent both on the philosophical approach already identified (social constructionism) and the needs of the research questions which emerged from the particular context, that of higher education institutions coping with increasing marketisation. Any chosen technique would need to take account of both the micro environment and the macro environment. Indeed, Burr (2003:66) describes discourse as providing such a frame of reference: 'a conceptual backdrop against which our utterances can be interpreted', thereby highlighting this important two-way relationship between text and a wider context.

Initially I had considered the possibility of thinking of the university as a single case study or series of cases. However, I realised that there was a mismatch due to the definition of a case as 'a case of something', as part of a coherent bounded system (Yin, 2009) and my focus turned to researching discourses as part of social practices. Case study methods were not consistent with my ideas about the way data was represented in the study and this was potentially a 'wrong turn' which I did not pursue. Further reading of examples of discourse studies reinforced the idea that methodological approaches tend to favour certain methods and not others. Fairclough (2010) argues that theory and method cannot be separated and therefore the choice of methods should be theoretical.

I adopted a discourse analytic approach to not only look at what was happening locally but more broadly, at 'how meanings are created and eroded as part of ongoing social change' (Taylor, 2001a:8). It can be argued that the ongoing process of marketisation of universities creates new language (e.g. student as 'customer', university as 'service provider') and new activities (for example, more student involvement in curriculum development, increased student/staff liaison). Whilst meaning at a micro level can be derived from the way a student, in speaking, constructs their individual identity in relation to being a student at this time, my interest was also simultaneously in the wider social and cultural context. My focus therefore was on the recurring elements of talk in this wider context rather than on the micro analysis of talk as a series of interactions in a particular sequence. I therefore rejected a technique such as conversation analysis, which was too narrow to allow a consideration of the wider issues which emerge from policy.

In discourse analysis, language is seen as 'action-oriented' (Potter and Wetherell 1987; Potter and Edwards 2001), and both constructs the participants and is a product of interactions. A critical discursive approach does not restrict itself to accounts by the

participants themselves but can also discuss how language provides a set of ways of talking about objects or events. In the analysis, account can be taken of the way linguistic resources are provided for them by the history and context in which they find themselves. For example, in higher education, the term 'student satisfaction' is associated with the history of the introduction of the National Student Survey (NSS) and constructs the student as needing to be satisfied with education rather than being challenged by it. Gee (2011) argues that a progression from analysing everyday occurrences of language in context ('situated meanings') to the wider picture of discourses in society ('Discourses') is the point of critical discourse analysis. In the research analysis I adopted a staged approach by moving from examples of text showing different constructions of students, to the identification of wider discourses.

I will now discuss the implications of the term 'critical' in a CDA approach and how I approached the political aspects of this study. Before doing so, I note that researching higher education is an unavoidably political project due to the tensions between different visions of the university, for example, as autonomous institutions for the public good or as global businesses or as quasi-markets. Despite many critics, the assumption by recent UK governments remains that 'the market model is still feasible' (Marginson, 2013:368). Even before this doctoral study was conducted, 47 per cent of people aged 17 to 30 participated in higher education in English universities in the 2013-14 academic year, (DBIS, 2015), so what happens in universities in practice should be of interest to a large section of society.

Ruth Wodak, when interviewed by Kendall (2007) on this topic, suggested a range of criteria for being 'critical':

Wodak: "Critical" means not taking things for granted, opening up to complexity, challenging reductionism, dogmatism and dichotomies, being self-reflective in my research, and through these processes, making opaque structures of power relations and ideologies manifest'. (Kendall, 2007:4)

My approach to criticality in discourse analysis embraces the idea of questioning things, being a sceptical listener and shedding light on the contemporary development of pedagogical relationships. It contrasts with a Foucauldian discourse analysis, which has a more overtly political aim - to highlight oppressive power relations and increase the voice of those marginalised. The distinction is made here between a Foucauldian perspective

and other perspectives, such as those who use 'interpretative repertoires' (Potter and Wetherell, 1987), and who 'want to place more emphasis upon human agency within the flexible deployment of language' (Edley, 2001:2). For the purposes of this study, I took the position that the commentary on any power imbalances arising from the academic-student relationships should emerge from the discourse analysis and not from any a-priori ideological standpoint as a researcher.

A critical approach was appropriate as I could explore how discourses may be intentionally or unintentionally widening and/or shrinking possibilities for pedagogical relationships and what it means to be a student. As interactions are shaped by the language used, I could look at how these possibilities were formed and reformed as students positioned themselves differently in relationships at different times. The same student may in one situation position themselves as a consumer and assert their 'rights' whereas in another situation may position themselves as an 'engaged learner'.

Having established a theoretical approach, a pilot study was conducted to see how data could be collected and analysed in practice.

3.4 The Pilot Study

The pilot study contributed to the design of the main study by allowing an evaluation of methods and techniques, testing of research instruments and applying and gaining ethical approval in a university setting. The pilot study work, which was conducted in a post-1992 university in 2015, made a difference in methodological terms by influencing the size, scope, location, access and ethical considerations of the research.

Despite the inherent difficulties and ambiguities in conducting qualitative pilot studies, Kim (2011) argues that there are also many practical reasons for doing so, including assessing interview protocols, researcher self-evaluation, improving the skills of novice researchers, uncovering ethical issues, reviewing practical issues such as sampling procedures, and gaining a clearer conceptualisation of the topic. Indeed, pilot studies are regarded by some as an underutilised technique, a crucial element of a good study design and may be considered as a kind of feasibility study, a mini version of a full-scale study (Van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2002). Sampson (2004: 383) further emphasises the importance of pilot studies in a wider sense in 'foreshadowing research problems and questions'. In addition, there is an element

of self-knowledge through reflection on the research process, for example, Marshall and Rossman (2011:96) assert that 'pilot interviews help in understanding oneself as a researcher'.

3.4.1 Methods

The aim of the pilot study was to explore methodological issues and concerns before finalising the research study design. These included, for example, the format of interviews - whether individual, paired or grouped, how to recruit participants, and how to reflect on the research events. The outline of the research methodology, which included interviews and unstructured observations of Student Forum meetings and documentary analysis is presented at the end of this section at Figure 2.

In the pilot study, I conducted semi-structured interviews with staff and with students from both vocational and non-vocational subject areas. A schedule of open-ended questions was prepared in advance. Although the order of questions could differ in each interview, similar topics were discussed. This type of interview offers flexibility for both the researcher and the respondents (Robson, 2011) as the researcher can adapt the questioning and add or omit certain questions as appropriate.

Interviews with staff were arranged individually, whereas students were interviewed either individually, in pairs or small groups. The students were all volunteers and the sample included students from both vocational and non-vocational subject areas as well as a mix of year groups. A purposive sampling approach was adopted in order to collect data from participants who were likely to be able to provide answers to the research questions. According to Cohen *et al.* (2007:115) this is particularly appropriate where the intention is not to represent the wider population, but the concern is to 'acquire in-depth information from those who are in a position to give it'. Individual interviews allowed in-depth examination of individual learning experiences, but paired or group interviews were also very useful for sharing and contrasting experiences of pedagogical relationships. My starting point for recruiting participants was to approach students who had already volunteered to be student representatives on the basis that they had good communication skills and had shown a willingness to participate in a university project. An alternative to interviews would have been to run focus groups, but based on early indications in the pilot study, the availability of students on the same days or at the same times was limited due to clashing timetables and commitments within and outside the university. The result was that a more flexible

combination of individual, paired and group interviews were carried out at times convenient to students.

The major strength of observation is the direct access which it gives to the events or interactions which are the focus of the research. Silverman (2011:380) recommends getting out in the field 'to study what participants are doing' to avoid 'armchair thinking', but cautions against smugness in collecting 'naturally occurring' data and against assuming there is such a thing as 'pure', unmediated data. Rather than making distinctions between 'naturally occurring' and 'contrived data', Speer (2002) recommends considering how data collection practices are consequential for the topics to which we wish to gain access. The observation of meetings passes the 'dead scientist test' (Potter and Wetherell, 1987:162), in that the event would happen even if the researcher were not there, but the importance of the method lies in revealing both examples of interactions in practice and about practice.

The pilot study observations of meetings took place in a classroom and consisted of a regular round table Student Forum discussion between staff and students structured around feedback on the undergraduate programmes. The meetings were audio recorded, with the aim of transcribing the meetings into a textual representation, rather than being video-recorded. If meetings had been video recorded, this would not only have implications for the methods of analysis but also for confidentiality, which would be compromised as there would be a higher risk of participants being identified.

Unstructured observations in the first stages of data collection aim to assist in the understanding of the local context and to 'seek to find out what is going on in a situation as a precursor to subsequent testing out of the insights obtained' (Robson, 2011: 315). Observing the kind of issues that are discussed during meetings can be useful in refining questions for interviews (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). Through the observation of meetings in the pilot study I aimed to consider how staff and students position themselves in relation to each other and to identify, through specific narrated examples, the issues which were either enabling or disrupting pedagogical relationships. For example, from the student perspective these included professionalism (punctuality, lateness, cancellation of lectures, and length of lectures) and practices in relation to assessment and feedback (quality and timeliness of feedback, setting deadlines, anonymous marking, and fairness of marking). From the staff perspective the areas of concern were to do with inconsistency between practices, and the tension between autonomy of lecturers (who were responding to student requests) and the

pressure towards increased standardisation. There were tension points around expectations of practices outside the classroom, for example, in relation to personal tutoring and communication. This resulted in additional interview questions being formulated for the main study.

Fieldnotes were used principally for noting contextual features of the setting and for recording ideas that occurred during the meetings and which could be reflected upon on later when playing back the recording. There was no formal observation schedule and during the meetings brief notes were made of ideas, questions or particularly striking phrases or interactions, which were then reflected upon in the interview notes which were written up after the end of the session. Gibson and Brown (2009:105) suggest that fieldnotes can be employed as a kind of 'analysis *in vivo*' rather than as a record of events. In this way, they can be conceptualised as an ongoing working out of the analytic focus of a study and serve to 'discursively explore the things they are observing and their connection to the researcher's interests' (Gibson and Brown: 2009:106).

During the pilot stage and throughout the period of data collection, I practised techniques of analysing data which other discourse analysts had applied: such as identifying interpretative repertoires (Potter and Wetherell, 1987) ideological dilemmas (Billig *et al.*, 1988), subject positions (Edley, 2001) and metaphor analysis (Jensen, 2006). I was not looking for a recipe book to follow step by step, but needed a clear definition of what constituted a discourse and a framework for identifying discourses across different data sources in different locations. A combination of readings from Parker (1990, 1992, 2013) and Gee (2011, 2014a, 2014b, 2015) were ultimately the source of my approach (see section 3.6 below).

Writing up my analyses of selected interviews and student meetings helped identify methodological concerns. I needed to rigorously document the process of analysis, for example, to be able to justify my selection of discourses and examples, and to be able to answer the question 'when is it enough?' My working assumption was that there needed to be sufficient satisfaction that the research questions had been addressed and that a reasonable and convincing interpretation of the findings could be offered.

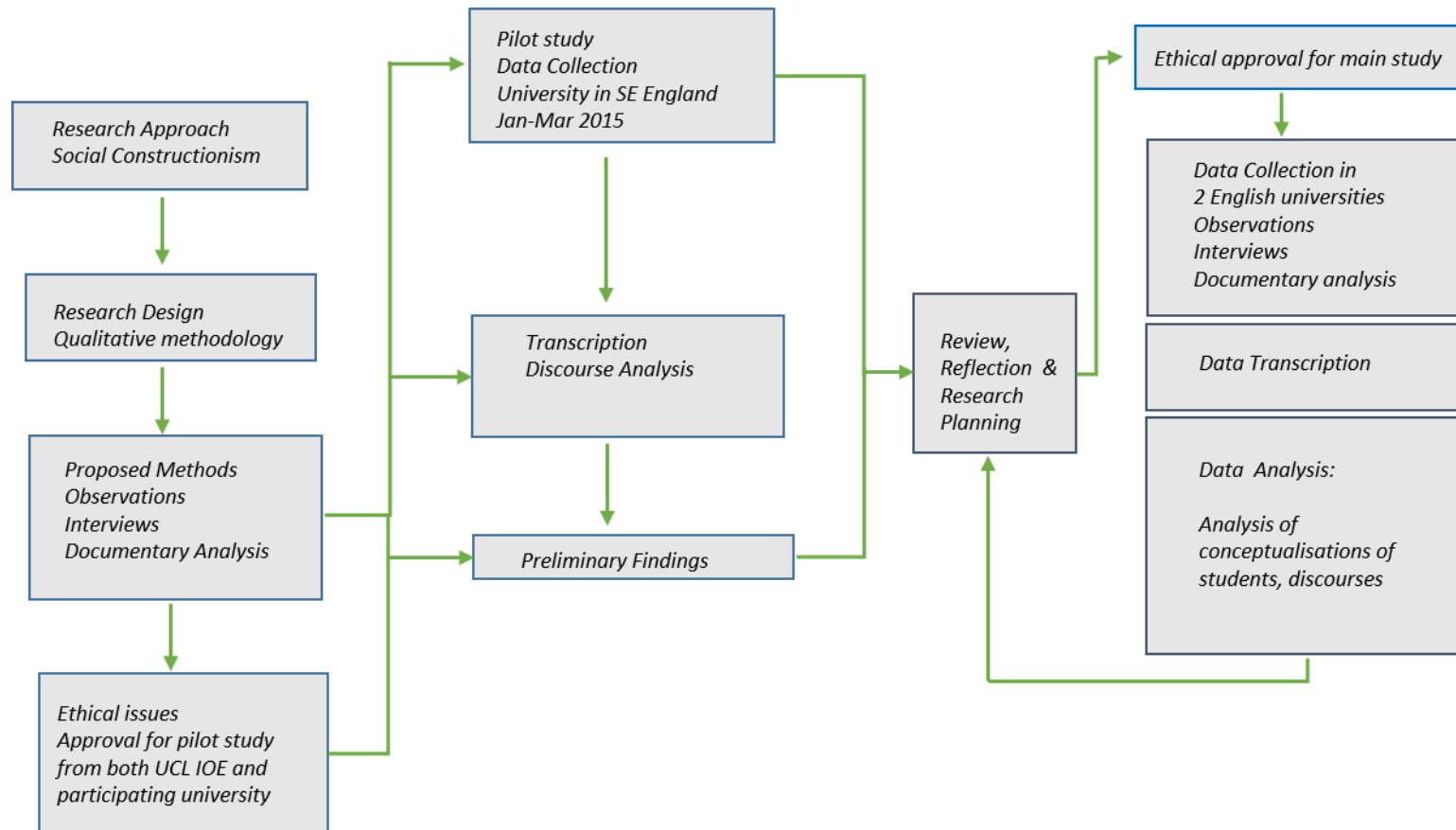


Figure 2: Outline of the research methodology and methods

3.4.2 Evaluation of the pilot study

Despite its small scale, the pilot study was useful in identifying methods that were appropriate in a higher education setting to provide answers to the main research question and areas for improvement in the research design were identified. During the pilot study the wording of the research questions were adjusted to reflect interest in the construction of discourses and the functions that discourses serve within the context. This reflected the intention to treat discourse as 'a potent action-oriented medium, not a transparent information channel' (Potter and Wetherell, 1987:160). For example, a question which asked about changing 'attitudes' towards consumerism was reworded to seek examples of whether the language of the 'student-as-consumer' was being deployed in accounts of learning and teaching.

The pilot observation of a Student Forum meeting was useful in identifying practices which were impacting either negatively (or positively) on relationships with staff and which were explored further in the main study. Challenges and limitations of the observation method were highlighted, and changes made to the study design. For example, one often quoted disadvantage of observation is the 'extent to which an observer affects the situation under observation, a phenomenon referred to as reactivity' (Robson, 2011: 317). This had been mitigated by building up a level of trust with the participants by attending a previous Student Forum as an informal observer. For the main study I identified three improvements. First, I concluded that it would be essential to communicate with participants prior to the day of the Student Forum meetings, not only to explain the purpose of the observation but to put them at ease. Second, standard letters and emails and an Information Sheet for participants would be developed alongside consent forms and sent to participants in advance. Third, having a nominated contact or 'gatekeeper' in each subject department would be helpful in facilitating access to participants and arranging events.

Other practical difficulties of the unstructured observation method which I noted were the inability to intervene if one person dominates discussions and the lack of opportunity as a non-participant observer to clarify any matters at the time which were not understood. The appreciation of nuances and meanings depends on access to local knowledge of staff, programmes and policies as well as the shared history of a department. There can also be challenges with hearing some interactions, particularly when several people are talking at once or are sharing comments privately with one another. Where further clarification was

needed, a contact person within the organisation was helpful. Fieldnotes were essential both for noting points that needed clarification and for recording observations in-situ.

The review of the pilot study included analysing the success of the pilot interviews and subsequently the reformulation of interview questions and the adjustment of questioning techniques in line with my reflections on interviewing skills. Transcripts of sample pilot interviews were also shared with my supervisors and interview techniques were discussed. An example of this evaluation work is included at Appendix B.

A pilot study is based on a limited data sample and only tentative conclusions could be drawn from the findings. The study confirmed that there was sufficient scope for a rich exploration of discourses and alternative metaphors for the 'student-as-consumer'. This seemed to support the conclusion that 'the notion of actively consuming higher education did not seem to capture the majority of students' approaches' (Tomlinson, 2014:6). The discourses identified in the pilot study were named 'value for money', 'employability', 'personal development' and lastly, 'human struggle' and were based on staff and students' accounts of learning and teaching experiences.

3.5 Selecting data sources within a discourse analytic approach

This section discusses the decisions made in relation to the location of the main research study and the criteria for sampling of data. Figure 3 (below) shows the methods of data collection undertaken for the study.

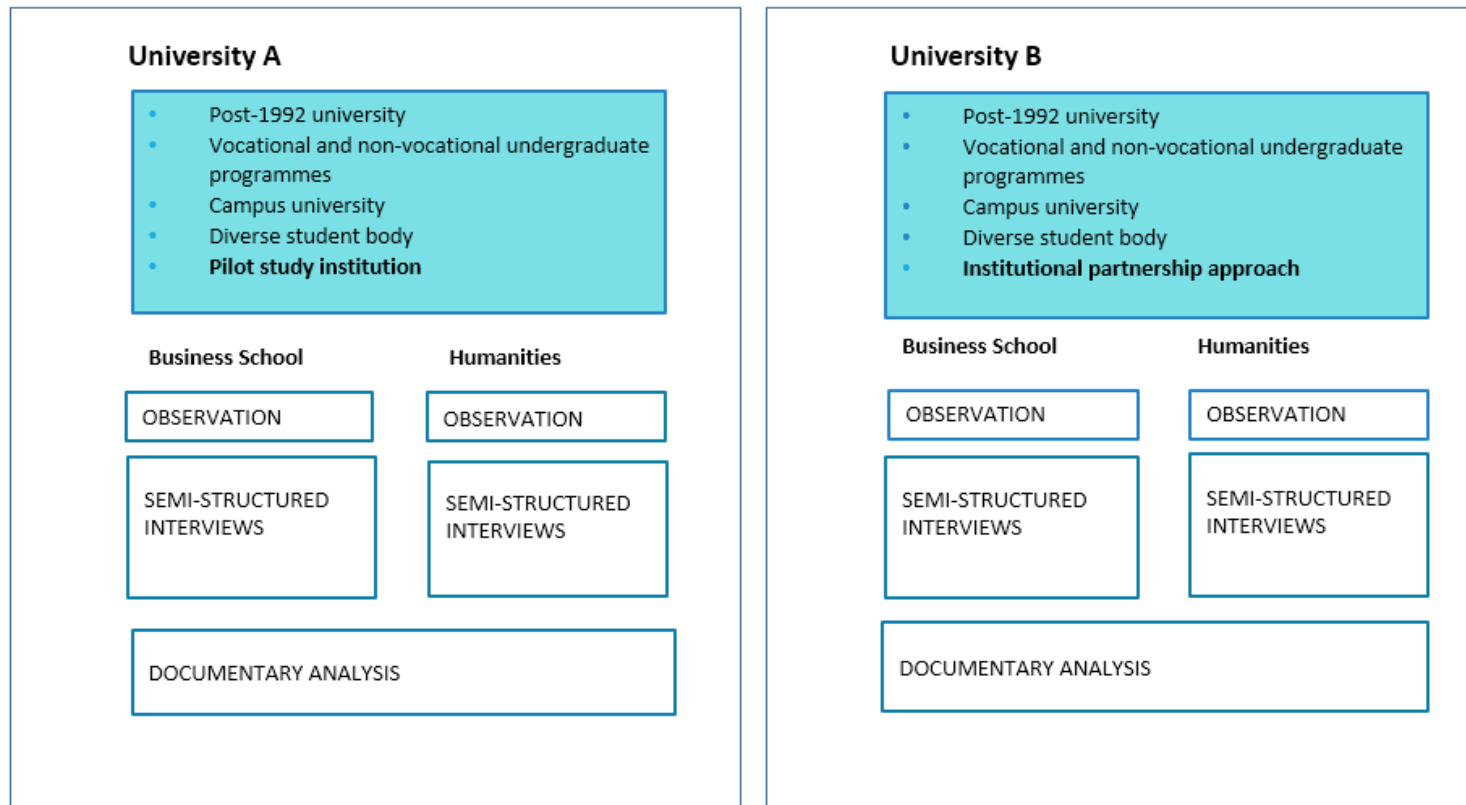


Figure 3: Methods of data collection in Universities A and B

3.5.1 Choice of institutions

A key decision was where to locate the study and whether to research a single or multiple sites. The word 'site' or 'case' is used to mean instances of a university setting, rather than a reference to case study methods. A single site would allow an in-depth analysis of a phenomenon or issue, whereas multiple or collective sites allows analysis within and across settings, which would allow a greater richness of data to be collected. However, the idea of multiple sites led to the question 'how many sites?' I was looking to extend the sample with a university sharing key characteristics with the pilot, primary higher education institution. The inclusion of a second post-1992 university allowed a more in-depth study to be undertaken of modern universities. An alternative approach might have been to select a more prestigious university, such as a Russell Group institution, but this small sample would not have been representative of the sector and in any case, the study was not aiming to be draw conclusions about English higher education as a whole.

A further complicating factor was the possibility of one site being set in an institution where I was working, leading to a consideration of the merits and challenges of insider-research and the implications for my role as a researcher (see section 3.7.4). Additionally, I felt that there should be a theoretical reason for choosing a location as well as a consideration of the pragmatics of conducting a study whilst employed as a university lecturer.

The criteria for choosing a location were as follows: post-1992 universities with a diverse student body including 'non-traditional' students and offering both vocational and non-vocational undergraduate courses. Researching two contexts with a diverse student body and range of undergraduate programmes would allow the similarities and differences in discourses to be explored in depth and the research questions to be answered within a feasible timescale. Two sites were chosen, University A being an institution where I was working part-time and the other, University B, being another post-1992 (modern) university. For the second site, an institution was chosen which had shown a strong interest in the development of students as 'partners'. Ideas of partnership learning have been proposed as a strong alternative metaphor to the 'student-as-consumer' (Healey *et al.*, 2014). For example, I have attended learning and teaching conferences at two modern universities that have chosen ideas of 'student-as-partners' as their learning and teaching conference themes (Chichester University and Newman University). By including an institution with an interest in student engagement and partnerships it was anticipated that this would provide a rich

insight into a broad range of pedagogical relationships and provide opportunities for a detailed study of discourses. At the same time, I acknowledged that all higher education settings are necessarily different and influenced by their local context and culture and there is no claim that the chosen institutions would form a representative sample of post-1992 universities.

The disadvantages of a two-site approach included the need to manage multiple sources of data. The sample size was an important consideration for the study because there was a danger of being overwhelmed by the data: 'getting bogged down in too much data and not being able to let the linguistic detail emerge from the mountains of text' (Potter and Wetherell, 1987:161). The authors caution that for discourse analysts, the success of the study is 'not in the least dependent on sample size' (p. 161) and more data can add to the labour without adding to the quality of the analysis. Therefore, developing and defining a clear process and strategy for data analysis was essential to ensuring that the task could be completed.

3.5.2 Choice of subject disciplines

A further question was whether subject discipline might influence the nature of conversations and interactions between students and staff. In UK universities the amount of contact time differs greatly between arts and science subjects. Also, the nature of the discipline as high consensus or low consensus (Becher and Trowler, 2001) means that there might well be disciplinary specific ideas about the nature of learning, for example whether it is about memorising facts or questioning and interpreting ideas. A possible approach might have been to compare STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) subjects with Arts subjects, but the STEM provision in the two institutions was not similar. Research was therefore carried out in the same two departments in each of the two universities, the Business School and the School of Humanities, in order to include students studying both vocational and less vocationally focused subjects.

3.5.3 Selection of staff and students

Decisions made about sampling were influenced by the testing of methods during the pilot study as detailed in section 3.4.1. The methods and scope of data collection which were set out in a fieldwork plan and agreed with the Ethics Committee of each university site and the relevant Heads of School were: 2 observations of staff-student meetings, a total of 8- 10

interviews (approx. 4 staff and 4 student interview sessions) lasting between 30-40 minutes, and documentary analysis of publicly available documents such as university plans and strategies. All interviews and observation of meetings took place on the university campus within the normal working day. The aim was to collect a rich variety of data rather than to collect a large or representative sample. Large quantities of data are not required or helpful for a critical discourse analysis study. Further details about the selection of participants is provided here and each method is discussed in turn in section 3.7.

Observations: Two unstructured observations of student/staff meetings (Student Forum meetings) per institution were conducted and audio recorded at each institution, one Student Forum in each of the two departments. These meetings typically occur once or twice per term and tend to precede more formal programme committee meetings. Student Forum meetings are the site of discussions about learning and teaching issues and are useful examples of staff-student interactions. They have the advantage of being informal meetings, chaired by an experienced Programme Leader, typically lasting up to two hours, where students from all year groups and programmes are invited to voice their ideas and concerns about learning and teaching matters. The numbers of students attending these meetings ranged between seven and fourteen students. The participants were student representatives and were invited by the Programme Leaders in each department via email according to the usual departmental procedures and routines. I sent a follow up email to each invited participant with an Information Sheet explaining the scope and purpose of the research and a consent form. Ethical consent was gained from every student and staff member who attended.

Student interviews: A minimum of four interview sessions with undergraduate students were arranged in each department. A combination of individual student interviews, paired interviews, and group interviews were carried out. Primarily, student representatives were selected for individual interviews as they were more likely to be willing participants and tend to be good communicators. Additionally, it is usual for student representatives in universities to have training in communication skills and how to represent the views of others rather than just their own individual agendas. In a case where an invited student representative was not available or sick, they nominated another student from their programme. To maximise variety in the data, the sample included both male and female participants and students from different years and programmes within the subject area.

Staff interviews: Programme leaders were selected as they were able to draw on their own experiences as lecturers but also are were familiar with institutional policies and strategies. The pilot study had included interviews with learning support staff, for example maths tutors or academic writing tutors, but their extent and level of experience with undergraduate students varied and they often supported students across a wide range of subject areas. For the main study it was decided to invite participants who were both programme leaders and experienced lecturers, and who taught undergraduate students within the two specific chosen subject disciplines.

In each institution, programme leaders were selected from each discipline, Business and Humanities, all of whom had regular contact with undergraduate students. Lists of staff were available on the institutional websites and the lists were compared to identify similar and overlapping programme areas. Humanities and Business contain many subject specialisms and staff can teach across different subject areas. To aid comparisons between the universities and the disciplines, Programme Leaders in Business were chosen who had teaching experience in Accounting programmes and the Programme Leaders in Humanities had teaching experience which included History programmes. If staff did not respond to an invitation or were not willing or available to participate, then Heads of School were consulted about staff who might be available.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Ethics approval was sought from both participating institutions and UCL IoE. This involved updating and revising the approval documents from the pilot study and responding to queries. The British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines were consulted in order to ensure that the study was conducted 'within an ethic of respect and freedom from prejudice' (BERA, 2011:5). Safeguards were put in place to ensure the rights of participants were respected. These measures included making sure that participants were well-informed. A verbal explanation was given at the beginning of an interview or observation and emails explaining the purpose of the research were sent to interviewees along with an information sheet explaining the nature and purpose of the research and a list of indicative interview questions. The right to withdraw at any time was emphasised and this right was also be stated clearly on the participant consent forms. The procedures were designed to 'avoid deception or subterfuge' and not to 'use coercion or duress' (BERA, 2011:6).

To reduce disruption to participants and to 'minimize the impact on the normal working and workloads of participants' (BERA, 2011:7), interviews and observation meetings were carried out within the standard working hours of the university and at times likely to be convenient to students, and staff interviews were held on mutually convenient dates. The events took place in easily accessible locations on the university campuses.

In order to maintain privacy and to protect the identity of the participants, the names of participants remain confidential, through using pseudonyms. Care has also been taken to preserve the anonymity of the institutions in order to limit the possibility of participants being identified. I have documented how and why data is being stored, for what purposes and to whom it would be made available. This is in accordance with the BERA (2011) guidelines, which state that researchers must comply with the legal requirements of the Data Protection Act (1988). Data was collected only for the purpose of this research study and for any future publications arising from this study. The data is held securely and full access is limited to supervisors of the doctoral study, including other UCL colleagues and external examiners on request.

Potential ethical problems of the study were highlighted through the pilot study. For example, gaining access to observe student/staff meetings depended on establishing good relationships with programme leaders and reassuring students about the ethical protocols. According to the ethical guidelines from BERA (2011), educational researchers 'should operate within an ethic of respect for any persons involved in the research they are undertaking'. Close liaison with gatekeepers, such as Heads of School, was necessary to ensure access as well as with conveners and staff to explain the purpose of the research and develop trust.

3.7 Methods of data collection

The philosophical perspective described earlier in this chapter points towards a focus on talk and text which are studied as social practices in order to try and understand what the speaker or writer is trying to achieve in a particular context: 'reading the word requires reading the world' (Gee, 2015). This perspective has influenced the choice of research methods and data analysis techniques, which are discussed below. The three methods were: observations of student-staff interactions, semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis. Each method is described in turn and justified in the context of the aims of the study. A

combination of documents, recorded interactions and interviews can be useful in building up a picture of the way participants' linguistic practices are organised (Potter and Wetherell, 1987).

The research questions identified at the end of Chapter Two suggest two levels of proposed analysis: the construction of the contemporary student and the construction of wider discourses which might be circulating. The first research question (RQ1) seeks to identify constructions of students in their own words. The second and third questions (RQ2 and RQ3) relate to the identification of dominant and additional discourses. As already mentioned in Chapter Two, the notion from Gee (2015) of "little 'd' discourses" (language in use among people) and "Big 'D' Discourses" (conversations among different socially and historically significant kinds of people or social groups) supported the two levels of analysis: how the student is constructed through language in use, and how wider conversations about learning and teaching relationships are constructed through discourses. Both 'constructions' of students and wider discourses could be sought through the systematic analysis of text – text which was created through different methods. The use of two analysis methods was not intended to constitute triangulation of data, as triangulation implies the search for a single truth and the purpose was not to confirm whether the constructions of students are 'true'.

The term 'construction', used throughout this thesis, has been chosen rather than 'characterisation' or 'conceptualisation' to denote the work that is done by language to (re-)construct the student in a particular way for specific purposes. In this context, it indicates how the speaker enacts a particular way of being in a pedagogical relationship. The nature of the research questions suggest that constructions will relate to learning and teaching and ways of being and developing as a student, but does not preclude the identification of unexpected constructions which arise in a particular context. The construction of student as 'party-goer' is one such example, which was a construction deployed by students, but not staff.

The identification of constructions of students aided the identification of wider discourses through a consideration of what the speakers accomplished through these ways of speaking, what these suggested about the dominant 'ideal' pedagogical relationship and what this revealed about the broader context. It is through the idea of 'subject positions' that the social construction of the individual is connected to wider discourses. They are the 'identities made relevant by specific ways of talking' (Edley, 2001:210). For example, as students change the

way they talk both within and between conversations, they take on different identities at different times as they construct an account of their position. Similarly, staff may adopt various positions of teacher, manager, researcher, expert, assessor or mentor in conversation with others. Analysis using this concept seeks to establish what the subject positions of participants accomplished, what this suggested about the dominant 'ideal' pedagogical relationship and what this revealed about the broader context.

Accounts can be contradictory and examining contradictions can be fruitful. For example, Billig *et al.*, (1988) suggest that there are common-sense ways of talking about topics which are 'out there', which they call 'ideological dilemmas', which are not coherent ideologies but common-sense ways of thinking that are characterised by inconsistency, fragmentation and contradiction. Analysing ideological dilemmas looks at the function of such talk and how it is used rhetorically as well as looking at their 'wider cultural significance' (Edley, 2001:217). For example, students and staff might deploy different every-day ideas about students which have developed over time, for example, based on assumptions that students 'study hard' or 'are short of money' or 'enjoy a good social life'. This research aims also to look beyond the 'common-sense' understandings and look at connections to wider policy discourses, as discussed in Chapter Two.

The next sections describe the different methods, which all involved creation or interpretation of text, and in which I was positioned differently as a researcher. Interviews provided opportunities for the creation of texts of conversations in which I played a key role as provider of the questions, able to guide the direction of the interactions. Unstructured observations of meetings were events where conversations were recorded in a 'natural' setting without my direct intervention as the researcher, but I subsequently created the text of these interactions through the process of transcription and interpreted its meanings. For the analysis of documents, I was involved in the interpretation of the texts, but absent from the creation of the texts, which were produced by institutions. Lastly, the use of reflective methods such as field notes represented my lone writings as a researcher. In other words, my involvement is evident in the creation and interpretation of the data as well as in the ultimate mapping of the discourses, which are crafted for a particular audience and necessarily bounded by the limits of my own understandings.

3.7.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Interviews were selected as a method due to their flexibility and the fact they were likely to produce a richness of data. They are suited to the 'exploration of the more complex and subtle phenomena' (Denscombe, 2010:173), providing an opportunity to explore a range of issues within a limited timeframe. Potter and Wetherell (1987: 164-5) highlight the opportunity in interviews for active intervention by the researcher, suggesting at the same time that this is a 'craft skill'. The authors emphasise three ways in which interviews by researchers interested in discourse analysis differ from conventional interviews: first, there is a focus on the variation in responses rather than the consistency, second, interview techniques specifically aim to allow diversity in responses and third, interviewers are acknowledged as 'active participants' rather than 'speaking questionnaires' (p.165).

The advantage of the interview format, as explained by Rubin and Rubin (2005:29), is that individuals interpret situations differently, and are likely 'to bring to bear the understandings held by peers, family, friends, coreligionists, or members of other groups to which he or she belongs'. This was clear from the individual and paired interviews in the pilot study, where students' accounts indicated that family and societal expectations were a key influence on their understanding of what it means to be a student at university. Three different interview formats (individual, paired, and group) were adopted to facilitate answers to the main research questions, with individual interviews allowing the most in-depth examination of individual learning experiences and the self-concept, but paired and group interviews also being very useful for sharing and contrasting experiences of pedagogical relationships. Being flexible about format allowed me to maximise the opportunities to interview students and do this in the way they preferred, either individually, in pairs or in groups.

The strength of the group interview as a method is the exchange of views between participants and Rubin and Rubin (2005:180) suggest that joint interviews 'can take you in a new direction, suggesting what is important to the interviewees rather than what initially is of interest to the researcher.' A practical disadvantage of the group interview is that it can be difficult to arrange with students who have conflicting schedules and competing priorities. In the group interview it can be more difficult for the researcher to guide the conversation, but it can highlight areas of importance to the participants. For example, in the pilot study group interviews, business students talked about their difficulties and fears of communicating with tutors and approaching them for help. They also discussed non-

attendance in terms of it being a choice (rather than a failure) and a rational decision to use the time for learning independently. The group interview adds complexity as the researcher needs to be sensitive to possible impacts of the group on the openness of dialogue and opportunities to speak. Student representatives were approached for interviews as they were thought to be good communicators, able to voice their views and those of others and likely to be willing participants.

3.7.2 Observations of staff-student meetings

The distinctive feature of the method is the opportunity to gather data from 'live' situations (Cohen, 2007). Observations may often be associated with methods used in educational settings to observe teacher-pupil behaviour. However, as is typical of discourse analysis studies with naturalistic observation, the observation is converted to a transcript to enable textual analysis and it is not considered possible to annotate all non-verbal behaviours. In this way, critical discourse analysis could be carried out using the same techniques across the three types of text from this study: interviews, meetings and institutional documents. Accounts could therefore be compared across subject areas and settings (see section 3.8 doing Discourse Analysis).

Student/staff liaison groups (Student Forums) were chosen as this is where the nature of the relationships between staff and students is continually renegotiated and commented upon. These meetings typically discuss issues which can be taken forward to a departmental committee meeting and in order to do so tend to cover a wide range of topics. The meetings might, for example, discuss practices which are described as encouraging or hindering good pedagogical relationships. Meetings were observed in each of the two different subject areas in each university in order to identify any subject influence. For example, business students are arguably more likely to be familiar with the language of consumerism and therefore might be expected to give responses that seem more consumerist. Although these were live events, the key purpose was to record the meetings and transcribe them into a text for further analysis. It was necessary to be present to record the meetings and ensure the agreed ethical procedures were followed.

An alternative that was considered was to observe interactions between staff and students in a teaching context. However, the CDA approach focuses entirely on textual constructions and is more interested in accounts of things, rather than the things themselves, which as far as they are non-linguistic remain unknowable. Student Forum meetings are also meetings

where pedagogical relationships are explicitly on the agenda, whereas in teaching situations this is implicit. Compared to subject or departmental committees, these meetings also had the advantage of being less constrained conversations as they are not formally minuted meetings. Furthermore, it would have been problematic to gain ethical consent in a teaching session or welcome/induction meeting, where the number of attendees would be large and students may arrive and leave unannounced. Gaining ethical consent from all participants in a Student Forum meeting to record the session was much more straightforward. The limited number of Student Forum meetings in each department and in each university across the academic year, typically only one or two per term, meant that close liaison with departments and careful scheduling was required.

The meetings which were observed were scheduled by the universities as part of their programme management activities. They were arranged by the Programme Leaders to take place during the working day on the university campuses in teaching rooms or meeting rooms. The meetings were audio recorded as video recordings would risk revealing the identities of the participants and the institutions. The recorded data was later transcribed in full and the text of the interactions between the participants was analysed using a critical discourse analysis approach. Each participant, including myself, introduced themselves at the beginning of the meeting and the seating positions of participants were noted. This helped with identifying speakers when transcribing the meetings, particularly where there were rapid interactions during conversations. The meeting was chaired by the Programme Leader and the participants were student representatives from the programmes within the discipline area.

I sat at the table or in the circle with participants depending on the layout of the room. Although I was a non-participant in the meetings, I acknowledge and accept that my presence in the meeting may have influenced the words spoken. Preparations made before the meeting included meeting with the Programme Leaders to explain the aims of my research, the observation method and the research process. I also emailed clear information sheets and consent forms to participants in advance. This meant that after a short introduction the focus of the Student Forum meeting could move quickly to the discussion of programme issues. This meant the business of the meetings were not unduly delayed and my presence was less likely to seem intrusive. Reflexivity is further discussed in section 3.7.4 below.

During the meetings I made brief notes were made of ideas, questions or particularly striking phrases or interactions. As mentioned in section 3.4.1, fieldnotes were employed as a kind of 'analysis *in vivo*' rather than as a record of events (Gibson and Brown, 2009:105). They were used both for noting contextual features of the setting and for recording ideas that occurred during the meetings and which could be reflected upon on later when analysing the data. Following each meeting I reflected on these field notes as I wrote up the interview notes after the end of the session. This technique had been tried out during the pilot study and a decision had been made that a structured observation schedule was not required as the aim was not to observe behaviour, but to listen to conversations without a prepared agenda.

3.7.3 Documentary analysis

For the main study, I decided to analyse publicly available university documents such as Strategic Plans, Learning and Teaching Strategies and Student Charters. These documents were therefore not considered as 'neutral', but representing a situation for a particular purpose. Charters, for example, are useful in analysing the ways that institutions describe relationships between staff, students and the university and their respective obligations.

Analysis of institutional documents involved deconstructing the meanings of the texts in a local context and situating them within a broader setting. For example, a university prospectus typically describes its vision and purpose and associates itself with particular organisational characteristics, values and qualities. Strategic Plans were analysed to reveal how an institution represents the relationship with students and, furthermore, how it wishes to be regarded and described by others.

Through analysing documents relevant to the case, useful insights can be gained into how particular issues are represented or talked about and by combining documents with other sources, 'researchers can explore their research setting from more than one perspective' (Gibson and Brown, 2009:70). Materials such as university strategy and policy documents and departmental information can provide insights into dominant and alternative discourses. Cohen *et al.* (2007) caution that documents are often selective and serve purposes and audiences other than the researcher. This complexity is echoed by Gibson and Brown (2009) who point out that some documents may require the insights of insiders in a community to help make sense of them. Access to knowledge, for example, to internal, confidential documents accessible in the course of my daily work required me to reflect carefully on the

nature of this 'knowingness' and what this meant for my position as a researcher. Due to the socially constructed nature of knowledge, such aspects of knowledge cannot be neatly put to one side, but instead I was careful to use evidence-based interpretations based on declared sources to support my arguments.

An important confidentiality issue was that the identity of the universities should not be revealed. Direct quotations from documents had to be omitted in this thesis to avoid the possibility of identifying the University, for example, through internet searches using document extracts.

3.7.4 Reflexivity

In this section, I outline my role and participation in the research, given my position and experience as a lecturer working in higher education. This research was work-based, 'happening within the researcher's own work practice' (Costley *et al.*, 2010:1), and therefore needed to take into account the challenges and ethical issues arising from insider research. Mercer (2007) contends that the insider-researcher needs to be particularly aware of their own assumptions and prejudices and warns that familiarity might lead to better initial understandings, but also the risk of taking things for granted. For example, as an interviewer in this research study, I might make assumptions about the responses given by interviewees and miss opportunities for probing topics in greater depth.

In simple terms, reflexivity is where the researcher reflects on their own position in the research process and recognises that 'the product of research inevitably reflects some of the background milieu and predilections of the researcher' (Gibbs, 2007:91). My position as a researcher and a university lecturer is particularly relevant in that this has influenced the choice of topic, the design of the research, the analysis and the written account. Reflexivity in this study involved methods which openly acknowledged my role as a researcher in the project and the recognition of the social constructionism that is involved in my production of the account of the research. For example, during interviews I was able to facilitate or constrain certain topics of conversation according to my research interests. Following each interview, notes were made about the interactions and anything striking about the session. A level of self-awareness during the analysis was essential to avoid closing off possible interpretations.

From a social constructionist perspective, my aim in analysing text was not to reveal attitudes, beliefs or an inner 'truth' about the participants as individuals and therefore there was a strong argument for avoiding speculative commentary and restricting the scope of the analysis to a close examination of the discourse. When writing an account of my research, I was aware that, from a social constructionist standpoint, reflexivity involved acknowledging the necessarily partial nature of each individual's perspective and that there are always competing versions of reality. Overall, my approach to reflexivity in the study was twofold: to make my personal stance as a researcher and lecturer explicit, for example, by recognising my access to insider knowledge of the English higher education and institutional contexts; and to acknowledge that, although I might position myself as if I was outside the text, discourse analysis is a process of constructing meaning in which I am fully engaged.

In addition to transcription, notes were taken just after each research event, which were an unstructured record of impressions at the time of the research. These included descriptions of the settings to help remind me of the context, ideas and potential findings that were striking at the time and possible areas for further investigation. Writing up accounts of each interview or observation was a useful way of summarising the key areas of conversation and issues relating to pedagogical relationships.

3.8 Doing Discourse Analysis

Rather than select extracts for transcription, I took the decision to transcribe all the interviews and meetings myself in order to become familiar with the data and because it was difficult at an early stage to be sure which aspects of the data would be most relevant. Furthermore, Gibson and Brown (2009:109-113) consider transcription as a form of representation or re-representation of data and a creative process which 'entails trying to work through a particular set of analytic concerns in relation to specific research interests'. For my research, questions of the fine-tuning of timing and intonation of speech were not considered crucial and therefore the texts were transcribed with readability in mind using an 'unfocused transcription' approach which aims to record the spoken words 'without attempting to represent its detailed contextual or interactional characteristics' (Gibson and Brown, 2009:114). However, even in unfocused transcriptions, details such as punctuation are typically added to assist with the representation of the data. Following transcription of meetings and interviews, the versions were then checked against the raw data and

amendments made. The texts were then loaded into the NVivo software package as a structured way of holding the data, and to facilitate online reading and searching for examples. This initial reading is both 'part of and necessary for analysis' (Wood and Kroger, 2000:87). It aims to identify the focus, identify appropriate sections for analysis and to make the data more manageable for analysis. The decision was taken to consider the findings of Universities A and B separately as they were situated in different contexts, before discussing the implications of the findings together in Chapter Six. This would also help to demonstrate a structured and rigorous approach.

Doing discourse analysis has been described as a craft skill, like learning to ride a bike:

'Analysis of discourse is like riding a bicycle compared to conducting experiments or analysing survey data which resemble baking cakes from a recipe'. (Potter and Wetherell, 1987:169)

Potter and Wetherell (1987) divided tasks into ten stages, although recognising that in practice the tasks do not happen sequentially. This orderliness masks the problem, mentioned earlier, that many discourse analysts have struggled to clearly explain in writing up their findings how they recognise discourses in text. Parker (1992) describes seven criteria for distinguishing discourses, which are helpful as a tool for mapping discourses (see section 3.8.2 below).

On reflection, my initial attempts at analysis resembled a thematic analysis which tried to present a range of neat themes rather than discourses. The analysis was without due consideration of the connectedness between discourses, how they might overlap, and how they might occur at both the institutional level and within conversations in practice. I found that writing was integral to the process of analysis as a way of working through ideas and arguments. Gibson and Brown (2009:194) warn that 'even if some parts of an analytic framework have been well formulated and constructed, the process of writing about those ideas may well result in a development or alteration of them'. The data chapters were written and re-written several times.

Given the quantity of data collected, examples had to be chosen to best represent the points of analysis for the reader. I had established that the criteria for inclusion might be their vividness and conciseness as exemplars of a particular point. Including many examples added to the richness of my account of the data, but also presented issues with word count. Certain

participants were more expressive in their accounts, and including many examples from particular students might have given the impression that there was a limited sample available. A further issue was that the conciseness of some accounts meant that examples could be useful for illustrating more than one argument and might result in some repetition in the thesis.

The process of making sense of data is time-consuming and Antaki *et al.* (2003) warn against superficial analysis which provides ‘the sheen of analysis without its substance’. The authors identify ways of treating textual data which fall short of discourse analysis:

‘writers are not doing analysis if they summarise, if they take sides, if they parade quotes, or if they simply spot in their data features of talk or text that are already well-known. Nor are they doing analysis if their discovery of discourses, or mental constructs is circular, or if they unconsciously treat their findings as surveys’ (Antaki *et al.*, 2003).

Although they prefer not to unambiguously spell out what constitutes excellent analysis, they do suggest that it involves ‘a close engagement with one’s text or transcripts, and the illumination of their meaning and significance through insightful and technically sophisticated work’. In summary, discourse analysis means ‘Doing Analysis’ (Antaki *et al.*, 2003). As well as writing down ideas, oral presentations can also be integral to the process. I presented my initial findings to colleagues and students at a doctoral seminar, which helped me clarify my arguments and further justify my chosen methods. Figure 4 below outlines the process of data analysis. Examples of interview schedules are provided at Appendix E and Appendix F. Examples of worked analysis are provided at Appendix G.

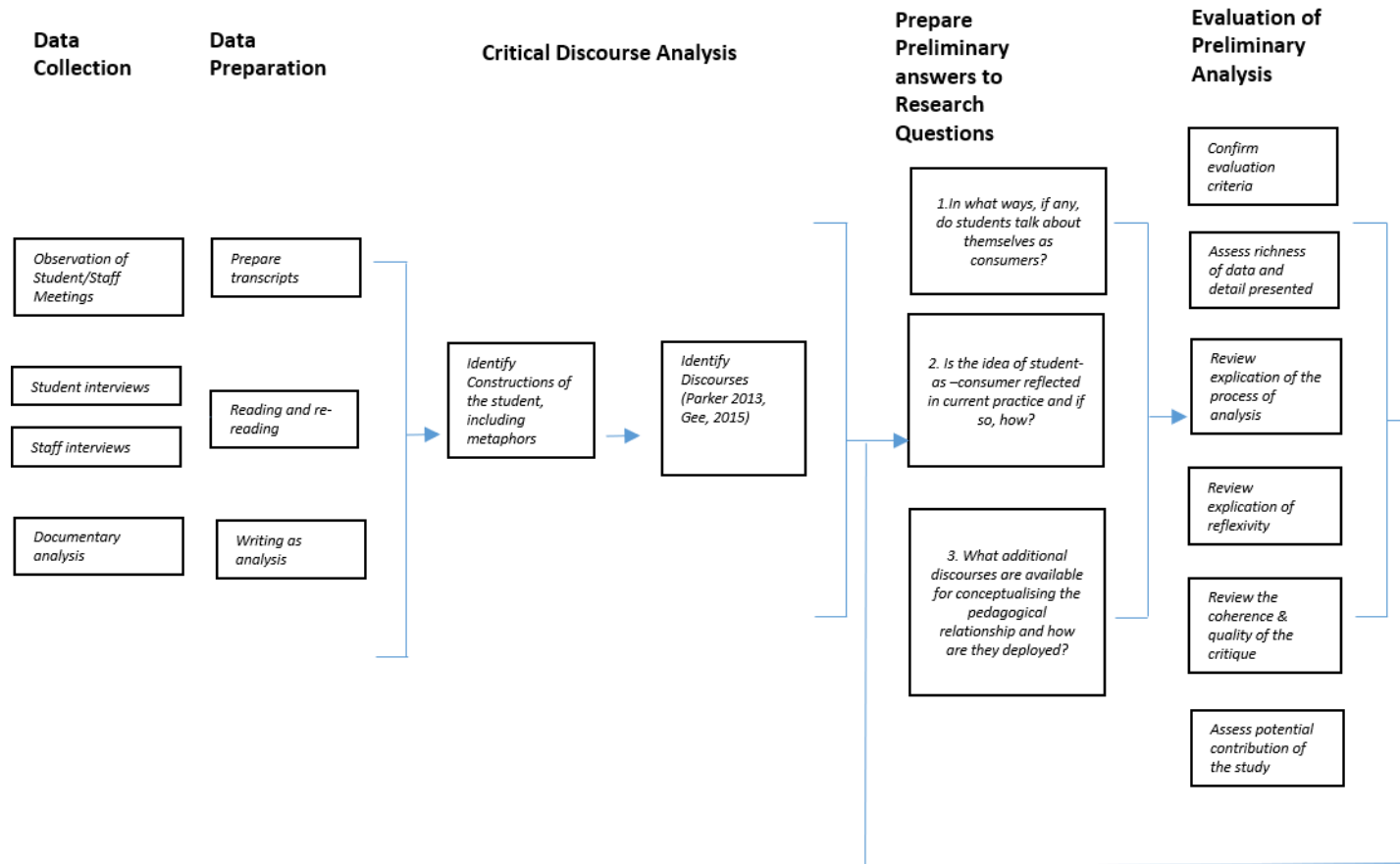


Figure 4: Data Analysis and Methods

3.8.1 Defining the outcomes of analysis: Constructions of the Student

A 'construction' is the creation of an abstract entity which aims to concisely describe how a speaker, for example, a staff member or student, talks about 'being a student'. A construction does not aim to represent the internal or emotional state of an individual but implies a position that can be taken up in a relationship. On its own, the abstraction is a label and does not judge or acknowledge connections with other constructions. Each 'construction' is reductive in that it distils meaning into just one or two words and sheds light on a particular aspect of being a student. For the purposes of this analysis, a construction was deemed to be feasible or recognisable where it referred to actions or activities in a university setting and had implications for student-staff relationships. It would be considered not feasible if it did not relate to activities or actions in the university setting, was not judged to be recognisable by others in the context or had nothing to say about pedagogical relationships.

There are many ways of constructing students and their inclusion in the findings depends on the relevance to the research questions, particularly the first question, which asks how students construct themselves. For this reason, the focus was not on how students construct staff, which would also be an interesting analysis, but less pertinent to the research questions.

As discussed in Chapter Two, metaphors are examples of constructions of the student. The analysis of metaphors can be fruitful due to their inherent conciseness and the way they are widely employed at different levels (the micro, meso and macro), thereby providing insights into issues for policymakers, the dominant culture of universities, the characterisation of students and the nature of pedagogical relationships. Tight (2013) claims that metaphors are useful in three main ways, namely simplification, variety and level: simplification helps with the evaluation of the object in question; a variety of metaphors present alternative competing perspectives to be considered; and occurrence of similar metaphors on different levels allows the comparison of concepts across contexts and through different mediums such as text and speech. Of particular relevance for this study, Gross and Hogler (2005) suggest that metaphors provide a perspective through which the relationship between student and teacher and their context can be more fully understood.

As well as being useful for clarification and understanding, there is a suggestion that metaphors go beyond this and not only reflect the social world but influence our actions. Tight (2013:292) claims that 'the particular metaphors that are used for the student

encourage those involved in higher education to behave in particular ways'. They do this by foregrounding certain aspects of relationships at the expense of others, thereby providing insights into 'what matters' to those involved in the situation. Tight (2013) further argues that metaphors are applied differently by different actors: by policymakers as a lever for change; by higher education institutions as a strategic tool to redefine the academic culture; and by academics to contrast the current environment with the past, and either embrace or resist change. The choice by the academic of one metaphor over another implies different assumptions about the pedagogical relationship:

'Academics might prefer to articulate a perception of the student as client or co-producer, or perhaps a fall-back to the more traditional the student as apprentice, but each of these would imply — if taken seriously — significant changes in the teaching/learning relationship'. (Tight, 2013:303)

However, although the literature review identified numerous metaphors, everyday speech does not always employ neat metaphors. It was necessary to look at accounts for language which indicated how students were constructed, only some of which would be recognised as metaphors. By looking at how these constructions were deployed and combined in accounts at both universities, a set of potential discourses could be identified. The idea of two levels of conversations fits with the two levels of discourse identified by Gee (2015).

Little "d" discourse analysis studies how the flow of language in-use across time and the patterns and connections across this flow of language make sense and guide in interpretation. "Big'D" Discourse" analysis embeds little "d" discourse analysis into the ways in which language melds with bodies and things to create society and history. (Gee, 2015)

3.8.2 Defining the outcomes of analysis: Discourses

The term 'discourse' is frequently employed in a similar way to 'interpretative repertoires' and Edley (2001:202) suggests they are closely linked in two main ways: first, they both have the idea of being 'repositories of meaning' and second, the implications are the same in that speakers may unthinkingly adopt these metaphorical expressions as they are 'enticed or encultured into particular, even partial ways of understanding the world'. In short, they are both committed or tied to the concept of ideology. An interpretative repertoire is 'basically a lexicon or register of terms and metaphors drawn upon to characterize and evaluate actions and events' (Potter and Wetherell, 1987:138).

The difference between the terms relates to the degree of agency of the speaker, with interpretative repertoires employed in a flexible, rhetorical way as opposed to in a Foucauldian sense, where 'discourses are seen to construct entire institutions, such as medicine, the judiciary and science' (Edley, 2001:202). Compared to 'discourses', 'interpretative repertoires' are seen as less monolithic. Indeed, they are viewed as smaller and more fragmented, offering speakers a whole range of different rhetorical opportunities. 'Interpretative repertoires' have been compared to the moves of a ballet dancer in the way that the dancer combines the moves to suit the occasion (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Although the term 'interpretative repertoire' is useful to show a contrast with a Foucauldian discourse analysis, which has a more overtly political aim from the outset, typically to highlight oppressive power relations and increase the voice of those marginalised, it implies that the researcher might seek to identify a neat collection of discourses, which may not be helpful in analysing a set of disparate texts. Parker (1990) suggests caution when using the term 'interpretative repertoire' because of its association with behaviourism and suggests sets of metaphor and statements found should more simply be called 'discourses'. For the purposes of clarity and consistency, the term 'discourse' has been used in the accounts of my findings to refer to patterns which occurred across accounts in the university documents, the interviews and the observations. The term 'construction' is retained to refer to constructions of the student within a pedagogical relationship.

The identification of discourses was guided by the seven criteria detailed by Parker (1992):

1. A discourse is a coherent system of meanings
2. A discourse is realised in texts
3. A discourse reflects on its own way of speaking
4. A discourse refers to other discourses
5. A discourse is about objects
6. A discourse contains subjects
7. A discourse is historically located.

He points out that discourses are coherent systems of meaning and 'statements in a discourse can be grouped, and give a certain coherence, in so far as they refer to the same topic' (Parker, 1992:11). A long-list of discourses was drawn up based on multiple readings of the data and then a further analysis was conducted in order to identify which participants (staff or students) deployed the discourses in each of the two subject areas

and where there were absences. On a practical level, a series of questions were asked when identifying discourses and the answers to these questions are included in the findings chapters: who deploys the discourse?; what are the associated values and beliefs?; what ideas and knowledge are legitimised and undermined by the discourse?; and what subject positions are created in relation to the pedagogical relationship?

Through this form of analysis, light was shed on the different ways that students were experiencing their engagement with the university and their learning in the light of the current policy context. Importantly, this contrasts with a thematic analysis, which seeks out similarities in themes rather than variability. A focus on discourses maintains a focus on the spoken accounts of participants and strategies they might deploy for making sense of the environment. Parker (1992) defines discourses as frameworks for debating different ways of talking about the world.

3.9 Evaluation of research quality

In this section, I outline how I evaluated the quality of the data analysis. This was not a one-off activity but a circular process, as shown in Figure 2. There are general principles against which academic research can be evaluated, such as locating the work with reference to other published work and assessing its persuasiveness and coherence, as well as demonstrating rigour through a systematic process of analysis. There are also specific criteria for evaluating discourse analysis work (Taylor, 2001b: 320-324).

The first step was to confirm the evaluation criteria as there is no commonly agreed set of criteria to assess discourse analysis. The criteria considered were as follows: a clear theoretical underpinning of the study, rigour and transparency of the approach, richness of detail, clarity of the explication and reflexivity, and the coherence and recognisability of the discourses. These criteria do overlap, for example, 'rigour' is linked to the richness of data and detail presented as well as the thoroughness of the explication of the research and analysis process.

During the review process, practical issues were encountered with regards to the presentation and explication of data, for example, when selecting parts of texts to support arguments about constructions and discourses. Extracts of text can typically speak to several points at the same time and therefore careful decisions had to be made about

how best to deploy examples. My early attempts at writing up the first findings chapter, which more closely resembled a thematic analysis than a discourse analysis, were instructive in ensuring that I was attentive to inconsistency and diversity in the data as well as providing a coherent account.

Potter and Wetherell (1987) refer to other criteria such as coherence and the 'fruitfulness' of the research, which is defined as the 'scope of an analytic scheme to make sense of new kinds of discourse and to generate novel explanations' (p. 171). This led to the final stages of evaluation, which involved assessing the possible application of the research conducted and writing an impact statement. In particular, this included assessing the potential contribution of the study to creating new understandings.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter has set out the research approach, which was based on a social-constructionist and qualitative approach. By focussing on staff, student and institutional discourses, disparities and clashes can be highlighted which give insights into the tensions and pressures which arise in this context. Through this combination of methods, the identification of sets of constructions of students and discourses were identified, which provide empirical evidence about students' accounts of learning and teaching, which can then be compared and contrasted with those in policy documents and academic literature. A combination of techniques allowed discourses to be traced across institutions and subject areas in a new way.

Discourse analysis is regarded as a craft skill and, in common with other qualitative studies, my approach evolved and was tailored rather than being an 'off the shelf' application of one particular method. Given more resources, this methodology could be applied in other contexts, such as English research-intensive universities, in order to examine the patterns of discourses amongst those student populations. The application of discourse analysis to texts of interviews and meetings might be of interest to other researchers. In particular, it shed light on some of the difficulties encountered in conducting discourse analytic research and might encourage further demystification of the research process.

Chapter Four: Findings from University A

4.1 Introduction

Following an explanation of the research approach in Chapter Three, this chapter provides the findings from the research conducted at University A. My intention is to explore the different ways in which students are constructed through talk in University A and identify a set of discourses which were deployed, and which shed light on the development of pedagogical relationships in this modern university. Although previous work has addressed the discourse of 'student-as-consumer', authors have not specifically addressed how far this discourse is dominant and how alternative discourses are being deployed in practice in an era of marketisation. The implications of these discourses are discussed in Chapter Six.

The chapter begins by explaining the type and purpose of analysis conducted and how the findings are presented. The remainder of the chapter is divided into five parts, starting with an examination of the University context based on an analysis of documents. The second section examines constructions of students based on student and staff interviews and aims to identify the different ways in which students constructed their identities. Thirdly, accounts of current practices are examined to identify the discourses which occur as patterns across the data. This section draws on the text of Student Forum meetings in the Business School and the Humanities School as well as semi-structured interviews. The discursive practices and the relationships between them are then discussed as a whole. In the last section, conclusions are drawn based on the overall findings.

Type of analyses conducted

The specific types of analysis conducted were explained in Chapter Three, The Research Approach, and a reminder of the techniques applied in the analysis will be outlined in the following sections. The genre of analysis is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). As explained in the methods chapter there are a range of approaches to analysis which fall under this broad heading. Parker (2013) distinguishes four levels of discourse analysis, of which CDA is at Level 3. This type of analysis is characterised by the identification of discourses which are described by Trowler as 'language in social practice conditioned by social structures' and 'more than text' but 'less than culture' (2001:186). Analysis at this level goes beyond a focus on the individual person or group and considers the wider social context whilst still emphasising the

human agency of individuals. As a mode of analysis this falls between a focus on the micro analysis of language at level 1 as would be seen, for example, in Conversation Analysis and the much broader analysis at Level 4 offered by approaches such as Semiotic Analysis and Political Discourse Theory. The analysis focuses as a first stage on the identification of the constructions of students followed by an examination of discourses and the relationships between them. The products of the analysis include a set of constructions of students and the identification of discourses which were being deployed in University A and which provide insights into the pedagogical relationships.

Mode of presentation

Recordings of observations and interviews have been transcribed and represent particular snapshots in time. The criteria for evaluating quality in discourse analysis have been much debated (Jorgensen and Philips, 2002: 171-174) and attention has been paid to rigour, transparency, plausibility and providing a convincing account. Contextual and biographical information has only been provided about participants where necessary, in order to preserve the confidentiality of the participant identities. Where there are authors rather than participants, for example, in the case of the analysis of institutional documents, some relevant background information is given about the institution. This is within the confines of the ethical standards agreed for the study and due care has been taken to avoid revealing the identity of the institution. This means that, for the most part, quotations from the documents themselves have not been included.

The next section will present the context of University A and the analysis of discourses from selected University documents.

4.2 Context and institutional discourses

University A is a post-1992 campus university with a diverse population of mainly undergraduate students of whom an increasing number are the first in their family to attend university, are from lower-income families and who are from culturally diverse communities. The University has strong local competition and is aiming to improve its position in surveys such as the National Student Survey (NSS), and has invested in academic staff with strong research profiles as well as making improvements to the buildings and facilities on campus.

In order to ascertain the discourses available from the university setting, an examination was made of key university documents which were publicly available at the time that the research was conducted. As outlined in Chapter Three, a discourse has been defined as a way of talking about and representing certain ideas or topics that circulate within a specific community. These ways of talking may or may not be taken up by individuals. Discourses were defined as language that is actively employed to achieve something, for example, to construct a position. In other words, it refers to how people use language to construct versions of the social world and give accounts of something.

The documents reviewed were the University Strategic Plan and the Learning and Teaching Strategy, which cover the same period and encompassed the timeframe during which the research was conducted. Direct quotations from the documents have been omitted in order to avoid identifying the University.

The aim of the analysis was to provide background and context for the study, to describe the position of the institution and how it describes its relationship with students. The Student Charter was also added to this list of documents as this provides a representation of the way the University, the students and the Student Union work in partnership. It is acknowledged that these documents did not aim to represent how an organisation currently works in practice, are typically written by committee and have a particular purpose and audience in mind. They are, however, an expression of expectations and aspirations and, in their choice of language, they reveal what is valued. As documents, their existence can be regarded as 'social facts' (Atkinson and Coffey, 1997) which are produced without the intervention of the researcher. They provide opportunities for interpretation and in this case the language can be studied in order to examine the way the contemporary student is being constructed in this setting.

For University A, there were three main discourses which emerged from the analysis of the Strategic Plan: 'transformation', 'employability' and 'knowledge creation'. A brief explanation of the discourse of 'transformation' (Mezirow, 1991) and the discourse of 'employability' (Holmes, 2001; Harvey and Morey, 2002) were described in section 2.5 of the literature review in Chapter Two. The discourse of 'knowledge creation' overlaps with the discourse of 'research-based learning' identified in the same chapter. The University A documents do not position the undergraduate as a student researcher but emphasise the role of staff in delivering 'research-informed' teaching.

The purpose of the Strategic Plan was to set targets for performance and the stated aims were closely aligned to typical measures of university performance such as the proportion of students with first and upper second class degrees, student satisfaction (NSS survey results) and destinations of leavers surveys (DLHE data). The University's stated mission was to transform students' lives, develop employability and create new knowledge through research-informed teaching. A 'high quality' student was one that achieved excellence academically, secured a graduate-level job, was satisfied with their experience and remained engaged with the university after graduation. The 'ideal graduate' was characterised as a confident and critical thinker, valued by employers and a responsible and confident citizen.

The emphasis in the documents was on the University as a provider of services. The offering of an 'attractive, demand-led portfolio' was aimed at maximising recruitment and maintaining financial viability. The idea of 'partnership' was mentioned in terms of 'encouraging' students to get involved in determining the direction of the University, but it was not a strongly developed notion of partnership. The idea of 'community' was mentioned but this was linked to its social and organisational structure and the University's image of itself as 'cosmopolitan and friendly' rather than as a community of learners.

The Strategic Plan showed a blending of different institutional identities. There was a portrayal of the University as a continuation of the past by reference to the university's long history as a provider of education for teachers but also as a modern institution, heading on an upwards trajectory of improvement despite the period of radical change in higher education. The language of business performance was drawn on to emphasise qualities such as agility, responsiveness, resilience, innovation and entrepreneurship which aimed to position the University as a modern, dynamic and competitive organisation.

The Learning and Teaching Strategy document drew on a discourse of education as 'transforming lives and communities'. Students were portrayed as entering a phase where they will 'grow as individuals' in order to reach their full potential. As mentioned in Chapter Two, universities have for some time been constructed as widening access and transforming student lives, for example, through being the 'providers of life chances for individuals' (DBIS, 2009:2). There were multiple references to the employability agenda and the University portrayed itself as a provider of opportunities to develop employable graduates. The Learning and Teaching Strategy seemed mainly focused on being the delivery vehicle for the Strategic Plan and presented a detailed breakdown of elements required to achieve the

strategic goals against named rankings and targets across a range of indicators relating to entry tariffs, continuation, academic achievement, employment and satisfaction. It was not made clear in the document whether students were involved in the creation of the strategy.

The discourses identified in these texts are just one set of discourses which were available to be employed to achieve particular purposes. Of course, participants in the study could also draw on other discourses such as discipline-based discourses, learning and teaching discourses and other recurring conversations happening in the media, schools or in their families. At the end of the chapter the prominence of these institutional discourses will be reviewed.

In the next section, interviews in two departments with staff and students in University A are examined to try and answer the first research question: how do students construct themselves through their talk? Student interviews were included to look at how students characterised themselves. Staff interviews were included as people who interact regularly with students and as programme leaders, they could provide information about the academic framework within which students in each subject area were operating. Through their language they could reinforce, resist or reinterpret the discourses which were coming from the institution.

This section has analysed the discourses in University A documents. The next section presents the construction of students based on interviews with staff and students.

4.3 Constructions of students through talk

As explained in Chapter Three, constructions of students are abstractions of ideas about the student which are referred to in conversations which are circulating in a particular context and may include metaphors. Constructions may overlap in some respects, but they focus on a particular aspect of the way a student is portrayed which is striking or unique. This process of analysis necessarily involves some degree of objectification (Parker, 1992) and constructions can be viewed as representations of the student which are formed as objects by discourses. These tend to recur across the data, although outliers have also been considered in the analysis as well as notable absences.

A key finding from the analysis was that talk revealed multiple and overlapping constructions of the student and examples will be discussed below. An example of the detailed analysis of each construction with associated evidence from the study is provided at Appendix C. The table below, Table 1, summarises the constructions of students which emerged through talk in University A. The table provides a brief description of each construction and highlights by whom the constructions were deployed or not deployed. This is followed by a summary of the findings from the analysis.

Table 1: Constructions of Students in University A

Construction	Definition	Deployed by	Absences
'Paying-customer'	As part of a transaction, the student pays fees and expects services in return	*PL BUS, Students <i>*Abbreviation for Programme Leader, Business</i>	*PL HUM <i>*Abbreviation for Programme Leader, Humanities</i>
'Investor'	The student anticipates that investments made now will bring future benefit	PL BUS, Students	PL HUM
'Novice'	The student is inexperienced and lacking confidence but can progress with appropriate practice and guidance from staff	PL HUM, PL BUS, Students	
'Mini-adult'	Inexperienced and not ready for the big wide world. This implies a need for the student and staff to focus on developing new skills, including academic skills	Students	
'Critical thinker'	The student questions, engages with topics and ideas in a critical way, thereby facilitating a pedagogical relationship based on intellectual engagement with others	PL HUM	PL BUS Students

Construction	Definition	Deployed by	Absences
'Community member'	The student values participation in a community such as a subject community	PL HUM Students	PL BUS
'Party-goer'	The student prioritises socialising over academic work	Students	PL HUM PL BUS
'Pawn'	The student positions themselves as disempowered and manipulated by the university and the higher education system	Students	Staff
'Engaged learner'	The student is interested in learning and actively engages with knowledge and participates in learning activities	Staff and students	
'Disengaged learner'	The student does not participate and is likely to have poor attendance or be passive or a non-contributor in class. There is a distant relationship with staff, if any	Staff and students	
'Strategic learner'	The student exercises choice in order to maximise the use of time and resource	PL HUM Students	PL BUS
'Struggler'	The student struggles intellectually or with university life	Staff and Students	
'Social learner'	The student collaborates with other students and shares learning	PL HUM Students	PL BUS
'Future employee'	The student directs efforts towards securing future employment	Staff and Students	
'Business Partner'	A form of co-operation where staff strike a deal to encourage fifty-fifty participation	PL BUS	PL HUM

The number and range of constructions highlights that students did not consider themselves as a homogenous group and that there are many ways to be a student. The construction of student as 'paying customer' was unsurprising and was typically deployed in order to express entitlement. Alongside this, students described themselves as 'investors' in their own futures, a construction which emphasised that they were expending not only money but effort.

Conversations indicated an awareness about the wider environment and efforts were expended towards securing better employment prospects as 'future employees'. Concerns about their own inexperience were reflected in the idea of students as academic 'novices' but also as 'mini-adults', the latter encompassing their view of university as a period of transition or growing-up. Students' accounts gave a broad range of constructions and included outside influences such as their working lives, families and communities.

Areas of commonality between staff and students were in the way they described students as either 'engaged' or 'disengaged', which were terms which tended to align with ideas of 'good' or 'bad' students. There were differences between the construction of pedagogical relationships by the Business and the Humanities Programme Leaders. The Business Programme Leader described a transactional approach to teaching, whereas the Humanities Programme Leader resisted the construction of the 'student-as-consumer'. Amongst students, subject discipline was not a factor in whether students portrayed themselves as consumers.

Two constructions used which were not in the literature review were 'party-goer' and 'social learner'. The former reflected descriptions of the way students had to make choices about how to prioritise learning and a social life, the latter was a preference for students to work together outside the formal timetable, particularly in response to teaching that they considered unsatisfactory.

These were not only multiple, but concurrent constructions, which were deployed by the same person within the same conversation. For example, Karl portrayed himself as a fee-payer but also had high expectations of university and took a broad and long-term view of what it means to be a student:

'it kind of enhances your life in total' [Karl, year 2 Humanities Student]

He strikingly compared paying fees to buying a second-hand car:

‘it’s a bit like buying a car from brand new – you expect it to do the things that any other new car does – but instead you get like a used car – it does half of the things you expect it to do. It’s a bit of a weird metaphor but..’

He seemed to adopt a consumerist stance as a means of expressing his entitlement whilst retaining a longer term view of the benefits of education. By using the car metaphor, the student reduced the university experience to a transaction in which he was only a recipient of education and constructed the university as responsible for the customer experience.

The absence of constructions was also considered in the analysis. For example, there was a lack of emphasis on the student as a ‘researcher’ or a ‘scholar’ or a ‘future citizen’, despite these constructions of the student having been identified as ideal, based on the analysis of institutional documents for University A. This points to a potential variance between the institutional discourses and those deployed by staff and students.

There was also a lack of emphasis on the student as an ‘independent learner’ who is ‘able to take full responsibility for their progress and achievements’ (Leathwood, 2006:614). Students largely portrayed themselves as wanting and needing direction. Whilst students such as Karl actively sought feedback and guidance in order to improve his work, he also contended that, as a fee-payer, he should not be expected to do it all himself, thereby suggesting that his personal responsibility for his learning was diminished by his construction of himself as a paying customer.

In summary, a range of functions of the constructions were identified, including:

- positioning the student as a ‘paying customer’
- expressing the idea of students as investors in the future
- suggesting views about ‘good’ and ‘bad’ ways of being a student
- highlighting the aspects of being a student that impinge on the learning and teaching arena, for example, ‘party-goer’ or ‘community member’
- protesting against the university, for example, ‘pawn’, and
- drawing attention to the difficulties of being a student, for example, ‘struggler’.

As outlined in Chapter Three, the Research Approach, the next step towards the identification of discourses was the consideration of what the speakers accomplished through these ways of speaking, what these suggested about the dominant 'ideal' pedagogical relationship and what this revealed about the broader context.

The next sections present the discourses in the talk of staff and students at University A which relate to pedagogical relationships. Other weaker discourses are also considered at the end of the section. Weaker discourses were defined as discourses which depended on constructions of students which were not taken up strongly in student talk. The discourses inevitably reflect the preoccupations in the conversations of students and staff during the period of the research and the relative importance attributed to different identities and worldviews by the participants.

4.4 Discourses in current practices

Five discourses present in the talk of staff and students were identified at University A and which relate to pedagogical relationships. These were named as follows:

- 'Students under pressure'
- 'Exercising autonomy'
- 'Satisfying the customer'
- 'Contractual obligations'
- 'Trajectories of student development'

The identification of discourses was guided by the seven criteria suggested by Parker (1992). He points out that discourses are coherent systems of meaning and that 'statements in a discourse can be grouped, and give a certain coherence, in so far as they refer to the same topic.' (Parker, 1992:11). A long-list of discourses was drawn up based on multiple readings of the data and then a further analysis was conducted in order to identify which participants (staff or students) deployed the discourses in each of the two subject areas and where there were absences. The five discourses identified represented different ways of talking about pedagogical relationships and which could be supported with vivid examples from the talk. A further three discourses are discussed in this section which were either notably absent or which were not taken up strongly in student or staff talk.

'Students under pressure' focused on students' struggles on their journey through university and how they encountered conflicting pressures. 'Exercising autonomy' reflected the perspectives of students who constructed themselves as active decision-makers about participation in their learning activities. 'Satisfying the customer' focused on the positioning of students as paying customers and staff as service-providers. 'Contractual obligations' focused on the adoption of multiple and shifting student positions in relation to their perceived roles. The fifth discourse concerned the development trajectories of students, in particular the recurring idea of independent learning.

A summary table of these discourses is presented at Table 2 and is followed by an explanation of each discourse.

Table 2: Discourses - University A

Discourse (Deployed by)	Associated values and beliefs	Ideas and knowledge legitimised/undermined	Subject positions created in relation to the pedagogical relationship
1. 'Students under Pressure' (Staff and Students)	Students are experiencing pressures around fitting in academic studies with their lives beyond their studies	Legitimises – student lives as complex Undermines – student as just a scholar	Staff as a resource Students as strugglers, strategic learners
2. 'Exercising Autonomy' (Students)	Studying is just one of life's priorities. Students make choices about their priorities and the best way to study. Disengagement can be a choice	Legitimises – decisions to participate or not based on perceived quality, calculation of value-for-money or opportunity cost Undermines – idea of a university as a place primarily to study	Staff relationships as just one factor to consider. Face to face interaction as not central to student development Students positioned as agents exercising choice
3. 'Satisfying the Customer' (BUS Staff, Students)	Student satisfaction is a priority. Reworks the relationship with student as a 'paying customer' and staff focus on improving service provision. Focus on achievement and success, e.g. through a business partnership	Legitimises – transactional learning, adapting the curriculum in response to student wants and needs Undermines – learning for its own sake	Staff as accountable for student satisfaction, responsible for 'delivering' education Students as keeping their side of the bargain

Discourse (Deployed by)	Associated values and beliefs	Ideas and knowledge legitimised/undermined	Subject positions created in relation to the pedagogical relationship
4. 'Contractual Obligations' (Staff, Students, University)	There are sets of obligations associated with different relationships by which students and staff abide. Both written and unwritten rules apply	Legitimises: relationships as a set of organisational interactions, with social and moral obligations which need to be defined Undermines: idea of emergent and informal relationships	Students as constantly evaluating whether obligations have been met, judges of reasonableness Staff as constantly explaining and redefining their obligations
5. 'Development Trajectories of students' (Staff, Students, University)	Student as evolving in different ways, for example, through a process of transformation, becoming independent learners or through transactional learning	Legitimises: Role of staff and the institution as pivotal in shaping learning and teaching according to pre-defined patterns Undermines: More flexible study patterns	Students as the object of creation, rather than self-creating Staff as facilitators of student development
6. 'Community' - weak (Students, Staff)	Refers to a community either a) within the University as a learning community, a group of people with shared interests and actively engaged in learning from each other, or b) beyond the University	Legitimises: a) special bonds between certain groups, e.g. subjects b) specific practices e.g. foregrounding family in decision-making Delegitimises: foregrounding the interests of the individual	Student as active learner Staff as active facilitator of learning Student as having obligations outside the university, e.g. to family Staff as outside this community

Discourse (Deployed by)	Associated values and beliefs	Ideas and knowledge legitimised/undermined	Subject positions created in relation to the pedagogical relationship
7. 'Students-as-partners' (Not deployed)	All participants are actively engaged in a process of learning and working together, both for the participants' and the wider community benefit	Legitimises: staff and students learning from each other Undermines: tutor-led learning, a body of knowledge to be transferred to the student	Student as responsible to others and self, trusted to take on new roles Staff as both learner and facilitator
8. 'Knowledge Creation' - weak (University)	Knowledge and the university itself are constructed through the joint efforts of students and staff. Teaching and research are closely connected	Legitimises: co-production of knowledge, research-informed projects for the benefit of all the community Undermines: research and teaching as separate activities	Students as co-creators of their education Staff as co-researchers with students

4.4.1 'Students under pressure'

This discourse, deployed by both staff and students, expressed the challenges of being a student and the pressures around how academic studies fitted with their lives beyond their studies. The examples of pressures described below include:

- financial pressures and managing part-time paid work
- family expectations
- competitive pressures; and
- anxieties around achievement and employability.

Although the discourse focuses on students being under pressure, the idea of 'staff under pressure' is also discussed at the end of the section.

This discourse of 'students under pressure' was not deployed in the University documentation. Documents such as the University Strategy focused on portraying positive images of the student gaining excellent academic results and employability skills in order to secure a graduate level position after university. There were variations between the institution's portrayal of the student as a public figure and the private constructions of the students and staff, as revealed in their own words.

Financial pressures

For some students, a consequence of paying fees was financial pressures, including the accumulation of future debt in the form of a graduate tax on earnings or concerns about qualifying for a student loan. For example, Liam, a mature student, previously attended another university where he dropped out of the course. He decided to return to university and was working in a supermarket to help pay his fees as he was ineligible for a student loan for the current year:

'I feel how hard it is. Because I do work. I work part-time for Waitrose and the hours I do – I don't mind that I have to work there, it's cool – it's a good job. But I see how much I have to work to kind of pay it off. So I now see the kind of level where it is. It's a lot of money which we're paying'. [Liam, Year 2 Business Student]

There was a variety in accounts with some students saying they did not think about future payments at all as this would only affect them later, whilst others felt a burden of debt. The impact on learning depended on the student's individual circumstances with some students

prioritising work over study and sometimes having little choice about their paid working hours. The Humanities Programme Leader portrayed how working students would be unable to fully take advantage of learning opportunities:

‘a big reason why students skip classes is that they are working and either they can’t get the shifts co-ordinated with the timetable or quite a lot are doing bar work and working in the evening and the night and are too tired in the morning. Work is I think one of the major reasons why they skip classes. Some students are strategic and look at the topics and look at the essay topics – choose an essay topic and attend only the relevant class.’ [Irene, Programme Leader, Humanities]

This excerpt also sheds light on the inequality of opportunities for students with very limited financial resources and the incompatibility of some part-time jobs with full-time study. As indicated by the example above, some students, despite paying fees, and because of their limited means, had to accept work as it arose. However, for a student such as Liam, his financial status was a motivator and the effect was for him to make the most of every opportunity:

‘So, this is why every single lecture, every single seminar anything the University offers me, I grasp at it, you know’. [Liam, Year 2 Business Student]

This example, although unusual in the data, suggests that this discourse could potentially encourage some students to take up opportunities for learning.

Family expectations

Students also described pressures resulting from meeting family expectations and highlighted the influence of other family members on their career decisions. For example, Ava and Liam were living with their families and commuting daily to the campus. Both students had changed their career paths and preferences in order to please their families:

‘I personally didn’t want to come back to university. I wanted to do an apprenticeship or just kind of build my way up because I had a passion for cars. I have a family friend at Audi and they were giving me a sales executive job. But I realised that – because I’ve got two older brothers – and they have not gone to university – so I kind of want to make my parents happy in that sense. At least they can say “one of our child’s got a degree”. [Liam, year 2 Business Student]

‘I feel like now, now that I’m in my second year I feel like I need to make my parents proud. Like I really need to do good. I want to become a business

teacher, so that's my aim. So I really, really need to make them proud. And they're like my motivation. They're my inspiration because you know they've done a lot for me to get where I am right now. So I'm doing everything I can for them and for my own future'. [Ava, year 2 Business Student]

The construction of themselves as either graduates or non-graduates seemed important not just for their future careers but also to their family's status. Ava had originally wanted to be an artist and had previously been offered a place at Art College and then had also considered becoming a cabin crew apprentice. Her parents had discouraged her:

"I was going to do Cabin Crew Apprenticeship. But my parents were like "no, just go to uni. Because at least that way you would have a degree to fall back on if anything goes wrong". [Ava, year 2 Business Student]

From considering these accounts, it seems there might be an underestimation of the role of families in student decision-making in the literature, and by policymakers, who tend to focus on the student as an individual decision-maker. This is further discussed in Chapter Seven as a potential area for further research.

Anxieties around achievement and employability

The Humanities Programme Leader identified some changes in terms of the wider higher education environment related to the way the students increasingly focused on good degree outcomes and the growing anxiety and pressure to do well. She reported that she had discussed this with colleagues and suggested that pressure was less associated with being a 'paying customer' and more about the anxiety to achieve:

'I mean we considered whether they might be more demanding of us in the sense of 'I'm here paying'... We haven't observed that. It's more the personal anxiety to do well.' [Irene, Programme Leader, Humanities]

On the other hand, some students suggested the whole higher education landscape had changed:

'I think the definition of a degree has changed. So if you went to university say in the 70s or 80s you were much more likely to – well you were definitely going to get a job were you were paid more than the average person. And you went to university to do that and the social life was one of the other aspects. But now people go to university to have the social life and pretty much know that they're not going to end up doing anything better than anyone else and they're just

going to end up with a normal paid job. So I think the definition of going to university has changed a lot.' [Tanya, year 3 Humanities Student]

This excerpt highlights the uncertainties around the purpose of going to university and the anxiety around the diminished prospects of gaining a graduate job, thereby questioning the whole premise of the graduate premium and a university education.

Competitive pressures

Students described how they felt pressurised by the competitiveness of the job market, such as this Business student who constructed her Russell Group student friend as being in an advantageous position:

'There's so many more people going to uni now, whereas before a degree it was "oh, wow, you've got a degree" whereas now it's "what degree have you got – have you got a first, have you got a 2:1?" And I do think the university you go to plays a role. I went home and my friend who's at Oxford – his words were literally "I could get a 2:2 or a third, but I'm going to Oxford so it doesn't really matter." [Dawn, Year 3 Business Student]

The Humanities Programme Leader referred to the idea that external pressures weighed heavily on students and that there was felt to be increased competition in the market, such that students claimed that 'anything less than a 2:1 is a fail' and leading to increased personal anxiety:

'there is more concern about the degree classification. The anxiety and the concern about it starts much earlier. And it doesn't necessarily translate to harder work, but they articulate far more – that they really need a 2:1 otherwise "I can't do this or that". That certainly has changed. So the pressure to need to get a good degree is heavy on them. Probably not least because they end up with so much debt. So there is definitely a distinct change here'. [Irene, Programme Leader, Humanities]

Overall, the student talk reflected underlying pressures and anxiety relating to finances, family expectations and future employability. However, some students tended to minimise the pressure by portraying the challenges as opportunities or motivators. Other students minimised financial pressures by deferring the concerns until later. For example, Tanya did not portray herself as being in debt as she had convinced herself that repayments would be affordable:

'I think for me the money is simply just not an issue because I mean by the time we have to pay it back it will be just pennies in our income per month'. [Tanya, year 3 Humanities Student]

Grace also said it was not an issue currently:

'I guess it is because were not paying for it now but in the future it might be an issue'. [Grace, year 2 Humanities Student]

Rachel said she felt the debt didn't seem real now:

'Basically, I know it's put some people off, but for me – it's like – it's not a physical debt that I have to pay off yet, if that makes sense. But yes – at the same time it's like they increase it but I still don't see that debt, you know. Like I'm in so much debt I probably won't be able to pay it for a very long time, but like it's not something I have to worry about right now'. [Rachel, year 2 Humanities Student]

The University also took steps to minimise academic pressure on students through new centrally agreed assessment strategies. An example of this was the implementation of a new assessment strategy in the Business School, where all coursework assessments for the first semester had to be submitted before the Christmas break. One programme convenor told students in the Student Forum meeting that the strategy came directly from the Deputy Provost for Learning and Teaching:

'His rationale was that he did not want – and he wishes every university did that – he did not want his kids to study during the Christmas period. The Christmas holiday is a holiday for you to rest and come back refreshed rather than add stress to yourselves. So there is a clear rationale.' [Lynn, Programme Convenor, Business]

In contrast, staff were under pressure during that same period:

'I think the issue of course we've got is that staff, as I said are frantically busy. We're trying to meet a twenty day turnaround. We're marking over Christmas period into New Year. And we're meeting that twenty working days. [Beverley, Programme Leader, Business]

As seen above, the unintended consequences of minimising pressure on students was to put staff under more pressure. The Business Programme Leader portrayed staff in the Business School as being under pressure. For example, the University's decision to move from year-

long to semester-long modules and implement a standard pattern of teaching had meant trying to cover the same curricula in less time. The Programme Leader might have tried to condense the curriculum or provide less support, however, she felt this was difficult as students were holding her personally accountable for their performance. She reflected on changes over the past years:

‘In going back five years, ten years, we didn’t have students saying “I must get a first”. Firsts were few and far between. And this is – it’s across the sector isn’t it and anything less than a 2:1 is a fail. As a result they are putting more pressure on us, I think, to deliver the 2:1 or the first. They’re almost holding us accountable for the marks that they get – not themselves.’ [Beverley, Programme Leader, Business]

Staff under pressure

Staff in the Business Student Forum meeting described the pressure on them from the institution to provide feedback on coursework within a guaranteed timescale, to answer student emails within forty-eight hours and there was also pressure on all staff to attain high levels of satisfaction on all modules. This pressure was a factor in changing learning and teaching practices. For example, the Business Programme Leader justified her transactional teaching approach because the module achieved high module evaluation scores. The Student Forum also highlighted the practice of the publication of module evaluation outcomes which would create competition amongst some staff to achieve the highest scores or to beat the performance targets. This could potentially leave some staff feeling vulnerable if their module scores were not high, thereby making the focus on student satisfaction more intense. This might also mean that the quality of feedback was sacrificed for the sake of speed, as strict feedback deadlines were applied. In contrast, the Humanities Programme Leader did not portray herself as under pressure, although she acknowledged the pressures faced by students.

4.4.2 ‘Exercising autonomy’

In this second discourse, the student portrayed themselves as having agency and making short-term decisions about priorities based on the context and constraints. ‘Exercising autonomy’ refers, for example, to the way students described how they responded to pressures by making calculated decisions about how they participated or absented themselves from university activities.

Engagement is frequently expressed as binary: the student is regarded as either engaged or disengaged. However, the study showed more complexity and identified different and inconsistent ways that students disengaged from university life and their studies and the consequent implications for the relationships with staff. In the following examples, the students were describing choices they made to skip lectures:

'I had to skip out on a lecture because I had to focus on an assignment. And I had to prioritise if a lecture's really worth it of me coming in... I know I'm missing out on something new that I could learn – [but] I could use those hours to further improve my essay'. [Karl, Year 2 Humanities student]

'I'm not going to lie. I've skipped classes. That's because I live like it's like 40 minutes away by drive, but sometimes in the morning it's just, you know, rush hour traffic and it's like "really do I have to go in?" and you just sleep in. Or, when I had that lesson with that teacher who doesn't really know how to teach I think I can just do it at home. You know sometimes – I only come in uni for two days – but on the other three days when I haven't got uni I do come into uni and do work with my friends. I feel I get more out of that. That's why I skip classes, but other people get distracted by their friends and say "oh let's go out to eat. Let's do that". And they just go out with their friends instead of sitting in classes. But the main reason I do it is because of rush hour'. [Ava, Year 2 Business Student]

The first student justifies how they made a strategic decision to prioritise an investment in good results over an investment in education. In the second example, the student justifies her actions by highlighting a range of reasons for non-attendance including being a commuter student, alleged poor teaching and peer pressure, but with the quality of the lecturer-student relationship as a pivotal factor. The student explains how she used a combination of strategies to make up for the absence, including individual study and belonging to a peer group who study together. There was a concern for learning in both examples which might not be anticipated in the accounts of such students who might typically be considered by the University as disengaged due their lack of attendance. This excerpt shows a radical conception of learning which is in conflict with staff conceptions of engagement. The idea of students transgressing the unwritten rules of the pedagogical relationship is taken up in section 4.4.4 below.

Alongside intermittent participation there were students whose participation declined and they gave up their studies:

'There's a couple that I know that I talk to – just because they don't – they don't really want to be here – they've kind of given up – their grades haven't been that great in the second year when it starts to count – they've given up – they've got other interests and for a couple of them that I know they didn't come here to get a degree, they came here to get away from home, to party a bit, and they've kind of realised that they're not going to get – his words were something like "well I might not even get a degree out of this so I might as well just carry on having fun". So it's a bit of a shock because I think about how much debt we're leaving in and stuff, so for me it's a bit like "ok?!"' [Dawn, Year 3 Business Student]

This portrayal of students who chose fun over studying and whose interests lay outside the University undermined a basic construction of a student as a person who studies.

As explained by staff in the Business Student Forum meeting, the condensing of the timetable to facilitate a student-focused timetable into two days was undertaken in order to achieve higher attendance levels on those days. The attempt by University A to re-timetable programmes to take into account the complexity of student lives seemed to have had unanticipated consequences. With more free days students were free to spend more time outside the campus and develop other interests which then might conflict with their university commitments. This was mentioned in the pilot study by students who chose not live on or close to campus because they spent more days at work than on campus. This freedom might in turn have been contributing to the formation of groups of students 'who've got other interests' and no longer construct themselves primarily as students who study.

4.4.3 'Satisfying the customer'

In this third discourse, three aspects of student and staff talk in University A are explored:

- the portrayal of the student as a 'paying customer'
- learning and teaching as 'service provision', and
- the student-staff relationship as a 'business deal'.

'Paying customer'

Students who characterised themselves as fee-payers portrayed a sense of entitlement which reflected the assumption that paying more should mean higher expected benefits from their studies:

'it's got more and more expensive and students expect a lot more out of their studies since they're paying so much for it'. [Tanya, Year 3 Humanities student]

This foregrounds the contractual nature of the student relationship with the University, which, in turn, could impact on learning and teaching practices. Paying fees seemed to have an impact on student expectations and, for example, on perceptions of the quality of teaching staff:

‘I’m paying nine thousand pounds a year – I don’t want someone that’s not got their full focus. I appreciate that they want to do research and that’s probably their field of study but I want someone that’s got the motivation and dedication to be teaching me to their best ability’. [Dawn, Year 3 Business student]

In this example, the business student positioned themselves as a ‘paying customer’ as a way of expressing entitlement to be taught by a lecturer who was perceived to prefer teaching rather than research and this raised questions about the status and qualifications of lecturers and the necessity of researchers to also be qualified and committed teachers.

As highlighted earlier, students did align themselves with the idea of the ‘paying customer’ and it seemed to give a sense of entitlement:

‘I think we’re paying for a service, the same way you go into a shop and you pay for something – you expect to receive what you’re paying for. So I definitely agree that we are customers to the university’. [Dawn, year 3 Business Student]

Although some students expressed entitlement, they did not describe themselves as empowered customers. For example, the Humanities student representative mentioned the passivity of fellow students and a reluctance to bring forward issues for discussion to the Student Forum meetings:

‘In the third year when I started a lot of people had issues and they wouldn’t go to anyone about them and I was getting sort of annoyed at everyone just moaning about it and not doing anything about it so I just put myself forward’. [Tanya, year 3 Humanities Student]

Karl also mentioned that there was little scope to challenge academic decisions. The following example discusses an example of feedback practice where a student disagreed with a tutor’s feedback:

‘One of my friends, he received feedback on one piece of work which he completely disagreed with. As in it, it said things that were covered in the essay, so he felt he was badly marked or wrongly marked and he raised it himself with

the lecturer. But again sometimes you find there is that divide of – you might do something wrong and the lecturer – it can - it might feel a bit intimidating to raise it. If you've done the question wrong and they say "you've done it wrong" and you think you've done it right, it's a bit like fighting a giant.' [Karl, Year2 Humanities Student]

The power imbalance between the student and academic as the person responsible for awarding grades was portrayed as significant and the experience was described using the metaphor of the battle - like 'fighting a giant'. However entitled the student felt, he described himself as powerless in the face of the tutor's academic judgement. This reflects the fact that academic judgement is beyond question in most universities, but not all students may be aware of this.

Similarly, the Humanities students did not portray themselves as powerful consumers in the Student Forum interactions. Although various issues emerged in the meeting, students tended to portray themselves as generally satisfied:

'there's not much to really say – the class was generally very happy'. [Amber, Year 2 Humanities Student]

Several examples of poor communication by the department were raised, but organisational issues were played down and one student described an incident as just a 'mix-up'. The nature of student questions indicated the students present wanted to portray themselves as keen learners but also wanted the university to take some account of their busy lifestyles, for example, by providing reading materials earlier. Students asked for reading to be posted earlier to allow more time to prepare for lectures. Another example was where readings of fifty or a hundred pages were posted only a couple of days before a lecture and the student representatives complained politely that some students struggled to fit in all the reading:

'it would have been nice in advance rather than like having it the night before'. [Laura, year 2 Humanities Student]

'Service provision'

Unlike in the Humanities Forum meeting, Business students complained about the quality of learning and teaching. In the extract below, staff (Lynn and Victor) were responding to students who were unhappy with a module, complaining that the lectures were 'not engaging at all'.

Lynn: OK and when you say engaging what do you mean by engaging? So what kind of – what is it that you want to see?

Justine (Student): I don't know. Just something interesting about the topic. If that makes sense? I don't know how to explain it – to put it in words.

Lynn: So is it using examples or is it enthusiasm or is it interaction?

Justine (Student): So it's just reading from the slides. It's not engaging.

Lynn: This one we could maybe address through peer observation or

Victor: We can address it, we can look at it.

Chair: Through peer observation. We'll speak to the module convenor.

In the above extract, the students were offered a series of choices and this positioned students as customers, being asked what they wanted and then staff discussing steps to rectify the problem. The lecturer in question, who was not present in the meeting, was then positioned as failing to provide an adequate service. There was no in-depth exploration of the issue, for example, questioning the student's level of participation in the session or the module and no indication that there would be an opportunity for the specific lecturer concerned to give their perspective.

The idea of service provision was further emphasised in a discussion about staff performance against key service indicators, for example, the failure of some staff to respond to student emails within a set timeframe. The Programme Leader emphasised the standard of communication required:

'48 working hours is not unreasonable and we are committed to that and we are reinforcing that....it is a service standard'. [Beverley, Business Programme Leader]

A long discussion ensued about meeting target deadlines for providing feedback on student coursework culminating in the programme leader regretting the inability to monitor whether staff were meeting the 48 hour deadline for email responses:

'there's a post date on Moodle and it will be 20 working days from when you handed in. And, and we can monitor that because we can go into Moodle sites and we can see "Ah – no feedback! Post date is up!" We can monitor that. What we can't monitor is people replying to emails within 48 hours. It's impossible for us to monitor that. But we can make our best endeavours to remind staff of that, of that commitment and the use of our out of office replies and things like that.'

[Beverley, Business Programme Leader]

One staff member mentioned having to make a trade-off between the speed and quality of feedback and was proud of the delivery time of feedback to students on a large final-year module, saying:

'we actually got it back – I got it back within a week! I mean that was tough – we got it back within a week – really tough!' [Victor, Staff member, Business School].

As illustrated here, this intensification of marking seemed to be linked to a desire to satisfy the students. This seemed to promote the prioritising and monitoring of speed over the quality of staff feedback to students and also a subsequent culture of competition as staff positioned themselves as high performers, exceeding targets and expectations set by the school.

The Business Programme Leader portrayed herself as selling an excellent service to students, as a successful and experienced academic and a 'very safe pair of hands', teaching on an accredited programme, and who could deliver 'what students want'.

'We're selling – "get this degree, get all these exemptions, fast-track into the profession!'. So my job is to make sure they have the best chance possible of getting through those exams'. [Beverley Business Programme Leader]

A culture of performance monitoring was described which was operationalised through instruments such as module evaluations, where she felt the module convenor was personally accountable for the module performance, and through the institution's monitoring of the NSS results. She positioned herself as resigned to a service delivery model of teaching, justifying the institutional changes as a positive development but expressing some underlying discomfort.

In the following extract, the instrumental language used and the repetition of 'what they want' shows a frankness and unapologetic determination about her position:

‘So for me, I think what is it they want? I know what they want and I will deliver what they want and I therefore will get fantastic module evaluations. But other people would look at what I do and how I teach and say ‘that’s terrible! All you’re getting them to do is manipulate numbers in the right order! Yes – you’re right-I am!’ [Beverley, Business Programme Leader]

She positioned herself as having come to an acceptance of this teaching approach and willing to defend it. This fits with the idea of the student as receiving a service rather than as engaging in a learning partnership. Students were not expected to struggle intellectually and feel discomfort along the way. Ironically, it was students who were the ones asking for more intellectual engagement. Beverley said that she knew from student feedback that they would like more opportunities to discuss real world examples rather than crunch numbers but had made a conscious choice in favour of teaching to the test:

‘They tell you they want intellectual engagement but actually what they want is eighty percent in the exam. And it’s hard to deliver the eighty percent in the exam and the intellectual engagement in the amount of teaching time we’ve got. If I had more teaching time I could deliver the intellectual engagement and the eighty percent in the exam. What is more important to them is the eighty percent in the exam’. [Beverley, Business Programme Leader]

Overall, Beverley characterised students as instrumental learners and customers of the University, expressing some discomfort about the position in which she found herself. As well as positioning herself as accountable for student learning, she was nevertheless resigned to the service delivery culture.

‘Business Deal’

The transactional approach to learning was encapsulated in the idea of the pedagogical relationship as a deal, where staff had to ‘deliver’ their part of the bargain and students needed to provide some input:

‘I expect them to meet me halfway...It works well when it’s a fifty-fifty’.
[Beverley, Business Programme Leader]

This language legitimised a transactional approach to learning which aimed to make sure all students reached the same standards. The process of learning described the mastering of techniques and did not allow space for critical thinking. There was an emphasis on providing a package of learning and making sure that the student felt secure and supported:

‘they know what they are going to get – they know that I’m going to support them – they know they’re going to be given a lot of practice for the exam’.
[Beverley, Programme Leader, Business]

Her account drew on the language of service provision with the ‘delivery of programmes’ taking precedence over wider learning and feeling accountable for student performance.

‘So I think they are increasingly demanding of high marks and they are increasingly regarding high marks as our job to deliver...we are in a way, I think, we are complicit in this idea that it’s our responsibility to deliver them the good marks’. [Beverley, Programme Leader, Business]

In the example below, the Business Programme Leader explained how she provided extra reading materials, which she justified on the basis of delivering what students wanted:

‘in response to interim feedback I put more of those kind of articles in. More of the ‘here is the sort of thing you should be reading before you go to job interviews. Here it is – I’m making it available for you. You wanted more articles, you wanted more reading, here it is! But whether you’re reading it I don’t know’.
[Beverley, Programme Leader, Business]

However, the staff member’s suspicion that students might not read the material also undermined the construction of the students as motivated engaged learners. This highlights the way that the deployment of discourse may alter the student-staff relationship by setting low expectations.

Another aspect of the approach was a focus on short-term gains in learning experiences. In the Business Student Forum meeting, one student questioned the value of lectures on a research methods module which were not directed explicitly at helping them with an assessment:

‘a lot of the people are feeling that the lectures aren’t really relevant because they aren’t helping us with our proposal’. [Student 3, Year 2 Business Student]

The value of sessions were justified by staff in relation to the development of career skills and enhanced employability. It was actually a third year student in a Student Forum meeting and not a staff member who emphasised the benefits of this module and the transformative nature of learning:

'coming into my third year, doing my dissertation, like having to go through the entire process myself, it's helped me. You don't actually appreciate the course until you're asked to do something at a higher level'. [Noah, Year 3 Business Student].

Although there was a claim that a 'deal' had been struck between staff and students, the practices described in the interview with the Programme Leader went beyond a 'fifty-fifty' arrangement and showed a huge personal commitment to student support. The lecturer was providing what amounted to a helpdesk service over email to students who were stuck with calculations:

'what they expect to do is to email me and for me to reply and for me to reply within a reasonable amount of time – which we say is 48 hours – and generally I'm replying probably in most cases the same day. So they expect email support' [Beverley, Business Programme Leader]

The impact of the language was to position staff as deal-makers and their side of the bargain was to ensure all students gained high grades. However, it also worked to limit students' expectations of themselves, putting boundaries around student input into the learning process, meaning that the pace and scope of student learning was regulated by staff. For example, there was a strong focus on acquiring knowledge which was required to pass exams, which resulted in some students complaining of repetitive and unchallenging teaching sessions. In the following example, the student described her frustration in classes towards the end of the semester and, in particular, how the lecturer repeated parts of the lecture in the seminar class to ensure all students were at the same point. When asked whether the repetition was more prominent during revision sessions, the student responded as follows:

'No. That's what – and it frustrates me that I feel like I don't want to go – it's just the lecturers are boring and I do appreciate that some modules are boring – some of them are hard – some of them aren't as engaging as others – but there comes a point when the lecturer is repeating himself time and time again and you're just like trying to get as much out of it as you can and you feel like you're hitting a brick wall and I know that a lot of my friends do that because they approach a module – "look we've done that for the last two weeks, he's repeating himself" and they're like – "I'd rather just go to the library and teach myself what I need to learn, following the lecture slides". Because they are like "I can go through that in ten minutes". [Dawn, Year 3 Business Student]

Overall, the discourse of ‘satisfying the customer’ positioned the staff as responsible for delivering education to meet student perceived wants and needs and accountable for module performance as well as student outcomes. Students in turn were ‘paying customers’ expressing entitlement at times but not positioning themselves as demanding consumers.

4.4.4 ‘Contractual Obligations’

As mentioned in Chapter Two, although instruments such as Student Charters are popular in universities, the nature of a contract in higher education is under discussion, with a call for clarification of the social contract (Maassen, 2014), whilst Regan (2012) argues that, regardless of financial arrangements, there remain obligations which stem from the voluntary nature of roles undertaken by staff and students. Fulford (2018) argues that contractual arrangements with students are problematic, as education cannot be reduced to a predetermined set of experiences.

In this fourth discourse, relationships were perceived by students as complex and a variety of configurations of the pedagogical relationships were described which highlighted tensions between students and staff and between students and the University. As indicated earlier in the chapter, depending on the context, students positioned themselves variously as being paying customers, members of the University community, novices, student representatives, as well as being in a business arrangement with University staff. There was a focus in these accounts on different obligations arising from these constructions of student-staff relationships. For example, one Humanities student used the idea of being a fee-payer to justify expecting more help from staff:

‘I mean academic life is all about – especially with history – you have to do your own research – but there is only so much you can do. You kind of – I mean – you don’t pay this money for nothing. And you kind of expect the experience of the lecturer to inform you more on certain topics because there’s only so much you can read.’ [Karl, Year 2 Humanities Student]

Here the payment of fees is linked to an increased reliance on staff experience to assist the time-pressed student.

The students in university A said they made limited use of support frameworks that were provided by their departments to develop and enhance student-staff relationships. For

example, Ava said she hadn't seen her personal tutor this year and was unaware of the name of her tutor:

'in first year they used to have sessions in a classroom to talk about your progress and see how you're doing. I feel like in second year they just haven't really made an effort'. [Ava, year 2 Business Student]

In the extract above, the talk of staff obligations is deployed to blame others and absolve herself of any responsibility for seeking out her tutor. An exception to this was Liam, an older student, who proactively contacted his personal tutor:

'I wanted to know my personal tutor. I wanted to meet them. So I got their email. I emailed her...You can talk to them about things if you're worried. You can build a relationship with them which you're comfortable about. Because I've seen that some students are not that comfortable in talking to some teachers. But I'm personally not like that.. .' [Liam, Year 2 Business Student]

For this student, personal tutoring was described as a matter of personal preference rather than an integral part of his education.

However, personal tutoring was rarely seen as well-organised or helpful and these interventions were sometimes understood as intrusive:

'it's just easier to talk to your friends'. [Grace, Year 2 Humanities Student]

'I'm pretty sure I remember our personal tutors saying that we were allowed to come to them for basically any issue but because – it's just like – to be frank – it's a person I don't know coming up and saying "come and talk to me about your life" – I'm not going to do that!' [Rachel, Year 2 Humanities student]

There was an emphasis on personal privacy here but also an outright rejection of the usefulness of the role of the personal tutor and of staff members as potentially respectful, supportive and well-intentioned. From these examples, it can be seen that obligations stemming from pedagogical relationships can include not only the financial implications of being a fee-paying student but also moral and social implications. Moral obligations refer to the student's duty to fulfil their role as a student and would be based on considerations of what is right or wrong, based on a set of values. Social obligations refer to the obligation to follow society's traditions and social etiquette in the interests of society. The students referred to the invitation to see the personal tutor not as an obligation based on their duty

to be the best student they can be, but as a form of optional encounter which they can accept or reject. By depicting the encounter as uncomfortable, this makes the rejection more justifiable.

Because of the varying ways in which staff constructed students and their responsibilities, the moral and social positions a student could take were also varied and the power implications different depending on the circumstances. In the Business School, the discourse of 'satisfying the customer' (embodied, for example, in a transactional approach to learning and teaching) seemed to portray an attempt to make a clear delineation of responsibilities between staff and students but resulted in some radical constructions of the pedagogical relationship, particularly where students felt that staff had not met their obligations. In the following example, Ava described how students actively removed themselves from learning situations:

'As soon as we've got that break, some people leave, they take their bags, laptops and they've gone. They really want to leave, it's so bad. I knew some girl she was telling me "I'd rather go and do some work in the library because this is wasting my time". [Ava, Year 2 Business Student]

In this account, the student justified the actions as a response to poor quality teaching and students seemed to violate the typical norms and rules of classroom practices. Whereas the lack of engagement might be interpreted by the staff member as rudeness, disinterest in the subject, or laziness, this account positioned the student as actively making value judgements about the best use of their time. As previously mentioned, students were prepared to exercise autonomy and constructed themselves as strategic learners, but this is an example of spontaneously violating the unwritten rules of social interaction in the classroom, whereby leaving a session may require some communication with the staff member. Here, the student avoids the interaction by leaving in the break and using self-directed learning as a justification for leaving. Self-directed learning would normally be associated with additional learning which happens once the role and obligations of being a student have been fulfilled. This sheds a different light on non-attendance which in the 'student-as-consumer' model might be regarded as passive behaviour. The idea of choice was used by the student here to explain non-engagement with the university as a rational decision rather than just laziness.

This example highlights variations in understanding about the role of a student and about student disengagement. In both staff and student interviews, students who did not attend

were portrayed as stereotypically 'bad students'. However, these accounts shed light on the way choices about participation were represented by students. Whereas staff might refer to non-attendance as a failure to engage, students described how they actively exercised choice about the use of their time, for example, by abruptly leaving a class they felt was not worthwhile. In the above example, there is a contradiction between the rhetoric of self-directed learning and the perception of it as breaking the rules.

The construction of the student as a partner in a fifty-fifty deal also raised questions for staff about their obligations and, in the following example, a key dilemma in the balance of power in the pedagogical relationship is highlighted:

'The question is – do we have a right to tell them what it is they should be consuming for their nine thousand pounds a year – that's where the tension is, isn't it? Because we're saying that for your nine thousand pounds a year you should be curious and intellectually challenged and they're saying no actually for my nine thousand pounds I want a 2:1 or a first.' [Beverley, Business Programme Leader]

In this excerpt, the Programme Leader highlights the effect of the 'student-as-consumer' discourse which was to place staff and students in tension with one another and set the ideal of intellectual development against the goal of academic success.

Students' accounts of their relationship with the University also differed from the University's portrayal of the student role. Whereas the University documentation reflected the student journey as an expected progression towards achievement of graduate status, students' accounts revealed concerns about academic failure. Students' responses to poor academic performance included the minimising of any concerns and focusing on the social side of University, thereby questioning the very idea that being a student necessarily involved studying:

'some students just see the social aspect of it more than the whole academic aspect of it'. [Karl, Year 2 Humanities Student]

Differences in opinion about what university is for and the mixed expectations of the future job market were also reflected in students' accounts. Some students questioned the benefits of going to university, thereby calling into question the idea of the graduate premium. Furthermore, there was some discomfort amongst some students with the National Student

Survey (NSS). One student claimed that the NSS was used by the University as a political tool, made students feel like consumers and she expressed a dislike for the advertising by universities on social media:

‘I see it very much as a consumer experience as if I was buying a car, sort of thing. And one of the main things of that is the National Student Survey. I’ve just recently done it. And it sort of – when you answer it, it’s all these questions where its just – you know it’s going to be so that other people can read it – and it sort of feels weird to me that anyone would care about that because it’s a university at the end of the day and you go there to get a degree’. [Tanya, year 3 Humanities Student]

This strained relationship with the University and the mixed views about the purpose of going to university along with low expectations of future outcomes seemed to undermine the potential for positive relationships.

Overall, the discourse of contractual obligations highlights the uncertainty and dilemmas resulting from the positions which students and staff were adopting in response to the higher education environment and the complexity of obligations which were moral, social and political as well as financial.

4.4.5 ‘Trajectories of student development’

This fifth discourse focuses on the different ways that students were expected to learn and develop as they progressed through university. In University A, this process was portrayed as happening through different pedagogical approaches. Three approaches are explored here:

- ‘transformation’
- ‘delivering learning’, and
- ‘creating independent learners’

‘Transformation’

In the earlier part of this chapter, different constructions of the student were presented. Underlying the different constructions were varying assumptions and expectations about how a student would develop in the course of an undergraduate programme. The discourse of ‘transformation’ expresses ideas about how students change over time through their experiences at university. Different ways of deploying a transformation discourse were identified and examples are discussed below: transformation as improving life chances,

transformation as producing successful graduates and transformation as the development of the whole person.

In the University A institutional documents which were analysed, the discourse of 'transformation' was deployed to suggest that through education the institution was able to transform both the individual and their life chances. The idea of better life chances is closely correlated with socioeconomic status and was deployed to suggest that all student applicants to the University would be transformed into successful employable graduates. The term 'better life chances' could also suggest that the institution enabled students to break with a past which was somehow unsatisfactory, and to move away from the present world to something better.

The transformation discourse did not match the constructions of the students by themselves in University A. They did not position themselves as overcoming disadvantage and said they had chosen the University for a range of different reasons. In addition to university, they suggested that a range of attractive alternative and competing opportunities were available to them such as trainee positions and apprenticeships. Moreover, some students were not just focused on their individual journey but portrayed themselves as very committed to their families and current communities. Becoming a graduate was described as not just important for themselves but very significant for their family. Not all students were focused on graduation as an end point of the transformation. For example, one of the humanities students regarded a gap year following graduation as a key period of reflection before deciding about next steps:

'I was thinking about doing a gap year before I came to university to get some experience and some money - so I kind of want to do that once I get back out – just sort of gain that extra bit – because before I left it was more like an independence thing but now I have that I kind of want to take that and do something with it... I know I'm not quite ready to make any huge decisions just yet, so I'm probably going to sort of like - probably get as much experience as I can – once I come out for a little bit, give myself like a set time then branch out and see what I want to do after that. [Rachel, Year 3 Humanities student]

'Transformation' was also associated with a discourse of success which assumed that all students were on a common path towards graduate employment. Connected with this was the assumption that all students would experience education in the same way, for example, through a curriculum for employability. The students interviewed had a richness and variety

of experience from their part-time jobs, from their pre-university experiences and had different ambitions. The University documentation therefore seemed to underestimate the variety and contribution of the individual and their personal experiences or struggles. It focused on the trajectory of the student as part of a homogenous group and it downplayed wider possible interpretations of transformation such as enabling a broader education or potentially transforming society for the public good through the development of an awareness of citizenship. There was no mention in the data of students acknowledging the University's notion of graduates transforming into future citizens and this was a notable absence compared to the University's stated ambitions.

In terms of pedagogical relationships, this discourse legitimised the idea of a common path towards being a graduate and undermined the idea of students as active explorers or strugglers. As such, it could potentially restrict opportunities for students to proactively explore and learn in other ways. 'Transformation' can imply the development of the whole person and this was rare in the data, although one student neatly summed up their education as being about enhancing their life:

'so the more you learn, the more you get things, it kind of builds you'. [Liam, year 2 Business Student]

'Delivering learning'

'Delivering' learning suggests a transactional relationship between staff and students and has been associated with the spoon-feeding of students, teaching to the test in an instrumental fashion and setting unchallenging tasks. Some accounts described how this was built into the learning and teaching approach in the Business School and all modules in the curriculum had to follow the same pattern of having a formative element of assessment which was designed to prepare students for the single summative assessment. Other students were appreciative of teaching that was directive and directly linked to the assessments. Most of all they were appreciative of reassurance and staff that made them feel confident. The extract below refers to feedback practice by a 'good lecturer' on a formative assessment:

'She'll have jokes but then she'll get down to it. She'll be really serious about the work and tell us what we need to do and stuff. Like we had this formative feedback for our work and she spent like two hours on that. Even if it's like a formative, you know feedback, she spent so long explaining it to us and what we needed to do. And I felt like that was so good. I emailed her back and said

that was really helpful, thank you for the seminar. That was really helpful'. [Liam, Year 2 Business Student]

However, students did not describe themselves as passive, they were looking to participate. In this example, they criticised a 'bad' lecturer for not enabling participation:

'He could just explain things better or just break it down so people can participate rather than just throwing something at the class and being like 'what is it? Answer it!' [Ava, Year 2 Business Student]

Furthermore, there was a risk of breaking down tasks and over-simplifying tasks to the extent that students became bored, particularly towards the end of the term. The Business Programme Leader described how she was setting repetitive tasks and practice exercises and acknowledged that it was the students themselves who began to demand more engaging activities such as case studies.

A focus in the university on consistency of feedback practices and the prompt delivery of feedback, which had to be provided online within strictly specified timelines, seemed to have unintended consequences. For example, in the following excerpt from the Business Student Forum meeting, a first year Business student raised the issue of formative feedback and expressed some dissatisfaction about both the amount and quality of feedback:

Sophie (Student): We did, like, a draft journal entry which we got back, but it probably had like twenty words written on it!

Victor (Staff Member): From our point of view there's obviously going to be a trade-off between getting it back to you fast and putting more feedback on. Because we've got to do all the sort of reading and marking and so on.

A negotiation on the timing and speed of the delivery of feedback ensued. Humanities students also disliked online feedback because of its brevity and impersonal nature, and noted the negative effect on student-staff interactions:

'I don't feel it's a very personal approach. I'd rather sit down and talk to someone about – ok, this went well, this didn't – why it didn't. I feel like a couple of sentences online isn't very helpful.' [Karl, Year 2 Humanities Student].

'Creating independent learners'

This aspect of the discourse encompassed the idea of university as a place for students to become ready for the world beyond as well as to become self-directed learners, able to manage their own studies and think for themselves. In this approach, typically 'the real world' was constructed as artificially separated from everyday life, despite the fact that a large number of students were already playing an active part in this 'real world' through their paid employment and their roles in their families and communities. This development was described by Humanities staff as a staged process whereby students, by following a clearly specified path and meeting specified learning outcomes at each level, would become successful students. This approach was supported by the idea of going through planned stages of the curriculum each year. There was an expectation of being a particular kind of student, for example, the first year student would lack confidence and need high levels of support, compared with a third year student who was more capable.

The Humanities Programme Leader described a process of creating academic fitness, using a framework for learning, focusing on developing confidence and building up competencies, for example, in how to go about analysing set readings. It relied on a staged approach which differentiated between students in different year groups. She described how in her teaching she provided a framework for learning whereby expectations of students were gradually increased year on year. For example, first year undergraduates would be completing quizzes and short assessments and third years analysing academic papers. The effect of this was to create one anticipated speed of development for a student, which might be unchallenging for some students.

Expectations of becoming 'independent learners' were described by students as starting in school, for example, there was an account of a school setting tasks such as writing a 'university-style essay' and stressing the idea of doing things on your own. However, as suggested in the following extract, some students in University A found first year at university less academically demanding than A-levels, which undermined the discourse of 'independent learning':

'there was always this element of 'if you can't do A-levels, you can't do university' but when I got to the first year I found it much easier than A levels, which I know a lot of people say' [Tanya, year 3 Humanities Student]

Talk of 'independent learning' occurred primarily in staff talk and more so in the Humanities school than in the Business School. Students in University A did not generally refer to themselves as either 'independent learners' or 'critical thinkers' and tended to construct themselves as needing direction and guidance.

The next section will discuss discourses which were not strongly taken up by participants.

4.5 Weaker and absent discourses

Three further discourses are discussed below. 'Community' and 'knowledge-creation' were less prominent than the discourses identified above. The discourse of 'students-as-partners' was a notable absence in the data.

4.5.1 'Community'

The discourse of 'community' refers to the idea of students belonging to certain groups in their daily lives which have particular shared values and interests. This could refer to either communities within the University such as subject communities, or communities beyond the University. In University A, students mentioned communities outside the university and the importance of family, contrasting with the individualistic discourse of the 'student-as-consumer'. For example, some students wanted to become graduates in order to make their family proud to maintain a position or gain status within that community. As mentioned earlier, Liam said it was important for his parents to say "one of our child's got a degree".

The Humanities lecturer positioned herself and the students within a special learning community, claiming a special subject bond:

'For example, the Classics students know each other and they would come and, for example, tell us if they were concerned about a fellow student. Yes. I've never experienced that with a History student. So the Classics students they communicate closely among themselves but also with us as a team. I am sure they are on Facebook – together in some ways. I don't know.' [Irene, Programme Leader, Humanities]

In this example, this discourse diminished the gap between staff and students and positioned students as sharing knowledge and assigning a special status to certain groups. It undermined the focus on the individual and legitimised the sharing of disciplinary knowledge. However, the conversations of students and staff in the Humanities Forum meeting did not confirm the

portrayal of close-knit subject communities across the discipline and tended to emphasise the distance between student and staff, as exemplified by the Chair himself, who did not have a friendly rapport with the students. As mentioned earlier, students from similar subject disciplines had created their own informal learning communities (without staff) to share ideas and support each other. For example, one Business student belonged to a group of students who would help each other when they were stuck, and second year Humanities students had formed a study group which would meet in the library after classes to study together. This example highlights the attraction of forms of learning which are temporary and emergent. It also contrasts with the individualism of the 'student-as-consumer' metaphor.

4.5.2 'Knowledge-creation'

Although this was identified as a key theme for the University in the documentary analysis, there was limited reference in the data to the co-creation of knowledge, or being part of a research culture. There was little discussion by students or staff of research-informed teaching, opportunities for postgraduate study or the desirability of students developing into scholars or researchers.

For example, students in the Business School Student Forum meeting debated with staff about the point of modules such as 'Business Research Methods', which they described as not immediately relevant as they were designed to build knowledge for students conducting final year projects. One programme leader justified the purpose of research methods modules not in terms of developing research skills but in terms of employability skills. Furthermore, in response to the student dissatisfaction at having to study research methods, the chair of the Student Forum meeting noted that the curriculum would soon be changed. This undermined a construction of learning as open-ended discovery and contributed to a legitimisation of learning as a managed process which was regulated by staff and systems to occur at carefully planned times.

4.5.3 'Partnership'

The discourse of partnership was largely absent in the sense of students working alongside staff in a collaborative way as suggested by 'students-as-partners' or 'students as co-producers', where power is shared in some way (Streeting and Wise, 2009).

In the University documentation, the institution positioned itself as a provider to the student, who was a consumer rather than a co-creator of knowledge. The formality of the Humanities Student Forum meeting reinforced the way staff and student representatives interacted and discussed learning and teaching practices in a routinized and mechanical way. Student representatives had a voice and were heard rather than maintaining an ongoing dialogue with staff. The construction of 'students-as-partners' in the Business School was largely through staff positioning themselves as partners in striking a 'deal'. In the Business Student Forum meeting, staff talk was concerned with interpreting and implementing the management practices recommended by the University or their representatives to improve student satisfaction. This corresponds closely to the depiction of the consumer model below:

'In a model of consumerism, power is cleaved; consumers exert it through their market choices and their complaints to the provider, but the provider makes its own decisions about how to respond to these pressures, through policy and management practice' (Streeting and Wise, 2009:4).

Although the Business 'fifty-fifty' deal could be described as a form of power-sharing, on closer examination, the power of the student was very limited and not often exerted. Students in University A were more likely to highlight their collaboration with one another as fellow learners, setting up social groups for peer support, rather than identify themselves as working in partnership with staff.

Having outlined the discourses for University A, the next section discusses discursive practices as a whole and the connections between them.

4.6 Relationships between discourses

The 'satisfying the customer' discourse links with a consumerist discourse, with a focus on expressing satisfaction or dissatisfaction in pedagogical relationships. The 'student-as-consumer' metaphor was deployed, particularly in the form of the student constructing themselves as a 'paying customer'. However, this was just one of the numerous constructions of the student which was identified. The range of other discourses deployed in connection with student-staff interactions indicates that one single discourse is inadequate to represent the complexity of the relationships.

Discourses are said to be historically located and are part of ongoing conversations in society (Parker, 1992). The discourses are connected in the way they represent different ways of looking at pedagogical relationships. The five discourses construct different representations of student-staff interactions based on different perspectives, and could be said to have connections with contemporary conversations as follows:

- ‘Students under pressure’ focused on the experiences of students and how students coped with conflicting pressures, which impacted on the way they engaged with their studies. This links to conversations about increasing pressures on students in a competitive environment where they compete for jobs as well as grades, and concerns about student mental health (IPPR, 2017).
- ‘Exercising autonomy’ – focused on students challenging assumptions underpinning student-staff working relationships as students decided to participate flexibly with their studies. This links to conversations about freedom to learn and the power balance in pedagogical relationships and the appropriateness of the current structures of higher education provision and support (Macfarlane, 2015).
- ‘Satisfying the customer’ – focused on the student as a demanding fee-payer and the increasing willingness of staff to provide student-centred academic guidance. This links with the ‘student-as-consumer’ metaphor and with ideas around student satisfaction (Molesworth et al, 2009; Williams, 2013).
- ‘Contractual obligations’ focused on the tensions associated with different formal roles adopted by students and staff. This links to conversations about the contractualisation of higher education relationships (Regan, 2012; Fulford 2018).
- ‘Trajectories of student development’ focused on competing philosophies underpinning student development. This links with current conversations about higher education pedagogies which might support or counter the idea of ‘student-as-consumer’ (Lambert, 2009; Healey *et al.*, 2014; MacFarlane, 2016).

Discourses exist in relation to each other in different ways and can contrast, contradict or co-exist and this will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

Having identified the discourses for University A, the final section concludes the findings about the constructions of students and how the discourses were deployed in current practices and considers the prominence of the institutional discourses in the data.

4.7 Conclusions

This summary refers back to the research questions and considers how far students constructed themselves as consumers, how far the 'student-as-consumer' discourse was drawn upon and how alternative discourses were deployed in University A.

The range of different constructions of the student suggested that the student-as consumer metaphor was inadequate on its own as a metaphor to represent the experiences of students and this undermines the idea of students as a homogenous group. The broad range of constructions of students gave insights into the complexity and different ways of being a student. Subject discipline did not seem to be an indicator of how students would portray themselves in relation to the 'student-as-consumer' model. The institutional documents underestimated the variety of perceptions of the student and reflected a limited view of the student and a narrow range of discourses. Although the University documents envisaged the graduate as a responsible future citizen, depictions of the student as a future citizen were rare. The staff and student talk in the interviews and the Student Forum meetings revealed a broad and rich range of constructions and discourses in addition to the 'student-as-consumer' discourse.

Based on the analysis of the interviews it was apparent that the consumerist discourse was prevalent but intermittent in students' accounts of learning and teaching. Overall, the picture was complex and students and students and staff adopted multiple discourses even within the same conversation. According to Trowler (2001:187), 'discourse guides and sets limits on recurrent practices as well as on values, attitudes and taken-for-granted knowledge'. Interactions in the Business Student Forum provided vivid examples of how management practices associated with consumerism were influencing learning and teaching practices. The Programme Leaders in the two subject areas constructed the student relationships differently, with the Humanities Programme Leader resisting the construction of the 'student-as-consumer'.

The discourse of 'satisfying the customer' was deployed by both students and staff. Examples showed that staff who deployed this discourse were limiting opportunities for extending learning, for example, by limiting opportunities to develop critical thinking. Students were, however, typically guarded and respectful in their participation rather than acting as demanding consumers. They adopted a consumerist stance as a means of expressing entitlement but also frequently to highlight a gap between the expectations and reality of service. Concurrent with this discourse, which is predicated on learning delivery and students as recipients of learning, many students described themselves as active participants in learning and some were actively able to devise their own learning strategies, for example, by creating informal social learning groups. This was one of the unexpected consequences of the transactional learning approach associated with the 'satisfying the customer' discourse.

As described earlier in the chapter, academics deployed different discourses, as evidenced by the Programme Leaders, Beverley and Irene. Whereas the Humanities School focused more on developing independent learners, academics in the Business School actively deployed the consumerist discourse. For example, staff in the Business Student Forum described a performance-driven approach, focusing on shortening the turnaround time to mark and provide student feedback in order to gain better student satisfaction. However, colleagues were also portrayed as under pressure due to the unintended consequences of customer-driven approaches.

Language used by the Business Programme Leader reduced the pedagogical relationship to a 'deal', which worked to limit the human and intellectual struggles and pleasures of learning. At one end of the spectrum, student learning was disparagingly described as 'training monkeys to perform tricks'. This serves as a striking visual metaphor and is notable in the way it degrades the student and in its failure to recognise students as diverse and human individuals as well as denying opportunities to develop critical skills. However, academics deploying a discourse of 'learning delivery' simultaneously portrayed themselves as academics highly committed to supporting students.

Overall, the discourse of 'satisfying the customer' was more frequently deployed by staff in the Business School than in Humanities and there were more examples of a transactional approach to learning. In the Humanities department, there was less consistency, as indicated, for example, by the contrast between the discourse of community deployed by Irene, the Programme Leader, and the fragmented relationships with staff described in the Student

Forum meeting. Overall, Programme Leaders seemed to play a key role in-between the University and the students in interpreting and re-interpreting the institutional discourses, which were interwoven with other additional ones. Although the research showed that the discourse of 'student-as-consumer' was drawn upon in accounts of learning and teaching practices, other discourses were also significant and deployed by students and staff to construct the pedagogical relationship in different ways, notably describing students as autonomous learners and as students under pressure.

Discourses of academic development were deployed by staff to show how the students expected to develop over the course of the degree. These were exemplified by language related to pupil-teacher relationships and which suggested that student constructions of the pedagogical relationship inherited from previous institutions were influential. There were few references to research-informed teaching, or the creation of new knowledge.

Overall in the University documentation the idea of the student as an individual achiever overshadowed the discourses of the student as a learner. The 'students under pressure' discourse which was apparent in the interview and Student Forum data revealed a harsher side of the students' experiences not addressed in the University documents. The University's stated mission was to transform students' lives, develop employability and create new knowledge through research-informed teaching. However, the analysis revealed a disparity between the ideal version of the University created in the documentation and the one described by students and staff. The construction of the student as a future employee was aligned in the institutional documentation with a discourse of service provision and treated the student as a future contributor to the economic wellbeing of the country rather than to a community.

Discourses of 'community', 'partnership' and 'knowledge creation' were relatively weak. Evidence presented showed that students portrayed themselves as autonomous individuals who could actively create their own learning opportunities and spaces. They fell short of positioning themselves as demanding consumers. The boundaries and balance of the student-staff relationships were partly defined by the students' powerlessness, for example, in their inability to argue against academic judgements about their work.

This chapter has focused on the findings from University A. Chapter Five analyses the findings from University B.

Chapter Five: Findings from University B

5.1.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the findings from University A. This chapter provides the main findings from the research conducted at University B. My intention is to explore the different ways in which students are constructed through talk in University B and identify a set of discourses which were deployed and which shed light on the development of pedagogical relationships in this modern university. The findings from the two universities will then be discussed in Chapter Six.

The chapter begins by explaining the type and purpose of analysis conducted and how the findings have been presented. The remainder of the chapter is divided into six parts, starting in section 5.2 with an examination of the University context based on a documentary analysis of key documents. Section 5.3 begins with an examination of constructions of students based principally on the analysis of student and staff interviews and aims to identify the different ways in which students constructed their identities. Thirdly, accounts of current practices are then examined in Section 5.4 to identify the discourses which occur as patterns across the data. This section draws on the text of Student Forum meetings conducted in the Business School and the Humanities School as well as semi-structured interviews. Following this, section 5.5 discusses weaker discourses. The discursive practices are then considered as a whole in section 5.6 and the relationships between them are examined. In the last section, section 5.7, conclusions are drawn based on the overall findings.

Type of analyses conducted

The specific types of analysis conducted were explained in Chapter Three, which concentrates on the research approach to the study. A reminder of the techniques applied in the analysis will be outlined at the beginning of each of the following sections. The genre of analysis is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). As explained in the methods chapter, Chapter Three, there are a range of approaches to analysis which fall under this broad heading. Parker (2013) distinguishes four levels of discourse analysis, of which CDA is at Level 3. This type of analysis is characterised by the identification of discourses which are described by Trowler (2001:186) as 'language in social practice conditioned by social structures' and 'more than text' but 'less than culture'. This level of analysis goes beyond a focus on the individual person or group and considers the wider social context whilst still emphasising the human agency of

individuals. As a mode of analysis, it falls between a focus on the micro analysis of language at level 1, for example, in Conversation Analysis, and the much broader analysis at Level 4 offered by approaches such as Semiotic Analysis and Political Discourse Theory. The analysis focuses as a first stage on the identification of the constructions of students followed by an examination of discourses and the relationships between them. The products of the analysis include a set of constructions of students and the identification of discourses which were being deployed and which provide insights into the pedagogical relationships.

Mode of presentation

Recordings of observations and interviews have been transcribed and represent particular 'captured moments in time' (Stevens, 2011: 199). The criteria for evaluating quality in discourse analysis have been much debated (Jorgensen and Philips, 2002: 171-174) and include not only rigour, but transparency, plausibility and providing a convincing account. Contextual and biographical information has only been provided about participants where necessary in order to preserve the confidentiality of the participant identities. Where there are authors rather than participants, for example, in the case of the analysis of institutional documents, some relevant background information is given about the institution. This is within the confines of the ethical standards agreed for the study and due care has been taken to avoid revealing the identity of the institution.

This section has discussed the order and presentation of the chapter. The next section will present the context of University B and the analysis of discourses from selected University documents.

5.2 Context and institutional discourses

University B gained its charter in 1992 and has a diverse student population which has grown significantly in recent years through the recruitment of more international students and has high levels of student satisfaction. It has a strong reputation for student engagement and working closely with students and the Students' Union. The reasons for selecting University B were outlined in Chapter Three and include a commitment to working in partnership with students.

In order to ascertain the discourses from the University setting, an examination was made of key University documents which were publicly available at the time that the research was

conducted. The approach to documentary analysis was described in the methodology chapter, Chapter Three. As explained in that chapter, a 'discourse' has been defined as a way of talking about and representing certain ideas or topics that circulate within a specific community. These ways of talking may or may not be taken up by individuals. A 'discourse' has been defined here as a pattern of language that is actively employed to achieve something, for example, to build a position or speak of an experience from a particular perspective. In other words, it refers to how people use language to construct versions of the social world and give accounts of something.

The documents reviewed were the latest versions of the University Strategic Plan and the Student Charter as well as policy documents relating to engaging students. These were publicly available documents which were issued during the period of the research study. For ethical reasons, direct quotations from the documents have been omitted to avoid identifying the University.

The aim of the analysis was not only to provide background and context but to describe the position of the institution and how it presented its relationship with students. The Student Charter was included as this indicated the way the University, the students and the Student Union wished to work together. It is acknowledged that these documents needed to be analysed carefully and that they may represent how an organisation would like to work rather than current practice, and are therefore on their own only able to provide part of the information required to answer the research questions. The documents would typically have been written by committee and had specific purposes and audiences in mind. As documents produced without the intervention of the researcher, they provided opportunities for interpretation of the institutional perspective and in this case the language was studied in order to examine the way the contemporary student was being portrayed.

The University B documents relating to student engagement were reviewed and the patterns initially identified were 'transformation', 'community' and 'partnership': suggesting that, from the University perspective, a university experience should be based on building collaborative and respectful learning communities and working closely with students as both partners and change-agents. The policy was informed by the principle of collaboration between academics and students, particularly in relation to research projects and the document alluded to the long-standing experience of this in the University. Students were portrayed in the document as co-creators of knowledge and 'experts in their own

experience'. For example, student input and representation were encouraged not only in responding to current policies but in the creation of new ones. There was a strong commitment to working with the Students' Union to facilitate student engagement. Planned changes were described in terms of a transformation of the community which would be achieved by a reshaping of the relationship between staff and students, and which would become more 'personal and exciting'.

The Strategic Plan had been developed in conjunction with the Students' Union which also published a student-friendly version of the document. This underlined the idea of the strategy as a live document rather than a boardroom planning exercise. There was a strong focus on creativity and innovation and an openness about being ambitious and courageous in setting a future direction. The University was also positioned as a community whose research and innovation activities would aim to create a better society. The ideal student was characterised as dynamic, curious, creative, resilient and determined to succeed. As well as partnerships between staff, employability initiatives involving external partners were emphasised as a key aspect of the Strategy. The portrayal of the student as customer did not feature prominently in the documents and the idea of the customer was only briefly mentioned in terms of the provision by the University of 'excellent customer service'.

The Student Charter document emphasised strong values of community, namely a community of learners committed to the academic exchange of ideas. It presented the opportunities and responsibilities associated with being part of that community. It portrayed a close relationship between students, staff and the Students' Union, outlining the shared values and responsibilities of each party. The shared commitment was reinforced in the Vice-Chancellor's statement about the Charter.

In summary, the documents were focused on looking forward as a community, being prepared to experiment and innovate and offered alternative ways of positioning the University other than being a service provider, for example, as a partner with students and external bodies, or as a community of learners. Partnerships with external bodies were sought as a means of ensuring the relevance and currency of the curriculum, enabling research projects and developing employment opportunities for future graduates.

The analysis then looked at the discourses which were being deployed and how these were functioning together. The discourses functioned to create a transformational vision for

higher education for the wider community by 'building excellence' and 'working in partnership'. The discourses enhanced the idea of the University as a forward-looking and dynamic community which was embarking on a period of change, which would mean reshaping the relationships between students and staff whilst maintaining high standards and growing its international reputation. There were very few references to the University as a service provider. Overall, the documents drew on contrasting discourses: on the one hand drawing on long-held values of the institution about the co-creation of knowledge, which underpinned the idea of an established and successful institution, and on the other hand emphasising an ambitious future vision of modernity, innovation and entrepreneurship which was focused on graduate success and securing employment opportunities for students. The strong discourse of working in 'partnership' throughout the documents was deployed to create a sense of optimism and excitement that, through extending its collaborative approaches, the University would achieve its aims, including that of being at the forefront of higher education practice.

This section has analysed the discourses in University B documents. The next section presents the construction of students based on interviews with staff and students.

5.3 Constructions of students through talk

As explained in Chapter Three, this first stage of analysis was included in order to explore the ways in which students were characterised, including those constructions which contrast with the metaphor of 'student-as-consumer'. Previous studies have successfully combined techniques with CDA, for example, the study of mass media representation of Latinos (Santa Ana, 2002) combined a metaphor analysis and CDA.

Each interview was transcribed and analysed separately and then an account of each was written up. A further stage involved the review of the interview accounts to identify the range of constructions of students across the data. This was important preparatory work for the ensuing identification and analysis of discourses in University B. Constructions of students are abstractions of ideas about the student which are referred to in conversations which are circulating in a particular context. There was an expectation that constructions might contradict one another, and this is consistent with a social constructionist approach which considers that individuals may adopt different positions in conversations. As explained in Chapter Two, the questions for the study revolved around how students and staff talk and

associate themselves with certain student identities, which in turn have implications for the relationships between staff and students. In sections 5.4 and 5.5, a discourse analysis extends this analysis by examining particular ways of talking about being a student and how these are deployed in the University.

Table 3 below summarises the constructions and gives a brief description of each one and highlights by whom the discourses were deployed as well as not deployed (absences). There were commonalities and also noticeable differences between constructions of students in the student and staff talk. A more detailed analysis of each construction with associated evidence from the study is provided at Appendix D.

Table 3: Constructions of Students in University B

Construction	Definition	Deployed by	Absences
'Paying-customer'	As part of a transaction, the student pays fees and expects services in return	Students	Staff
'Investor'	The student anticipates that investments made now will bring future benefit	Students	Staff
'Critical thinker'	The student questions, engages with topics and ideas in a critical way, thereby facilitating a pedagogical relationship based on intellectual engagement with others	Staff	Students
'Independent learner'	The student is self-reliant and takes responsibility for their own learning	*PL HUM Students <i>*Abbreviation for Programme Leader, Humanities</i>	*PL BUS <i>*Abbreviation for Programme Leader, Business</i>
'Party-goer'	The student prioritises socialising over academic work	Students	Staff

Construction	Definition	Deployed by	Absences
'Engaged learner'	The student is interested in learning and actively engages with knowledge and participates in learning activities. Is comfortable in learning situations and may proactively seek feedback from the tutor	Staff Students	
'Disengaged learner'	The student does not participate and is likely to have poor attendance, or be a non-contributor in class. There is a distant relationship with staff, if any	Staff Students	
'Strategic learner'	The student exercises choice in order to maximise the use of time and resources.	PL HUM Students	PL BUS
'Struggler'	The student struggles intellectually or with university life	Staff Students	
'Pawn'	The student positions themselves as disempowered and manipulated by the university and the higher education system	Students	Staff
'Community member'	The student values participation in a community such as a subject community	PL HUM	PL BUS Students
'Future employee'	The student directs efforts towards securing future employment	Students PL BUS	PL HUM

There were commonalities in staff and student constructions of students as 'strugglers', and their reference to students variously as 'engaged learners' and 'disengaged learners'. Students and staff in Humanities both referred to 'good students' as being 'independent learners', although staff in both subjects also talked about successful students being 'critical thinkers', for example, Humanities students having 'independence of mind'.

Differences between student and staff talk were evident in the way staff did not construct students as 'consumers' or 'investors' or 'party-goers'. Students did express an increased sense of entitlement when describing themselves as fee-payers, which positioned staff as responsible and accountable for learning opportunities and student satisfaction. They also talked of themselves as 'investors' who anticipated a return in the form of a good degree outcome and better employment prospects.

There were differences between staff around how they portrayed successful pedagogical relationships. For the Business Programme Leader, it was about getting to know the students individually, but for the Programme Leader in Humanities, it was based around the vision of a subject community. However, students did not talk of themselves as members of a community in a physical sense, although they did mention belonging to online chat groups to discuss their studies. Interestingly, they asserted that the reason that online forums worked well was mainly due to staff not being involved or having oversight of these conversations.

Furthermore, there was significant variation between the range of constructions of the students in the institutional documents analysed and the talk of students and staff. Representations of students as 'co-creators' and 'partners' were only weakly represented in the data. There were only limited references by students to the idea of working alongside staff to co-create knowledge. The University documentation made references to a research culture with research-led teaching. Humanities staff did describe the curriculum, particularly in the third year, as being mainly research-led, with dissertations supervised by researchers in the department and students being invited to research seminars. However, students made little reference to themselves as 'scholars' or 'researchers' in the University.

Likewise, there were surprisingly few direct references by students to working in partnership with the University other than in the role of student representative. These important gaps can be accounted for in several ways. First, the authors of the selected institutional documents were concerned with projecting a future vision and an ideal picture yet to be realised. Second, there was a disconnect between the University's perspective and accounts of the experiences of students, or third, it could be that more powerful discourses were dominating.

The next sections present the discourses in the talk of staff and students at University B which relate to pedagogical relationships. Other weaker discourses are also considered at the end of the section. Weaker discourses were defined as discourses which depended on constructions of students which were not taken up strongly in student talk. The discourses inevitably reflect the preoccupations in the conversations of students and staff during the period of the research.

5.4 Discourses in current practices

As explained in Chapter Three, discourses can be defined in a simple way as conceptual generalisations of conversations which circulate and which are recognisable within a specific context and community. They provide insights into how a particular worldview is organised and expressed in language. They reflect and reproduce values and beliefs and provide legitimacy for some kinds of knowledge while undermining others. In doing so, subject positions are created. As conceptualised in Fairclough's three-dimensional model (2010), the situational, institutional and societal contexts are presumed to be interlinked and discourses are assumed to be responsive to changes in language and ideology. Although they are presented separately here, the discourses are viewed as interconnected, potentially overlapping, competing and emerging at different moments to define and express different possible ways of being a student and ways of interacting in relationships with staff and the University.

The aim of the analysis was therefore to identify the different accounts of the social world that co-existed in the texts of interviews and observations, to describe the discourses and explore how they functioned in a specific context. In identifying and describing a small number of discourses, this would necessarily narrow the focus of attention of the research to particular recurring ways of talking about an issue. This is not to deny that other discourses existed, but that the research was viewing the conversations from a particular perspective or interest. CDA is viewed as 'transdisciplinary' and 'bringing together diverse theories to make sense of the object of the research' (Smith, 2014: 64). In this case, perspectives from the field of education, for example, around pedagogy and theories of learning and teaching practices, and from discursive psychology are relevant.

The discourses more strongly represented in the staff and students' accounts and most relevant and impactful for pedagogical relationships are presented first in this section. Weaker discourses ('community', and 'partnership') are discussed in section 5.5.

Five main discourses were identified which were reflected in the conversations and interactions. The main discourses were named as follows:

- 'Students under pressure'
- 'Exercising autonomy'
- 'Satisfying the customer'
- 'Contractual obligations'
- 'Trajectories of student development'

'Students under pressure' focusses on students' struggles on their journey through university and how they encountered conflicting pressures. 'Exercising autonomy' reflects the perspectives of students who constructed themselves as active decision-makers about participation in their learning activities. 'Satisfying the customer' focuses on the positioning of students as 'paying customers' and staff as 'service-providers'. 'Contractual obligations' focusses on the adoption of multiple and shifting student positions in relation to their perceived roles. The fifth discourse concerns pedagogical discourses about the development trajectories of students, in particular the recurring discourse of 'creating independent learners'.

A summary table of all discourses is presented at Table 4 and is followed by an explanation of each of the five main discourses.

Table 4: Discourses - University B

Discourse (Deployed by)	Associated values and beliefs	Ideas and knowledge legitimised/undermined	Subject positions created in relation to the pedagogical relationship
<p>1. 'Students under Pressure'</p> <p>(Staff and Students)</p>	<p>Students are experiencing pressures around fitting in academic studies with their lives beyond their studies</p>	<p>Legitimises – student lives as complex</p> <p>Undermines – student as just a scholar</p>	<p>Staff as a resource</p> <p>Students as strugglers, strategic learners</p>
<p>2. 'Exercising Autonomy'</p> <p>(Students)</p>	<p>Studying is just one of life's priorities. Students make choices about their priorities and the best way to study. Disengagement can be a choice</p>	<p>Legitimises – decisions to participate or not based on perceived quality, calculation of value-for-money or opportunity cost</p> <p>Undermines – idea of a university as a place primarily to study</p>	<p>Staff relationships' as just one factor to consider. Face to face interaction as not central to student development</p> <p>Students positioned as an agent exercising choice</p>

Discourse (Deployed by)	Associated values and beliefs	Ideas and knowledge legitimised/undermined	Subject positions created in relation to the pedagogical relationship
<p>3. 'Satisfying the Customer'</p> <p>(Students)</p>	<p>Student satisfaction is a priority. Reworks the relationship with student as paying customer and staff focus on improving service provision</p>	<p>Legitimises – transactional learning, adapting the curriculum in response to student wants and needs</p> <p>Undermines – learning for its own sake</p>	<p>Staff as accountable for student satisfaction, responsible for 'delivering' education</p> <p>Students as keeping their side of the bargain</p>
<p>4. 'Contractual Obligations'</p> <p>(Staff, Students, University)</p>	<p>There are a set of obligations associated with different relationships by which students and staff abide. Both written and unwritten rules apply</p>	<p>Legitimises: relationships as a set of organisational interactions, with social and moral obligations which need to be defined</p> <p>Undermines: idea of emergent and informal relationships</p>	<p>Students as constantly evaluating whether obligations have been met, judges of reasonableness</p> <p>Staff as constantly explaining and redefining their obligations</p>
<p>5. 'Trajectories of Student Development'</p> <p>(Staff, Students, University)</p>	<p>Student as evolving in different ways, for example, through a process of transformation, becoming independent learners or through transactional learning</p>	<p>Legitimises: Role of staff and the institution as pivotal in shaping learning and teaching according to pre-defined patterns</p> <p>Undermines: More flexible study patterns</p>	<p>Students as the object of creation, rather than self-creating</p> <p>Staff as facilitators of student development</p>

Discourse (Deployed by)	Associated values and beliefs	Ideas and knowledge legitimised/undermined	Subject positions created in relation to the pedagogical relationship
6. 'Community' - <i>weak</i> (University, Students, staff)	Refers to a community either a) within the University as a learning community, a group of people with shared interests and actively engaged in learning from each other, or b) beyond the University	Legitimises: a) special bonds between certain groups, e.g. subjects b) specific practices e.g. foregrounding family in decision-making Delegitimises: foregrounding the interests of the individual	a) Student as active learner Staff as active facilitator of learning b) Student as having obligations outside the university, e.g. to family Staff as outside this community
7. 'Students-as-partners' - <i>weak</i> (University)	All participants are actively engaged in a process of learning and working together, both for the participants' and the wider community benefit	Legitimises: staff and students learning from each other Undermines: tutor-led learning, a body of knowledge to be transferred to the student	Student as responsible to others and self, trusted to take on new roles. Staff as both learner and facilitator

Discourse (Deployed by)	Associated values and beliefs	Ideas and knowledge legitimised/undermined	Subject positions created in relation to the pedagogical relationship
8. 'Knowledge Creation' - <i>weak</i> (University)	Knowledge and the university itself are constructed through the joint efforts of students and staff. Teaching and research are closely connected	Legitimises: co-production of knowledge, research-informed projects for the benefit of all the community Undermines: research and teaching as separate activities	Students as co-creators of their education, Staff as co-researchers with students

5.4.1 'Students under pressure'

This first discourse, deployed by both staff and students, expressed the challenges of being a student and the pressure of fitting in academic studies with their lives beyond their studies. Although documents such as the University Strategy alluded to students needing determination and resilience to succeed, overall, they focused on portraying positive images of the student as creative, innovative and ambitious. This discourse of 'students under pressure' was not deployed in the University documentation. This suggests a gap between the institution's portrayal of the student as a public figure and the private constructions of the students and staff, as revealed in their own words.

Students constructed themselves as struggling for many reasons, for example, due to time pressures, being concerned about the quality of their work or lacking confidence in interacting with other students and staff. In addition, pressures related to external factors beyond their studies were highlighted as concerns, such as financial pressures or accommodation issues. For example, some students relied on other family members to bear some of the costs, thereby adding to the pressure:

'I only have a single income family. But yet because my Mum works so much to afford to put me through uni I then don't get any like payments from the university to give a hand. So my Mum wouldn't have to work so much if the University helped me out. Which is bad for her health, but she can't do anything about it because she has to put me through uni. I feel like if one person gets a bursary then everyone should, even if it's like twenty pounds, because I'm in a house where everyone gets one apart from me. And it's like 'yes, that's great, thanks guys!' [Maxine, Year 2 Business Student]

In this excerpt, the student alludes to the involvement of families in collective decision-making and the contributions made by parents. Although the students are paying the same level of fees, the way the bursary systems operate is portrayed as unsatisfactory and unfair. Other students in University B also talked about taking a collective family decision about going to university and considering other options. Quiana, a year 3 student, had decided to choose a more local university to save on accommodation costs and her friends had deferred entry to university in order to earn more money. Others had chosen subjects which were more likely to be lucrative in the longer run. For example, Clare chose Business over History because of better employment prospects:

'I suppose because in the long run I could see myself doing more jobs with a business degree than I could with history'. [Clare, Year 2 Business Student]

The topic of collective family decision-making may be an area for future research, focussing, for example, on the student's relationships with their families and the sacrifices families make for their relatives to attend higher education.

Student talk revealed three different ways of presenting the pressures: by depicting the pressure as out of the ordinary, by normalising it as part of the typical experience of being a student, and also by minimising experiences of pressure. This complex picture contrasted with an idealised view of the student and the recurring oversimplification, adopted by both staff and students, that studying is a matter of 'getting the balance right'. It was further complicated by the commonly-expressed idea that a certain amount of stress, albeit undefined, is normal, particularly for final year students.

Each of these three ways of accounting for pressure is discussed in turn below:

- 'pressure as out of the ordinary'
- 'normalising pressure', and
- 'minimising pressure'.

Pressure as out of the ordinary

In this discourse, the student portrayed themselves as struggling to fit everything in:

'you've got all of that as well as your dissertation to do and all of the other assessments due in. Like I haven't touched my dissertation for weeks because I've been too busy doing the seminar prep and the assessments due in for Christmas. And I've had one assessment per week since the second week of university' [Helen, Year 3 Humanities Student]

In the group interview the Humanities students discussed whether there was anything they would want to change about their studies and one of the third year students responded to the first year students as follows:

'Probably the amount of reading. It's honestly like – sometimes like over a hundred pages for a seminar and then they want you to work on your dissertation and then you've got assignments on top of that. So, like you were saying earlier – there's no balance. The way we experience our degree is

completely different to what you do because we've been out like twice since coming back in September!' [Isabelle, Year 3 Humanities Student]

In this response this student refers to the illusive ideal of balancing everything, and rather than making choices between activities, they position themselves as having to make sacrifices in order to meet deadlines. They also differentiated themselves from first-year students, thereby reproducing the cultural norm of the final-year student as going through a stressful experience. This also positions other students as less stressed than themselves.

Other responses to high pressure were to be self-critical. In this following example the student considered how she responds to pressure:

'I was expecting stress, but I didn't expect this much. But I think it's just me. I put myself in a toxic circle regarding my assessments. So everyone finds it stressful. I just find it more so because I panic a bit too much about whether or not I submit. Outside of the academic thing the one thing I would change would be to get involved in more societies and to go out more. Because I've only just started to do that this year. It's a good thing that I'm doing it now'. [Quiana, Year 3 Humanities Student]

In the example above, the student identified the stress as excessive and first blamed herself: 'I think it's just me', but also normalised the stress: 'so everyone finds it stressful'. In contrast to the previous example where the student positioned themselves as making a sacrifice and abstaining from a social life, here Quiana suggested that having distractions from the pressure, such as socialising, were another valid way of coping. Here, the student seems to suggest she has begun to normalise the idea of coping with severe pressure, not by addressing the causes, but by balancing it out with other activities, such as relaxation.

Normalising pressure

In the Humanities Student Forum, both the students and the Programme Leaders normalised pressure. For example, when students mentioned they were 'cramming it in' due to the number of assessments and deadlines in the space of three weeks, they added:

'but other than that it's going ok – it's just stressiness....but that's normal' [Nora, Year 3 Humanities Student].

The response from the Programme Leader also confirmed a culture that normalised stress:

'I mean, I think, you know, stress is ok and normal in third year as long as, you know, there's nothing in terms of you know, staff not there or anything.' [Elizabeth, Programme Leader, Humanities]

In talking about pressure, the same students positioned themselves differently in different situations. As mentioned earlier, in the group interview a third year student portrayed the final year experience as collectively stressful, leading the group to limit their social activities to watching the occasional popular television programme:

'It's just constant - it's like we only break for 'I'm a Celebrity!' [Isabelle, Year 3 Humanities Student].

Minimising pressure

In the Student Forum the very same student representative played down the stress. When asked how the term had gone, she responded:

'I think it was stressful but people enjoyed it. We don't see everybody. There's a few hours and everyone's just like in their little groups. I think everyone's quite happy just to get along with it at this point. I haven't had anything. Nothing major at this point'. [Isabelle, Year 3 Humanities Student]

This was echoed again in the Student Forum where students' accounts minimised the impact of stress. For example, they suggested that all students were supported in friendship groups when writing their dissertations:

'I think everyone has their own friendship groups and they just go "right ok -five hundred words and we'll go down to the pub" type of thing' [Quiana, Year 3 Humanities Student]

This excerpt portrayed student peers as employing coping strategies and minimising the problem as well as projecting an image of students under pressure as socially acceptable.

In this way, the student talk revolved around the dilemmas of prioritising study versus other pressures or pleasures. The common-sense notion of 'finding a balance' or 'getting the balance right' was a maxim which appeared across conversations. It suggested that being seen to be coping was culturally important but difficult to achieve, as per this description of a 'good student':

‘From my point of view it’s somebody who participates a lot in - erm in societies, who attempts to find a good balance - that doesn’t ever exist – between societies, studying and sleep’. [Graham, Year 3 Humanities Student]

There were also contrasting accounts of students who prioritised their social lives:

‘I know it’s not going to be a problem with second or third years, but people have come to university to drink, pretty much. There’s quite a few first years that I know that are just “living for the sesh” as they call it. Just literally here to come out, have a good time, not bother turning up’ [Graham, Year 3 Humanities Student].

This account functioned to position the speaker as more mature in relation to other ‘wayward’ first year students, but also reinforced the idea that a drinking culture was present in the University. It also suggested that there were other values driving entry to universities other than academic excellence. More investigation into the relationship between pressure and alcohol might be needed, as drinking was portrayed negatively by students as counter to high achievement but also more positively as an escape from pressure and thereby contributing to wellbeing.

The Programme Leader in the Business School also talked of students who ‘get the balance wrong’, but this was the balance between employment and study rather than between work and socialising. By using this expression, students were positioned as in deficit and blamed for the inability to live up to expectations, even though the factors mentioned which were causing pressure, such as financial difficulties, were acknowledged by the staff member as possibly being outside the student’s control.

The idea of ‘getting the balance right’ condenses a socially accepted wisdom into a single phrase, but it also oversimplifies and presents tensions and contradictions. For example, it suggests that the student just needs to find the ‘right way’ to study or be successful, without taking account of any constraints relating to the social or personal context. It simplifies a complex situation and competes directly with the idea of learning as necessarily involving an intellectual struggle. It fails to specify exactly what is being balanced and for what purpose. As such it becomes a general, but imprecise expression for coping. This expression also relegates the student to a type rather than an individual. This links with the idea that there is a ‘preferred’ way of developing as a student that may be being promoted by staff and institutions (see section 5.4.5 below). However, this preference may be implicit rather than

explicitly expressed and therefore not taken up by students in conversations. There may therefore be potential for more open discussions between staff and students around pedagogy and student development.

5.4.2 'Exercising autonomy'

In this second discourse, the student is portrayed as having some agency and making short-term decisions about priorities based on the context and constraints. In doing, so students portrayed themselves as autonomous decision-makers about their educational lives. Exercising autonomy refers, for example, to the way students described how they responded to pressures by making calculated decisions about how they participated or absented themselves from university activities. The following excerpts show contrasting ways of approaching studies:

'I'm a Mum, I run a house and as well as a full time course I've also got three other full time things going on as well. So I try and do as much as I can – like things like this – not outside of uni hours - but trying to fit it all in is really difficult. Trying to make sure you do all the readings and stuff as well - because it's a lot of work!' [Naomi, Year 1 Humanities Student]

'I remember a lot of our first years were very like 'well first year doesn't count so you don't really need to care about it that much.' [Graham, Year 3 Humanities Student]

The function of this talk was to justify the individual approaches taken by students as they navigated through their studies, decisions which, like the latter example, might not align to an academic's idea of the 'ideal' student, particularly when it did not prioritise academic excellence. This independence manifested itself as students making choices about whether to engage in learning opportunities or students as settling for a 'good-enough' approach to their education. For example, this involved making choices about how they prioritised different activities such as paid work, attending classes, socialising and catching up on sleep. Maxine said her friends chose not to attend sometimes because they were:

'too tired, or the lecturer is just not engaging enough and it's dull and you can get the information you need in the PowerPoint in the slides'. [Maxine, Year 2 Business Student].

In this example, there was an inherent assumption that learning was about the acquisition of information and that therefore reading PowerPoint slides could be justified as a substitute for face-to-face learning.

However, there was also a suggestion in some accounts that prioritising paid work was sometimes more of a necessity than a free choice. For example, Nadine, the Business Programme Leader gave an account of students who worked increasing numbers of hours, and in an attempt to pay off debts or to earn money to live, got into difficulties and entered into a 'spiral of failure'.

Students portrayed the practice of skipping a lecture or two towards the end of term as not unusual and showed a strategic approach to learning:

'I've noticed people in first year doing that. They're reading what's happening in the weeks to come and then going – well I'm not interested – so I'm not going to bother. They've got areas of history that they like, so they're waiting for that area, so they're not bothering'. [Matt, Year 1 Humanities Student]

Students positioned themselves as making a calculated judgement about attendance and blaming factors such as poor teaching in order to justify non-attendance. There was also an implication that students sometimes had different priorities from staff, who worked on the basis that students should always be aspiring to be the best, whereas some students suggested that a 'good enough' approach to study was one valid way of navigating through university.

5.4.3 'Satisfying the customer'

As identified earlier, students constructed themselves differently according to the circumstances of the conversations. For example, students might construct themselves within the same conversation as a 'customer' and an 'engaged learner'. In this third discourse, students portrayed themselves as 'paying customers' looking for satisfaction in terms of value for money, however, not as demanding consumers with a prospect of changing anything. This contrasts with the depiction, discussed in Chapter Two, of the student as a powerful 'client' (Bailey, 2000), where student desires were described as driving programmes and professors becoming subservient in staff-student relationships. Although, in the interviews, staff did not characterise students as customers and favoured a vision of the student as a 'critical thinker', there was an eagerness to please which evoked the idea of

service provision, although this was not consistently the case for all staff. Two aspects of this discourse are considered below and the implications for the pedagogical relationships:

- the student as ‘paying customer’, and
- student-centred academic guidance.

Student as ‘Paying Customer’

In the following examples, the students explained that peers typically thought of fees as directly paying for contact time:

‘a lot of people will actually work out how much money per lecture or seminar they’re paying to sort of attend that one – so this was like two hundred and fifty pounds to attend this.’ [Isabelle, Year 3 Humanities Student]

‘I’ve definitely heard a lot of students saying “I’m paying nine and a half thousand pounds a year just to look at a PowerPoint on a board”. I’ve heard that. So much so – if I’m paying so much a year I would hope that my education is more than just looking at a PowerPoint four times a week, really.’ [Clare, Year 2 Business Student]

Clare implied she would not say this herself. The initial use of reported speech and reference to ‘others’ signified a reluctance to identify fully with the position of ‘paying customer’ and hints at the discomfort of repeatedly hearing the consumer subject position, whilst positioning herself as someone who values ‘education’. In the excerpt, she comments on how ‘others’ appraise education as a series of transactions and assess the value for money of teaching sessions.

Students tended to construct themselves as ‘paying customers’ when expressing entitlement, for example, the phrase ‘I’m paying nine grand for this’ was a recurring expression in the interviews. Business students, for example, seemed to be under the impression that there was now more money in the system and that they were entitled to more information and transparency around the way the University appeared to be spending student fee income:

‘Why does it need to be nine thousand pounds a year, not three thousand like it was before? Because that seemed to work. So why now nine thousand? ...I’m paying for my books. I’m paying for my printing, so I know you’re educating me, but I’m paying for everything else. So why do I need to pay- and I’m paying on top of that -accommodation as well. And if you want to get a gym membership

here you have to pay for that as well. Why am I paying so much money for someone in a lecture theatre to talk to me for two hours a week?' [Susie, Year 3 Business Student]

The expression 'you're educating me' emphasises the passiveness of the experience. Students did not talk about taking any action beyond this rhetoric. In constructing themselves as 'paying customers', they did not position themselves as powerful, but as constrained by the current policies and pessimistic about possibility of changing things. Students also expressed a reluctance to raise issues to a higher level:

'it's not something we can really bring up' [Susie, Year 2 Business Student]

'we can't make a difference to it, let's be honest' [Maxine, Year 2 Business Student].

Providing student-centred academic guidance

Along with the idea of the student as a 'paying customer', there was also a corresponding willingness to please, which seemed to affect the dynamics of the pedagogical relationship by reinforcing a service culture. In the following example, a student describes a 'good' lecturer as service-oriented, but also implying that there was inconsistency and that other lecturers would not do the same:

'I'm on a module at the minute actually where the module leader has turned around and said to us "I do accept drafts in this module. I will help you - I will! So if you're not going into something enough I will tell you need to go into that - so that you don't fail this module"!' [Susie, Year 2 Business Student]

This could be interpreted as the staff member acknowledging the student's situation and showing a genuine concern for the student's performance and it could be argued that in this account the student is positioned here by staff more as a 'service user' rather than as a 'paying customer'. However, there is a narrow focus in the account which prioritises providing satisfaction, thereby avoiding failure, at the expense of emphasising opportunities for wider learning. This is consistent with the conclusions of Fulford (2013) in examining conversations in university tutorials, who suggests that, with an increasing emphasis on satisfaction, tutorials are often seen as a form of settlement, characterised by satisfying talk leading to contentment, rather than an invitation to have a dialogue.

The Business Programme Leader emphasised the availability of staff in the Business School to support any student who needed one-to-one help. This talk legitimised ideas such as open-door policies for tutorials and an emphasis on academic teaching staff maintaining close relationships with students. She emphasised her personal willingness to be available to students. In contrast with the common practice in the University to have set office hours, students could knock on her door at any time: 'I don't have office hours'. Students commented in interviews that the availability of academic staff was in their view a very positive factor for the University.

Students in the Business School said they typically tended to consult their seminar tutors rather than their personal tutors:

'you do have personal tutors but sometimes they don't really get to know you'.
[Maxine, Year 2 Business Student].

For example, Matt, a first year Humanities student, said what was important about lecturers was their approachability and also 'to feel like their office is always open to the student.' Humanities students also mentioned the approachability and willingness of tutors to help, which they regarded as being on a friendship basis:

'I remember in first year we did one subject called 'X' and it was a mediaeval subject– and I'm not really good with mediaeval stuff at all and I think I struggled quite a lot. But our tutor - who we were quite good friends with at the time – we felt we could approach her at any time and just email her with all our problems and stuff and it would normally get sorted out.' [Helen, Year 3 Humanities Student]

Clare, a second year Business Student, explained further:

'If I'm struggling it makes me really comfortable and happy and confident in knowing that I can approach that lecturer either through email or coming up here and knocking on his office. Because he's given us his like free hours so that – "if you've got any problems, if you don't understand anything, just come up to my office and I'll go through the whole of the topics with you again". That's quite good!!' [Clare, Year 2, Business Student]

The emphasis here was on the provision of an all-encompassing service and this extract highlights the construction of the role of tutors as wide-ranging, including not only providing student satisfaction, but the promotion of student well-being and building student

confidence, therefore positioning the staff member variously as a coach, mentor and subject expert. This co-existed with a discourse of independent learning which was also circulating and which was associated with the development of capacities for self-management and resilience (see Section 5.4.5 below). The risk of students expecting high levels of personal support would be that open-ended promises given by tutors might prove to be unrealistic given their workloads, and the experience therefore variable. Maxine, for example, described her tutors as inconsistent:

'some of them are really good, but some are terrible as well ...they say "oh email us if you have any questions" but they don't mean it. They just say it' [Maxine, Year 2 Business Student].

Furthermore, despite the offer of support to all, this practice depended on the student being prepared to access the support. In one case, a student described the reluctance of her peers to approach a lecturer:

'they feel like they're going to be told they're stupid really and made to feel stupid.' [Clare, Year 2 Business Student].

On the other hand, some high-achieving students regularly took up opportunities for advice:

'They're good with the feedback. You can see all their markings and you can go back to them and sit and go – ask for further feedback. So they'll talk you through it as well, which I really enjoy – because, well I tend to – every assessment I tend to go to them beforehand – so I go "that's my plan!". And then afterwards when I get my grades back, my feedback, I sit and go "how could I have done it better?" - like even if I get a first – "how could have I have made that higher into the boundary, how could I have got that to a higher level?" [Quiana, Year 3 Humanities Student]

As such, this practice might have the unintended consequence of potentially rewarding those who were prepared to come forward and disadvantaging those who did not.

5.4.4 'Contractual obligations'

The fourth discourse of 'contractual obligations' focuses on the different roles adopted by students and staff and the associated expectations which follow. The contractualisation of higher education relationships links to conversations about the social contract in higher

education and moral obligations of staff and students, discussed in Chapter Two (Maassen 2014; Regan 2012).

In this fourth discourse, relationships were described by students as complex. In different contexts, students positioned themselves variously as being 'paying customers', members of the University community, student representatives, ambassadors of the University at Open Days as well as being in a more contractual relationship with the University through the signing of a student contract. In doing so, there was a focus not only on the financial implications of being a student but also on the moral and social implications. Because of the varying and inconsistent positions which staff adopted towards students, the positions a student could take were also varied and the power implications different depending on the circumstances.

In the Humanities group interview, the importance of student-staff relationships was reinforced by students:

'We're not paying for fancy equipment or anything else – so it does come down to the quality of education I think'. [Isabelle, Year 3 Humanities Student]

The use of language here referenced the idea of student as 'paying customer' and also showed the student's description of the obligations of the University – namely to offer opportunities for a high quality education. In terms of student-staff relationships, there was also an implied element of trust in the University to deliver that. In the following example, not meeting commitments was portrayed as a breach of trust:

'I went to a meeting once that I set up and he wasn't there – he was like ten minutes late because he was like "oh I completely forgot!" Like I understand that all the lecturers are extremely busy, but at the end of the day you're here to support me and I don't feel supported when you're forgetting about me especially when I've pre-organised this meeting.' [Helen, Year 3 Humanities Student]

The relationship is reduced to the bare bones of a purely transactional arrangement: 'you're here to support me'.

In the group interview, students also highlighted the changing and increasingly contractual nature of the students' relationships with the University. In the following example, the

student expressed some confusion about the arrangements and portrayed her education as a kind of membership:

‘So we’ve paid that money and the University have gone “that’s great” and you can be part of the University as long as you do this, this and this. So, we work for you ‘cos you’re our student, however you’ve got to do this to get what we give you. If you don’t the contract is void. Does that make sense? [Naomi, Year 1 Humanities Student]

This account described how commitments and obligations towards the University were complex, more so than a consumer-service provider relationship might represent. The University is portrayed as working for the student in a contractual arrangement governed by a set of terms and conditions. However, the student highlights in the above extract that it is nevertheless the University which is perceived to have the upper hand in that relationship.

Student talk highlighted concerns around the uncertainty with regards to their obligations. For example, the same first year student described her position as both a customer of the University and as a student representative doing paid work for the University. She explains her position in terms of a relationship similar to that of a customer working for Avon:

‘you pay that money and you are a customer of Avon as a business, however you also work for Avon.’ [Naomi, Year 1 Humanities Student].

In this Avon Lady metaphor, there are concurrent commitments for the student as both a fee payer and as an employee and representative of the organisation. This is similar to the idea of the university as a membership organisation, for example, a gym with the student as a member. However, this arrangement is more complex because it creates a political dilemma for a student acting as an employee representative – that of not being willing to openly criticise the organisation on which they depend. For example, students described how at Open Days they felt uncomfortable about speaking their mind to visitors. In the following example they are addressing the low numbers of academic contact hours:

‘For parents especially when they say ‘how many hours a week do you do?’ I have to say to them “I actually only do four” and very much they say “and you’re a full-time student?” And that issue of having that sort of that relationship and having those contact hours is a huge thing not only for people at university but people who are thinking for like applying as well. And that’s one of things that lets it down, because maybe other institutions offer more. Offer more contact

hours or drop-in sessions or things like that. ' [Isabelle, Year 3 Humanities Student]

Student talk also foregrounded a moral dimension to the relationships beyond economic or contractual entitlement. Students and staff in University B were concerned in their conversations with the discussion of the explicit and implicit expectations and mutual obligations which should apply. In both the Student Forum meetings, the issue of the potential boycotting of the 2017 National Student Survey arose. There was discussion in the Humanities Forum about the boycott in the light of the report from one student representative that some student groups might be being encouraging others to give false answers to the survey as a protest. Giving false answers was not endorsed by the University B Students' Union. Students in the Humanities Forum discussed how incentives influenced the way students might respond and in what capacity they should answer. Should students position themselves as future graduates of the University (i.e. wanting it to retain a good reputation which would reflect well on them as employees), as honest evaluators of the teaching, or should they boycott the survey as a political protest?

'But to be honest after those three years – like I just thought about the lecturers that have been really good to me. If I'm honest - I couldn't - I don't think I could willingly say like – "you're terrible" – 'cos it does go quite into depth about the teaching – and about the aspects of it - it does go into a lot of it. And I mean, especially at the Open Days, they rave about it – the last year's, like it came out really well – and I think it just sounds so weird to hear that people are going to do that!' [Nina, Postgraduate Student, Humanities]

In the above extract, the centrality and personal nature of the student-staff relationships and the student's loyalty was expressed but also the potential conflict between the personal and public persona, and the importance of students being able to position themselves as part of a successful organisation which is proud of its achievements.

Some students in the group interview felt that the University should feel obliged to have a more transparent relationship with fee-payers:

'I think what would be nice is to see a breakdown as to where all the money goes and I think that's what a lot of us want to see, especially as they keep putting the prices up.' [Quiana, Year 3 Humanities Student]

There seemed to be a confusion here about how the University should be accountable, and whether as a public or private organisation. There was also a connection made between increased fees and the amount of money thought to be available to universities. The conversation between students did not take account of the changes in arrangements for the funding of English universities, including the shift in the way government funded higher education had moved from up-front grants to student loans. Although the 2012 reforms to tuition fees have increased overall funding levels, teaching grants have declined and maintenance grants were scrapped resulting in a very high proportion of up-front government support being in the form of loans (Belfield *et al.*, 2017).

Overall, the discourse of contractual obligations reflected the recognition by students themselves of the tensions between positions. When students wanted to draw attention to their rights, they positioned themselves as ‘paying customers’, but they also fell short of constructing themselves consistently as empowered consumers of education as they ultimately could not challenge academic judgement. The description of their clashing loyalties also served to highlight the political and moral dilemmas they faced. It also shed light on some of the difficulties they faced and highlighted their reluctance to speak out publicly about them, for example, in Student Forum meetings. This highlights the importance for staff in thinking about the potential gaps between how students experience education and how, in conversations, they may be enabled or deterred from describing those experiences.

5.4.5 ‘Trajectories of Student Development’

This fifth discourse focuses on the possible ways that students were expected to learn and develop as they progressed through university. This encompasses different accounts of student development, for example, there was a contrast between the way staff talked about creating ‘independent learners’ and the conversations of some students, who, as described earlier, described themselves as ‘autonomous’, struggling to navigate their own individual route through higher education.

‘Creating independent learners’

The discourse of independent learning functioned to position the student as able to manage their own studies and think for themselves. For example, Clare, who portrayed herself as an

independent learner, expressed her expectations in terms of what she was required to do as a learner:

'I don't expect to be spoon-fed everything. I expect to have to go and do my own research in my own time. That kind of thing.' [Clare, Year 2 Business Student]

A student who engaged well was portrayed as someone who can not only learn independently but

'can anticipate where their role in the whole learning process is.' [Nadine, Programme Leader, Business]

The idea of independent learning contrasts with the idea of the student as dependent on staff support and emphasises qualities such as independence of mind. In the Business School the Programme Leader described her role as a final year lecturer as empowering students to be critical thinkers:

'I think we're in a way empowering the students to ask the questions they wouldn't normally ask'. [Nadine, Programme Leader, Business]

Independent thinking was portrayed as an important quality to be developed. In the following example, the lecturer specifically avoided 'telling' in favour of presenting a range of intellectual arguments on a topic:

'I do think that lectures can be a kind of *battle* between students who want you to tell them the answers, and you who don't want to give an authoritative single view'. [Elizabeth, Programme Leader, Humanities]

In this account, the ideal student was positioned as one who would not wish to be told an answer and would prefer and be able to form their own opinions. Through the metaphor of the battle, the lecturer portrays a sense of the struggle she went through during the delivery of the lecture. She positioned herself as valiantly holding on to her principles in the face of responses to the lecture which were not always favourable ones. Here, the creation of the student-staff relationship was defined as being not only about what was said by the lecturer, but was also about what was left unsaid by the lecturer, in order to leave a space to inspire students to make their own connections between ideas.

The aim of creating independent learners was supported by both students and staff who talked about university as a series of stages of progression. This development for Humanities students was described by a Programme Leader as a process whereby students were given structured support in the first year, but by the third year they would be more capable of running seminars themselves:

‘I don’t think you can be too - free form in the first year – I think you’ve really got to kind of help them with that. And by the third year they are more capable of actually structuring and running the discussion themselves.’ [Elizabeth, Programme Leader, Humanities]

The context was where a Humanities programme had been structured such that lectures were infrequent in the final year with the expectation that students researched the context of topics themselves and prepared the set readings before the classes. Some students had requested that additional lectures be provided, but the department had resisted doing so. In the following example the Programme Leader explained her perception of students and the way they responded to this pedagogical approach:

‘Context is really important – and they haven’t necessarily got enough context. Now they can get it – and they are not as confident in their abilities to get it as they should be because you know – they are – they’re good – they’re good students – they can do this stuff. So, it’s not- it’s about that they’re lost. And you spend quite a lot of time at university feeling that you’re lost. And then a few months later you look round again – like the first year first term there’s really very little you can do about them feeling lost except to say “it will pass. Wait until December, you’ll be fine”, kind of thing. And again in the third year they feel a bit kind of like we’ve taken away some of their props and things – their comfort blankets. And they’re ok – they just need to believe that they’re ok if you like.’ [Elizabeth, Programme Leader, Humanities]

There are two different constructions of students in this example: the unconfident student seeking support and reassurance and the ideal student, inherently capable of creating their own framework for learning. To support the argument that the student transitions from one to the other, the metaphor of the ‘lost student’ was introduced – where being lost or struggling was portrayed as a common rite of passage. Key to the argument adopted was the lecturer’s trust that the students were ‘good’ students and could do well in the end. The lecturer could, alternatively, have argued that standards had slipped and students are not as capable these days or that interventions should be made to mitigate the discomfort of struggling students. The lecturer justified the approach by presenting learning as about

promoting a process of self-development, as taken for granted that it involves an intellectual struggle, and that it is a tried and tested approach in this subject area. At the same time, this stance implicitly argues against the idea of dumbing down the curriculum and in favour of empowering the student as an independent thinker. The lecturer took an approach which might be described as 'tough love' even though she recognised that students said they would find more lectures helpful. Indeed, as Naomi described in the group interview:

'it would be nice, sort of, to have more lectures, if you're really interested especially. That sort of passion that you get from the tutors really pushes you to actually learn more.' [Naomi, Year 1 Humanities Student].

The discourse was supported with language of parenting, whereby the staff member positioned herself as knowing best and removing the lectures which have acted as 'comfort blankets', in other words were regarded as unnecessary support. This in turn positioned the student as young children transitioning away from childhood. The discomfort of this transition was borne out again by Naomi, who described the process as 'being dropped into the deep end' and she resisted the approach:

'I think sometimes they get hung up on this thing about being independent as well. They sometimes forget that we are also still learners and we are also still – we need that support'. [Naomi, Year 1, Humanities Student]

Here the student highlighted the separation between staff and students who were perceived as existing in separate worlds rather than in the same learning community. In contrast, Graham, a year three student, described himself as more accepting of the high expectations of thinking independently. In the following example, he described why tutors sometimes refused to read drafts of assignments in order to encourage students to be more self-reliant:

'Yes, some might even not look at your work. They've said "if you send me a piece of work I'll ignore it". Not because they want to be mean about it or anything like that but they're promoting independency. So they can't be seen to be the safety cushion every time.' [Graham, Year 3 Humanities student]

The student positioned himself as taking a mature approach, as able to understand why staff did not act as 'safety cushions'. This aligns with a metaphor of parenting, whereby the lecturer as parent attempts to set boundaries and expectations and to treat each 'child' fairly as they grow up. The positions can be linked to wider discussions about pedagogical

relationships and contrasted with ideas such as the infantilization of the student, in which the student is positioned as stuck in childhood (Williams, 2013).

The next section will discuss discourses which were not strongly taken up by participants.

5.5 Weaker discourses

Two examples of weaker discourses, namely 'community' and 'partnership', are summarised in Table 4 (above) and discussed below. Not all discourses in the University B institutional documents were strongly taken up by students. However, it may be reasonable to expect that there would be differences, for example, documents such as the strategy documents, are aspirational in nature and may reflect anticipated future relationships rather than current ones.

5.5.1 'Community'

The idea of building a learning community was deployed rhetorically at Open Days by staff to reinforce the ideal of a subject community of historians, but there was limited evidence of this resonating with the undergraduate students. Instead of being members of a community, they portrayed themselves as individuals with strong opinions who didn't enjoy working together:

'...history as a whole – I think history just as a subject - people are individuals I'd say... we're also antisocial and don't like working in groups.' [Isabelle, Year 3 Humanities Student]

5.5.2 'Partnership'

In University B, 'partnership' was described as the key mode of operation for Student Engagement projects. It could therefore be thought of as both a discourse and a structural mechanism for getting things done. In addition, partnership practices in University B included, for example, students working with external organisations to enhance learning. For example, some history students were involved in the creation of a digital archive with an outside organisation as part of their studies.

The University identified itself as committed to working in partnership with students. However, partnership was not a term deployed by students, who were more familiar with

the term 'student engagement'. Students rarely talked about themselves as working in partnership with staff. As previously mentioned, students more frequently talked about the differences or gaps they experienced between themselves and their tutors rather than the closeness.

Although this was a surprising finding, there may be several reasons for this absence of partnership discourse amongst students in this study. The term 'partnership' is imprecise and can refer to a discourse which works on a number of levels. It can be applied variously to describe both a specific philosophy as well as a practice of working together in different ways and with different levels of collaboration. For example, in common parlance it can encompass a range of levels of interaction from involvement to consultation and joint-decision making. More specifically it can be conceived as part of an integrated approach to learning and teaching. In this way, 'partnership' has been linked to specific ways of talking about the world, as exemplified by the 'student-as-partner' discourse, described in Chapter Two, which goes beyond the idea of just working together and involves a deliberate sharing of the philosophy of partnership with students. In this sense it reflects a worldview which comes from learning and teaching specialists.

Having outlined the discourses for University B, the next section discusses discursive practices as a whole and the connections between them.

5.6 Relationships between discourses

Discourses are said to be historically located and are part of ongoing conversations in society (Parker, 1992). The discourses identified in this study are connected in the way they represent different ways of looking at pedagogical relationships. The range of discourses deployed in connection with student-staff interactions other than the 'student-as-consumer' discourse, indicates that one single discourse is inadequate to represent the complexity of the pedagogical relationships. The five discourses construct different representations of student-staff interactions and could be said to have connections with contemporary conversations as follows:

- 'Students under pressure' focuses on the experiences of students and how students cope with conflicting pressures, which impacts on the way they engage with their studies. This links to conversations about increasing

pressures on students in an environment where they consider that they compete for jobs as well as grades, and concerns about student mental health (IPPR, 2017).

- ‘Exercising autonomy’ – focuses on the way students are challenging assumptions underpinning student-staff working relationships as they decide to participate flexibly with their studies. This links to conversations about freedom and power balance in pedagogical relationships and the appropriateness of the current structures of higher education provision and support (Macfarlane, 2015)
- ‘Satisfying the customer’– focuses on the student as a demanding fee-payer and the increasing willingness of staff to provide student-centred academic guidance. This links with the ‘student-as-consumer’ metaphor and with ideas around student satisfaction (Molesworth et al, 2009; Williams, 2013).
- ‘Contractual obligations’ focuses on the tensions associated with different formal roles adopted by students and staff. This links to conversations about the contractualisation of higher education relationships (Regan, 2012; Fulford 2018).
- ‘Trajectories of student development’ focuses on competing philosophies underpinning student development. This links with current conversations about higher education pedagogies which might support or counter the idea of ‘student-as-consumer’ (Lambert, 2009; Healey *et al.*, 2014; MacFarlane, 2016).

Discourses exist in relation to each other in different ways and can contrast, contradict or co-exist and this will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

Having identified the discourses for University B, the final section concludes the findings about the constructions of students and how the discourses were deployed in current practices and considers the prominence of the institutional discourses in the data.

5.7 Conclusions

This summary refers back to the research questions and consider how far students constructed themselves as consumers, how far the 'student-as-consumer' discourse was drawn upon and how alternative discourses were deployed in University B.

Overall, there was a range of constructions of the student and a variation between the discourses in the institutional documents analysed compared to the student and staff talk. Representations of students as 'community members', 'co-creators' of knowledge and 'partners' were only weakly represented in the data. Students made little reference to themselves as 'scholars' or 'researchers' in the University. Likewise, there were few direct references by students to working in partnership with the University other than in the role of student representative. As suggested earlier, the variations could partly be explained with reference to the different purposes of the talk, for example, the aspirational nature of the institutional documents.

The language of consumerism was in evidence, particularly in respect of students expecting value-for-money for fees paid. It was also in evidence in the construction of the pedagogical relationship as based on service provision. However, competing constructions of the student were based around the language of pedagogy of learning and teaching, namely the construction of the student as a 'critical thinker' and an 'independent learner'. A discourse of 'satisfying the customer' was deployed alongside a culture of service provision, however, the student was not constructed as an empowered consumer and staff were portrayed as more powerful due to their role as assessors, as the ultimate arbiters of academic judgement.

The analysis revealed that the 'student-as-consumer' discourse was only one of five competing discourses identified. The texts of interviews and Student Forum meetings provided accounts of students as 'strugglers' and adopting various ways of coping. The discourse of 'students under pressure' showed that student talk functioned in different ways, for example, to highlight the pressures as extraordinary, to normalise them as part of the student learning experience or make light of them, particularly in interactions with staff. In contrast to being passive consumers of services, students also constructed themselves as navigating their own autonomous path through university.

The analysis also revealed different ways of talking about the student learning experience, with staff in the same subject areas simultaneously concerned with 'creating independent learners' as well as taking a service-driven approach to student support in order to satisfy the student as service-user. Where students are supported in order to assist in their development into more independent learners, then these two discourses can be seen as co-existing in a coherent way. The student and staff interviews revealed that student talk emphasised the challenges in meeting the expectations of university, for example, the expectation of becoming independent learners and following a pre-defined path of development. The discourse of 'trajectories of student development' deployed a metaphor of parenting to promote this idea of independent learning.

There were tensions between alternative visions of pedagogical relationships, with the inability of either side to control it, symbolised by the metaphor of the 'battle' between students and staff. Through the framework of a pedagogy of independent learning, staff were mapping out a path, relying on past experience of what worked and promoting the idea of 'getting the balance right' as a counter to the discourse of 'students under pressure'.

In contrast to the binary customer service-provider relationship, there was a discourse of 'contractual obligations' which took account of the multiple constructions of the student and the tensions which arise from these. Students talked about their competing obligations based on different constructions of their positions in relation to staff and the University. Some of these related to the conflicting roles played by students in addition to being learners, namely as representatives of the University, as paid employees, future workers as well as being fee-payers. What was striking and might be under-represented in higher education literature was the portrayal of difficulties they faced, pressures to combine studies, work and family responsibilities. Students described themselves as actively asserting their autonomy and engaging in the way they thought best, an approach which is unlikely to match with the academic's presumptions about student development or their taken-for-granted assumptions of aspiring to academic excellence.

The analysis and findings will be discussed in Chapter Six along with the findings from University A.

Chapter Six: Discussion

6.1 Introduction

Chapters Four and Five presented the findings from each institution and the analysis shed light on the variety and complexity of the student experiences and on their relationships with staff and their university. In this chapter, I will consider the findings from University A and B together in relation to the review of literature in Chapter Two and the three research questions for the study, which were as follows:

RQ1: How do students construct themselves through their talk?

RQ2: Do higher education staff and students draw on the ‘student-as-consumer’ discourse in their interactions and in accounts of learning and teaching practices? If so, how?

RQ3: What additional discourses are available for describing and accounting for the pedagogical relationships, and how are they deployed?

The aims of the chapter are to interpret the findings from Universities A and B and identify how these fit with previously published research. In particular, the analysis goes beyond the lists of student constructions or “little ‘d’ discourses” in Chapters Four and Five, and shares the outcomes of this discourse study by discussing the five discourses which have underpinned the pedagogical relationships analysed in this research. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the implications of the “big D Discourses” as alternative ways of talking about pedagogical relationships. In doing so, I am developing my arguments which are presented in the final chapter as part of my contributions to knowledge. Having conducted a thorough analysis, I am able in the last part of the chapter to revisit the literature and then argue for an alternative conceptual framework for pedagogical relationships.

The chapter is structured as follows: sections 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4 address each of the three research questions in turn. Section 6.5 discusses resistance to discourses. Section 6.6

summarises which discourses are more likely to open up learning opportunities before revisiting the theory of pedagogical relationships in section 6.7.

6.2 Multiple and concurrent constructions of the student

This section addresses the first research question which considers how students construct themselves through their talk. As explained in Chapter Three, The Research Approach, the term ‘construction’ has been chosen rather than ‘characterisation’ or ‘conceptualisation’ to denote the work that is done to actively (re-)construct the student in a particular way for specific purposes, rather than representing them in a passive way.

When considering how students constructed themselves through their talk, an important reference point in the literature was the research carried out by Tomlinson (2014) which concluded from a study across seven higher education institutions that a core of students were considered to have ‘a mixed and ambivalent attitude towards the consumer ethos’ (Tomlinson, 2014:6). Ambivalence indicates that students expressed mixed feelings or contradictory ideas about the topic. The evidence from this doctoral study shows that students did tend to adopt different positions according to the context and that these contradictory positions could be held concurrently. Brooks (2018) reviewed the Tomlinson (2014) findings and pointed out that the ambivalence was related to the fact that the students felt they had both considerable bargaining power as well as personal responsibility for learning. Although a close match to these particular constructions were not found in this doctoral study – as students did not construct themselves as powerful customers, nor did they strongly emphasise their personal responsibility for learning, the point about students deploying different constructions concurrently is an important one and supports the findings of this study.

As explained in Chapter Three, unlike in the Tomlinson (2014) study, I specifically chose to focus on talk, as the concept of attitudes was rejected in favour of a critical analysis of discourses. Although the study findings concurred with those of Tomlinson (2014), in that there was indeed variation in students’ accounts towards the consumer ethos, the interpretation of these contradictions is different from a critical discourse analysis perspective, which anticipates variation and looks at anyone’s talk as accounts which serve different purposes in different contexts.

This study provided evidence that students were taking up multiple positions and even within the same conversations. For example, consider the following statements:

‘it’s a nice phase into adulthood for me...I needed to move away, like learn about myself and get some independence’ [Dawn, year 3 Business Student]

‘for me it’s – university is an investment and I wanted to get the most out of it....it’s an investment in my future I’m paying for’ [Dawn, year 3 Business Student]

‘I think we’re paying for a service, the same way you go into a shop and you pay for something – you expect to receive what you’re paying for’ [Dawn, year 3 Business Student]

‘I’ve learnt a lot about myself from being at university and I definitely feel a lot more ready to go out and approach the world, rather than three years ago’ [Dawn, year 3 Business Student]

In the above example, the same student, within a single interview constructed herself in four different ways in conversation with me as an interviewer. In this talk, the student deploys language to portray herself in different ways, for example, to justify her time at university as well spent, and to express consumer entitlement. In the third extract, the use of ‘we’ rather than ‘I’, functions to represent not only herself, but the views of other students. In this way, students were viewed as deploying different representations of themselves for different purposes. Knowing that the student was a student representative might change the interpretation. Furthermore, each of the four example constructions also has an implication for the position that staff might be expected to adopt in the pedagogical relationship: the first implies staff should assist students to develop independence, the second implies staff are providing a return on student investment, in the third they are acting as service provider, and in the fourth they might be offering employability and life skills. Positions are considered to be constructed for a particular purpose within the interaction and were highly dependent on the context in which the talk occurred. This adds weight to the idea that the environment which universities create should be considered when understanding student and staff accounts.

As discussed in the Literature Review in Chapter Two, constructions of the student in the literature have tried to encapsulate the essence of the student identity and these have included, for example, the student as ‘customer’ and ‘client’ (Bailey, 2000), ‘co-producer’

(McCulloch, 2009), 'apprentice' (Lee and Green, 2009), 'pawn' (Tight, 2013), 'apprentice academic' (van der Velden, 2012), co-creator of value (Kalafatis and Ledden, 2013), 'explorer' (Emerson and Mansvelt, 2014) and 'student-as-partner' (Taylor and Wilding, 2009). Each of these says not only something about the student but about the implications for student-staff relationships and is also constructed by the authors at a particular point in time and reflects a specific institutional setting. They therefore reflect aspects of the history of higher education, the policy environment and the institutional context.

In the period leading up to this doctoral research, Temple *et al.*, (2014) hypothesized that the shifting landscape in higher education in England could result in universities themselves reinforcing the idea that students should be treated as 'paying customers': 'it seems plausible to hypothesise a mutually reinforcing spiral of expectations' (Temple *et al.*, 2014:19). The authors argued that increasing competition between universities had resulted in changes such that the university may increasingly be regarded as a service provider and the student may be considered a consumer of these services. A distinction was made between areas of activity such as accommodation services, where service provision could more easily understood, and learning and teaching relationships where the authors acknowledged that applying the idea of service provision may be more problematic. Their study found that some senior managers and professional staff largely took for granted the idea of the 'student as customer', even if some academic staff resisted the implications for learning and teaching. This raised the question of whether there was an inevitability about the seeping of the consumer metaphor into learning and teaching activities and how dominant that construction of the student-as-consumer had become in student and staff talk.

In the findings from this study, the consumer metaphor was inadequate on its own to fully represent students' situations and experiences, although considered dominant in the literature. It was present in that students did portray themselves as 'paying customers' and they adopted this position when expressing their entitlement. The associated discourse of 'satisfying the customer' is discussed in more detail in section 6.3. The range of constructions in this study was broad (see Table 1 in Chapter Four and Table 3 in Chapter Five), but many of the constructions of the student were similar across the two institutions. The analysis identified that there were also new constructions such as 'investor', 'party-goer' and 'social learner' as well as notable and unanticipated absences in the data. Variations between constructions deployed by staff and students were identified and these are discussed below, as well as variations between University A and B and whether there were any variations

which might be attributed to subject discipline. The aim of the next sections is to discuss these variations and the implications for pedagogical relationships.

6.2.1 New constructions

Students in both universities referred to themselves as ‘investors’ and the question arose as to whether this was just an element of the construction of the ‘student-as-consumer’ or a separate construction. At a policy level, ‘investment’ is typically seen as part of the ‘student-as-consumer’ idea. Brooks (2017), for example, highlights that in government documents and speeches, ‘investment’, ‘value for money’ and ‘student choice’ are three repeated elements of the consumer discourse. For students in this study, ‘investment’ had particular implications in that it was about more than paying fees. It was about both the investment of not only money but personal effort. The distinctiveness of the student as an ‘investor’ was underlined by the way students tended to construct themselves as a ‘paying customer’ at times when they expressed entitlement, whereas investment was deployed in a more positive way to emphasise a personal commitment.

Two other constructions are discussed here, which did not appear prominently in the review of literature: the student as ‘party-goer’ and the student as ‘social learner’. These have in common a social aspect but reflect contrasting aspects of the higher education environment and the changing constructions of student roles within it. The construction of students as ‘party-goers’ may not seem particularly surprising for a number of reasons. First, university life has been marketed as a lifestyle with an active social life (Attwood, 2008). Second, media attention has in recent years focused on the alcohol culture in universities and the party-going antics of students. Recent alcohol-infused freshers’ activities have on occasions led to student harm and even deaths (BBC News, 2018). Peer pressure has been cited as one explanation for the continuing alcohol culture in universities. Third, concerned universities over the last few years have been focussing on initiatives to improve safeguarding of students and introduce a wider range of activities which do not including drinking as well as offering alcohol-free student accommodation (Busby, 2018). Partying is not necessarily problematic in itself, and there is an increasing growth reported in young people abstaining from drinking, up from 18% in 2005 to 29% of 16-24 year olds in 2015 (Ng Fat *et al.*, 2018). However, the student talk in this study revealed that there were implications for pedagogical relationships for those regarded as ‘party-goers’. The construction of a ‘good’ student was typically of an all-rounder who could successfully combine both a social life and academic work. The ‘party-goer’ construction had negative connotations in both universities and reflected a student

who prioritised a social life over study and then struggled academically. There were accounts in both universities of students drifting away from studies, and also examples of students portraying being a student as a lifestyle choice which did not even have to involve an intention to study. There could be a connection here to the increased participation in higher education, where almost one in two young people attend higher education and hence a wider range of reasons for attending university could be anticipated. The emphasis by students themselves on 'growing up' at university points to their immaturity both as learners and individuals in coping with a new environment. One explanation explored in the analysis was the idea that 'party-goers' were typically 'others' and that this was a construction deployed by someone in order to create an impression of being a 'good student' by contrasting themselves positively with others. However, the vivid account by one older student in University A, who portrayed his former partying lifestyle in a previous institution, suggested this construction of the student was one which could be observed beyond the two universities in this study.

The student as 'social learner' referred to students who proactively set up study groups either face-to-face or online. In this construction, students portrayed themselves as active learners and their activities were typically invisible to staff rather than encouraged by staff. At first glance, this aligns with recommendations by Hockings *et al.*, (2018), who suggested that students found peer support systems helpful, but these were groups facilitated by staff rather than being emergent groups. Peer learning, initiated by students themselves in University A, was portrayed as one of the direct and unintended consequences of the transactional delivery of teaching. The justification for creating and joining such groups was described as a response to perceived poor or repetitive teaching, or as a way of accessing peer support outside the classroom. A student in University A who found classes repetitive, and described the experience as 'hitting a brick wall', preferred to engage with friends on social media to assist her learning:

'if I message like "ah, can someone help me with that? Is that the same answer you got?" They will take a picture of their workings and then we can discuss it – or if it's late at night we'll come in the next day and talk about where we went wrong or what we did differently' [Dawn, Year 3 Business Student]

This phenomenon of 'social learning', typically taking place in library study rooms or online via Facebook groups, was mentioned in students' accounts in both subject departments and was conducted for different purposes. Humanities students in University A described forming

their own study group in the library. In contrast, a Facebook group set up by the department to share study notes fell into disuse because the group evolved and changed its purpose:

‘it’s just social now, so we don’t get involved in it’ [Rachel, Year 2 Humanities Student]

Students described how they chose whether to engage and disengage from different groups depending on their needs. This depicts students as resourceful and asserting their ‘freedom to learn’ in their own way (Macfarlane, 2015). This links to the idea that students portray themselves as autonomous and less concerned with engaging with learning in the ways staff expect. There is an overlap with the idea of the student as an ‘independent learner’, which was more prevalent in University B, in terms of the responsibility for learning lying with the student. The construction of the ‘social learner’ could be viewed as a different way that students were taking responsibility for learning, one which rejects the construction of the student as an isolated independent learner and embraces the social aspects of learning using technologies and shared spaces. Students portrayed themselves as resourceful and as resisting the constraints of a transactional and student-focused curriculum. There is a note of caution for staff here whose efforts to facilitate peer learning may not be appreciated in the way Hockings *et al.* (2018) suggest.

6.2.2 Notable absences

There was an unanticipated absence of some constructions, for example, ‘students as partners’ and ‘students as researchers’. ‘Students as researchers’ was a construction occurring in the university documents from both University A and B and also in the literature on research-led teaching which was circulating in the sector in the period leading up to the research study. Research-led teaching can involve different practices and Zamorski (2002) found that academics referred to two principal pedagogical models which either placed students as audiences to the research carried out by their lecturers or followed a model where students are more directly involved in research activities. Less commonly, it referred to lecturers who were involved in their own professional development as teachers by investigating and reflecting on their own educational practice.

Students in University A and B did not construct themselves as researchers or scholars and the examples of ‘good’ teaching they described did not foreground research opportunities and careers in research were not mentioned. There was a small number of students in both

universities who mentioned the possibility of going on to postgraduate study but there was still little mention of research in relation to their current studies. In University B, postgraduate students participated in a Student Forum where they mentioned the creation of a research community which aimed to include undergraduate students. However, there was an absence of a strong identification by students as researchers. This might either suggest that students had limited exposure to activities where these constructions were prominent or that these discourses had not become part of the students' repertoire. This absence was surprising given the emphasis in the university documents on the creation of knowledge (University A) and the development of learning communities (University B), although it may be that the promotion of research was not seen by the Universities as an attractive marketing tool. This finding was also surprising given the interest in this topic amongst the learning and teaching community, evidenced, for example, through work to develop a conceptual framework for research-led teaching (Healey and Jenkins 2009) or initiatives to mainstream undergraduate research in non-research intensive universities, such as through the development of student e-journals (Gresty and Edwards-Jones 2012). This leads to the conclusion that the discourse was more important to staff than to students. Zamorski (2002:426) argued that the nature of research was not well understood by students and found that even in a research-intensive university, students had a 'poor grasp of the nature of academic work' and that the research process was largely invisible to undergraduates. This concurs with Jenkins (2004), who found that pre- and post-1992 universities did not have clear mechanisms for delivering the teaching-research link, despite the stated importance in university mission statements.

Furthermore, the idea of disciplinarity was less prominent than anticipated and was of differing importance to different groups: academic identity was stronger amongst staff than students, for example, Humanities Programme Leaders talked of students forming a community of historians. However, students made a negative association between staff conducting research in a discipline and a diminished focus on their teaching roles. There were examples of students switching to business subjects and their accounts suggested that choices were less about knowledge to be gained or the prestige of a particular subject discipline and more about the future employment opportunities a subject area might offer. In some students' accounts, families were interested in the level of education attained, as having a family member with a degree conferred a certain status. In student talk, high grades and a good degree classification were described as important indicators of educational quality.

Also notable was the absence of the construction of students as ‘partners’. Again, this was prevalent in the University B documentation but rarely mentioned by students. The construction of ‘partnership’ requires an adjustment to be made to the power balance in the pedagogical relationship such that students and staff operate on a more equal basis. However, there is a power imbalance due to the fact that staff are assessors and students are graded as well as the fact that governance structures in universities have limited input from students. According to Lizzio and Wilson (2009), the positioning of the student by the university defines the nature of the student governance role and in the case where the student is positioned as a consumer, this may involve operationalising the maximising of student satisfaction, enhancing accountability or earning a return on investment. This might help explain why students in the study did not describe themselves as empowered or in a partnership relationship. For students to describe themselves as ‘partners’, this would imply that there would also have been a sharing of the pedagogical philosophy underpinning the relationship. Students would be unlikely to adopt this discourse unless they had encountered the construction of students-as-partners in practice, for example, by initiating a project. This does not preclude the possibility or even the likelihood that such collaborative activities were happening in the institutions studied, but the absence of this construction suggests that students did not choose to portray themselves in a partnership role.

Dunne and Zandstra (2011) identify four different roles for students: as ‘evaluators’, as ‘participants’, as ‘partners’ and as ‘agents for change’. Students as ‘partners’ includes students engaged in institutional development work, but the authors suggest this tends to be led by the institution rather than jointly led. The construction of students as ‘change agents’ emphasises more actively student-driven agendas. The authors suggest that the approach to the student voice in the institution is important: merely listening to students rather than involving them in decisions can signify a consumer orientation:

‘The concept of ‘listening to the student voice’ – implicitly if not deliberately – supports the perspective of student as ‘consumer’, whereas ‘students as change agents’ explicitly supports a view of the student as ‘active collaborator’ and ‘co-producer’, with the potential for transformation’ (Dunne and Zandstra, 2011:4).

In practice, the Student Forum meetings functioned as a forum for listening to students (University A) and also for consulting students about future plans and issues (University B). Evidence from the student interviews suggested that some students had volunteered to be student representatives because they positioned themselves as having opportunities to

change things but they did not construct themselves as either partners or change agents and indicated that they had other career-related reasons for becoming a student representative, such as enhancing their CV. The possibilities to be either partners or agents of change were limited, as the students were highly dependent on staff and the institution for invoking possibilities to assume these roles. In the short term, students were unlikely to be involved in collaboration in great numbers across programmes, even where an institutional commitment had been made to student-staff collaborative work. In University B, where students had been involved in projects working alongside staff, the students did not describe themselves as 'partners' or 'change-agents' but as involved in 'student engagement'. 'Student engagement' was a term deployed by both students and staff in University B, but there was some confusion about what was meant by the term, and it was deployed by staff to mean both involving students in the running of programmes and also co-producing their education with staff.

6.2.3 Variation in student and staff accounts

Three constructions were deployed by students but not by staff ('mini-adult', 'party-goer' and 'pawn'). These constructions of students showed the impact of factors beyond the classroom and their potential vulnerability. In the case of the first two constructions, this absence may be because academic staff talk was focused on student academic development rather than their wider activities. Furthermore, in the case of 'party-goers', students were the ones who experienced first-hand the alcohol culture and noticed its impact on their fellow students. Although some staff did refer to students as struggling, this tended to be academically, whereas students were also highlighting the difficulties beyond academic studies, for example, adapting to being independent, coping with employment and a social life and, in the case of student as 'pawn', questioning their relationship with the university.

There were also constructions that were more prevalent amongst staff than students. For example, students did not construct themselves as 'critical thinkers'. They were more likely to construct themselves as hard-working or 'engaged learners'. 'Critical thinking' tends to be associated with becoming a scholar and some authors argue that it has moved from centre stage, and that student employability has moved to the foreground:

'Once, under the guidance of the academic, the undergraduate had the potential to be transformed into a scholar, someone who thinks critically, but in our consumer society such 'transformation' is denied and 'confirmation' of the student as consumer is favoured.' (Molesworth *et al.*, 2009:277)

This depiction of a binary shift from ‘scholar’ to ‘consumer’ masks the complexity of identity construction. There were instances of staff describing the student as a ‘critical thinker’ and staff definitions of a ‘good’ student included the dispositions and skills of thinking critically. Students emphasized being prepared, participating, achieving good attendance and needing a good work ethic, but were less likely to stress the higher order skills. Critical thinking itself is a complex idea and subject to debate as to what it entails in higher education (Davies and Barnett, 2015). The reasons why students may or may not adopt particular terms, such as ‘critical thinker’, to describe themselves are complex. Adoption could be related to the language that they hear frequently employed by staff or a familiarity with the language of learning and teaching, which has its particular vocabulary and discourse practices. As explained in Chapter Two, language and discourses are viewed as situated and serving a particular purpose in a particular context. The ‘critical thinker’ has associations with a higher order of thinking as exemplified by the top levels of Bloom’s taxonomy (Bloom, 1956), a model still frequently referenced by staff who were training to be teachers in higher education. For a student to adopt a particular construction it would involve grasping the conceptual meaning and relating that meaning to the context or situation. White and Lowenthal (2011) argue that, for students to be full participants in a university setting, a student needs to be provided with the necessary discursive resources. This would mean, for example, staff making discourses more explicit to students and providing ways of unpicking the academic discourses deployed.

In contrast to the ‘critical thinker’, the ‘independent learner’ had a general appeal and was recognised by some students in the study as an identity prized by their schools and associated with success in higher education. This leads to the conclusion that discourses of learning and teaching were deployed by staff to support particular views of student development, but that the language was not always taken up by students. This may have been due to the lack of explanation of academic discourses deployed.

6.2.4 Variations in constructions between University A and B

As mentioned in Chapters Four and Five, there were important variations between the constructions of the student made by staff, students and the University. Variations could be accounted for in different ways, for example, the authors of the selected University documents were concerned with projecting a future vision and an ideal picture yet to be realised rather than reflecting the contemporary environment. In other words, writers have different purposes. A strategy document not only reflects the conversations circulating at a

particular historical moment, but has been reworked many times and is less spontaneous than a spoken conversation. Variations could also indicate that there was a disconnect between the University staff and the breadth of the experiences of students, or it could be that there are fundamental differences in purpose and form, between text which has been laid down in writing for public consumption and text which was a transcription of a spoken conversation. The nature of the conversations with students in either interviews or in semi-formal Student Forum meetings meant that students were responding to questions and probing, and constructing their identities in a more open and intimate way than might be the case if they had written them as text.

The construction of 'student-as-consumer' was most striking in the Business School in University A where a transactional approach to teaching was espoused by the Programme Leader. The Business School staff in University B did not construct students in this way. In both universities, the Business Programme Leaders interviewed were teaching Finance and Accounting and a direct comparison could be made. In contrast to University A, the Programme Leader in University B embraced the idea of the student as a 'critical thinker' and the curriculum as empowering:

'Here with the degree we're empowering the students to ask the questions they wouldn't normally ask. To think about things in a different way. Not just accept that there's a rule and this is how the rule is applied, but to give them the ability to be able to criticise. And say "well why is that rule in place. Is that the right rule? Should we be changing it? What power have we got to change it?" I teach Personal Financial Planning and one of the things I stress is for them to ask questions before they buy a financial product. And they think "oh, I'm never going to have any money". I say "once you leave here next year, take a job, you're going to probably have a pension. And once you have a pension you are an investor, so you are going to ask questions about what that pensions can do for you, how do you contribute, what happens if you lose your job?" I just make them think about asking questions. And that's the power of a degree – it's not just in my subject that they'll get that – it's in – I hope – many other subjects.'
[Nadine, Programme Leader, Business]

This example reinforces the conclusion that subject discipline was not a key determinant of whether consumerist discourses would be deployed or resisted. Nor can the discourse of consumerism be viewed as a totalising discourse across an institution, as staff, for example, the Programme Leader in Humanities in University A, resisted the consumer discourse. This points to the agency that staff have in adopting or resisting particular discourses.

6.2.5 Findings from other studies

Studies looking at the construction of students have tended to be conceptual rather than empirical studies, have considered the ‘student-as-consumer’ as the dominant metaphor or have sought alternative overarching metaphors (see Chapter Two, Policy Context and Literature Review). There are relatively few published critical discourse studies in the literature which focus on higher education (Smith, 2014). Using a thematic approach, Brooks (2017) examined constructions of students based on the examination of English policy documents and identified students positioned as ‘thwarted students/ vulnerable children’, ‘future workers’, ‘learners’ and ‘hard-workers’, ‘political actors’ and ‘absent or “sham” international students’. There are some similarities between the first four constructions and the constructions identified in this study. In particular, students constructed themselves as thwarted consumers in the sense of having only limited powers and being beholden to the University as a service provider. This construction of the student as a thwarted customer was encapsulated by a metaphor used by a student in University A, already mentioned in Chapter Four, where the student paying fees was compared to a disappointed customer who had paid for a new car but was given a used vehicle instead:

‘it’s a bit like buying a car from brand new – you expect it to do the things that any other new car does – but instead you get like a used car – it does half of the things you expect it to do [Karl, Year 2 Humanities Student, University A].

The construction of students as ‘future workers’, ‘learners’ and ‘hard-workers’ map to the constructions in this doctoral study of ‘future employees’ and ‘learners’, including ‘engaged learners’. The remaining constructions are less relevant to this study. Despite many participants being student representatives, students did not emphasise their role as political actors or routinely construct international students as ‘sham’, although there was one isolated account where students suggested international students were flouting the terms of their visas.

In 2018, the same author looked at four roles of students in a European context (‘consumers’, ‘workers’, ‘family members’ and ‘political actors’) and found that the national context was important, with significant differences between and within nation-states (Brooks, 2018). The inclusion of students as ‘family members’ resonates with the findings of this study which identified the role of families in student decision-making as important and under-researched.

6.2.6 Implications for pedagogical relationships

In reviewing the similarities in findings from the two universities, a further analysis was conducted at this same level of abstraction to see whether patterns or overlaps in ways of talking about students could be identified given the large number of constructions discovered. In considering where the constructions identified in Chapters Four and Five had similar or overlapping functions, this analysis identified clusters of constructions. By considering the functions of constructions and how they position staff, the implications for how pedagogical relationships are being (re)conceptualised could be discussed. This mapping formed a step between the identification of constructions of students and the identification of discourses, as clusters suggested different strands of wider conversations that were circulating.

Four main clusters were identified and named as follows: 'Investors', 'Learners', 'Strugglers' and 'Rebels'.

1. **'Investors'**. The first set of constructions primarily talk about the student as focused on outputs, as an individual purchaser of education and view education as a private good ('investor', 'consumer', 'future employee', 'business partner' and 'strategic learner'). This suggests that pedagogical relationships are being conceptualised as relationships where the staff member is the guardian of the investment and is accountable for the future returns on that investment. There is a contradiction, in that the student is positioning themselves as making wise choices, but the inherent uncertainty of financial investments is not taken into account.
2. **'Learners'**. The second group constructs the student as focused on the process of learning, as primarily a learner and leaves open the possibility of viewing education as a public good ('engaged learner', 'critical thinker', 'social learner' and 'independent learner'). Pedagogical relationships are characterised by an upward trajectory of cognitive development and interaction with staff and other learners both in the past (through the study of knowledge and ideas) and in the present (through interactions with others). There is a contrast between the idealised view of the student as a learner and the idea of student success being driven by context and market factors.

3. **'Strugglers'**. The third group constructs students as vulnerable and views education as tied up with everyday life, a struggle sometimes played out in private mental struggles ('struggler', 'novice', 'mini-adult') and affected by the student's situational factors. The implication for pedagogical relationships is that staff are required to take account of contextual factors in order to understand the ways students are engaging, or not engaging, with learning opportunities. There is an overlap between the idea of struggling and learning, but the struggling acknowledges the context in which the student learns as well as the intellectual development.

4. **'Rebels'**. The fourth group include characterisations which might be negative such as 'party-goers', 'disengaged learner', and 'pawn', which do not fit with traditional notions of a 'good' or 'bad' student. As such, they resist conventional constructions of pedagogical relationships, thereby arguing that there are different ways to be an 'effective' or 'successful' student and questioning the moral and social obligations which form part of the social contract in higher education. This resistance contrasts with the passivity of student representatives who reported that they were reluctant to raise issues through formal university channels.

My argument is that these competing constructions matter because the acceptance of constructions as 'realities' in universities has implications for how learning and teaching can happen. As identified in Chapter Two, the student was portrayed in policy documents as the mechanism for marketisation, in the 'driving seat' of higher education. Based on the evidence from this study, the way pedagogical relationships are constructed in practice is more complex and differs from both the published visions of relationships in institutional documents and in policy documents. Furthermore, the complexity, diversity, and inaccuracy point to a need for a new conceptual framework for the pedagogical relationship. This is developed further in section 6.5.

In summary, students constructed themselves in multiple ways, which had implications for pedagogical relationships. New constructions were highlighted as well as notable absences. Variations between the constructions in University A and B have been discussed and clusters

of similar constructions have been proposed. Finally, constructions identified in the study have been compared to findings from other studies and overlaps examined.

Revealing multiple constructions of the student highlights the heterogeneity of students, which policymakers may overlook in generalising about the student population. Recognising the many and inconsistent ways that students construct themselves avoids reducing the student population to a homogenous body of consumers who are assumed to behave in certain ways. Questioning taken-for-granted assumptions about the way students wish to position themselves in relation to their learning and to wider society might better inform practices in institutions. The next step is to contemplate how far discourses circulating in institutions are creating spaces for certain types of conversations but are silencing others.

The next section addresses the second research question which focuses on whether higher education staff and students draw on the 'student-as-consumer' discourse in their interactions and in accounts of learning and teaching practices.

6.3 The power of the 'student-as-consumer' discourse

As highlighted in Chapter Two, the idea of the 'student-as-consumer' is not new and can be traced back even as far as mediaeval times where teachers relied on cash donations from students as payment for their lectures (Rudy, 1984). Universities have long had partnerships with outside organisations both public and private, and relationships which are constantly shifting as they respond to the changing and increasingly competitive environment of higher education. The idea of the student has been summed up in the literature in a series of metaphors about the student role. Many of these are helpful in that they may shed light on particular aspects of pedagogical relationships in the contemporary higher education context. However, metaphor can be a way of generalising about the state of higher education and the literature devotes less time to how these metaphors are deployed in practice in a particular context. A further drawback is that this form of generalisation, when taken one metaphor at a time, typically assumes that the student behaves consistently and rationally. Rather than seeing metaphors as static abstractions of common behaviours, they can also be seen as constructed identities. This opens up the possibility of metaphors offering insights into the way students describe themselves in more than one way at a time. Metaphors have therefore been seen in this study as contributing to constructions of the student, and which form part of the language of discourses.

The discourse of the 'student-as-consumer' has been perceived as dominant in English higher education (Molesworth *et al.*, 2009; Nixon *et al.*, 2016; Williams, 2013). It has been less clear if, and how, this discourse has altered the potential forms of pedagogical relationships. Williams (2011:170) suggests, for example, that students have been infantilized by their increased dependency on others due to 'a prolonged period of financial dependency and being restricted to influencing only their close environment'. In other words, students are focused on gaining value for money from their programme, and as 'borrowers', rather than 'fee-payers', are not expected to be able to afford to pay fees upfront, or would be dependent on their family if they did. This study has provided evidence of the 'student-as-consumer' discourse in both institutions and has identified several ways in which the discourse was deployed: by students to express their heightened expectations as paying customers of the university and in particular their increased expectations of the quality of teaching; also by students to express entitlement; and by staff to position the student in a transactional arrangement in a bid to improve student satisfaction and meet institutional expectations of performance. As explained in Chapters Four and Five, in this study the discourse was named 'satisfying the customer' and encompassed the sub-discourses of the 'paying customer' and 'service provision'.

The construction of the student as 'paying customer' was common to both universities. As outlined in Chapter Two, the implications for learning and teaching were expected to be around student choice, raised expectations of the university and emphasis on the quality of teaching. It may be important at this point to consider the status of the institutions studied as post-1992 universities, as outlined in the introduction to this thesis (see Boliver, 2015), and whether there is a link between university status and understanding how 'quality' may be understood by students. Research by Baker and Brown (2007) with 'non-traditional' students highlighted a range of factors such as taste, lifestyle and institutional prestige and the absence of considering teaching quality in student decision-making was notable. It cannot be taken for granted that applicants to less prestigious institutions, such as Universities A and B, where high entry requirements do not function as a proxy for the 'high' quality of the institution, that teaching quality automatically becomes a key factor in decision-making.

The idea of the student consumer demanding the quality they have purchased was emphasised by Naidoo and Jamieson (2005) who anticipated, for example, that the

publication of information relating to the quality of programmes would be used by students to put pressure on universities:

‘The assumption is that students will utilize such mechanisms to demand high quality provision and will apply pressures on universities to make courses more relevant to the skills they require for the workplace’. (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005:268)

The related assumption was that consumerist forces would have a positive impact on the professional practices of academic staff due to the increased competition within and between universities (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005).

This study found that the consumer mechanism did not function in the ways assumed by policymakers, and students did not construct themselves as demanding consumers as hypothesized by Naidoo and Jamieson (2005) given the conditions. This may be because it is difficult for students to be discerning customers and recognise what constitutes high quality provision, particularly when they only experience one institution at a time, or possibly ever. However, this can be countered by the evidence in the study that students had very similar perceptions of the characteristics of ‘good’ lecturers and ‘good’ teaching, which were common to both institutions. It is therefore important to look more closely at how this discourse was deployed.

The ‘student as consumer’ discourse was deployed as an expression of entitlement rather than as a lever to enhance quality of the student experience. The construction of the student as a demanding consumer was not borne out by the data in this study and student representatives expressed reluctance to escalate issues of concern. Could this be because students in the current environment were passive, or were students being better represented by their students’ unions in discussions with the university? The contemporary portrayal of the student in higher education in policy documents does not portray students as activists and focusses on the economic importance of students to society. A study by Brooks *et al.*, (2015) found that elected student union representatives placed a greater emphasis on representing student voices within the university than on activism or overtly political causes. An alternative explanation suggested by this doctoral study as to why students did not construct themselves as demanding customers is that they constructed themselves as constrained by one fundamental aspect of the pedagogical relationship, the fact that staff were their assessors and that their academic judgement could not be

challenged. As mentioned in Chapter Two, discourse can be a means by which tutors can exert power over students (Carless, 2006) and assessment is 'intimately interwoven with relations of power' (Leathwood, 2006). Students positioned staff as having an undeniable power advantage and also positioned themselves as dependent on their tutors for the qualifications they sought. A student who described his attempts to challenge his tutor's academic judgement in University A reported that it was like 'fighting a giant' [Karl, Year 2 Humanities Student].

As described in Chapters Four and Five, there was evidence of a 'service provision' approach to learning and teaching, which changed the description of pedagogical relationships, particularly in the Business School in University A. How far had this led to the opening or closing of opportunities for learning? This discourse legitimised transactional learning and adapting the curriculum in response to student wants and needs, which may be quite problematic given that these are distinct and at times in conflict. Examples in University A were dropping unpopular modules from the curriculum and rescheduling student timetables to be student-friendly. As seen in the Business School Student Forum and in the interview with the Business Programme Leader in University A, staff talk focused on improving service provision and student satisfaction and lecturers described themselves as accountable for student outcomes and satisfaction. Within this discourse the underpinning values were student achievement and success. From a student perspective, the focus by staff on meeting prescribed service levels (such as response times for emails, more transparency about timescales for delivery of feedback and clear advertising of office hours) might be seen as positive developments. Student interviews stressed the importance of staff being approachable and processes being consistent. However, the negatives were also significant in that there was evidence in the staff talk of instrumental learning aimed at achieving high grades rather than gaining a broad education. The popular construction of a student as an 'investor' in both universities underlined the common desire for a return on investment in the form of high marks, although there was no acknowledgement that the performance of investments can both rise and fall and cannot be guaranteed. There were unintended consequences of this consumer discourse for both staff and students, for example, students in University A were less willing to attend lectures on campus due to the condensing of the timetable in their favour and staff were constructed as vulnerable to the increasing demands of the performative environment.

6.4 Resisting the 'student-as-consumer' discourse

Students and staff demonstrated that they resisted the discourse in different ways and the Programme Leaders constructed themselves as influential in presenting alternative visions of the pedagogical relationship, for example, through creating independent learners and developing a community of learners amongst their disciplines. Evidence from the Student Forum meetings in University B suggested that staff went beyond just listening to the student voice and actively consulted students about changes. As discussed in Chapter Two, Trowler (2001:196) suggests how discourses might capture individuals and suggests this often involves 'discursive struggle or sometimes accommodation rather than simply discursive capture'. This was exemplified by the Business Programme Leader in University A who, when interviewed, described herself as battling with the struggle between delivering a curriculum which was more intellectually stimulating and one which satisfies the students' desire for high marks whilst also describing herself as knowingly complicit in her decision to satisfy the students' desire for high grades ('satisfying the customer'). From the analysis of the Business School Student Forum meeting, it was seen that the same staff member also adopted the discourse of 'service provision'. Trowler (2001:195) suggests that the deployment of discourses is transient and dependent on the context and refers to this as a form of 'bilingualism'.

In summary, the students and staff did draw on consumerist discourses. In particular the students drew on the discourse of the 'paying customer' as a means of expressing entitlement. However, the discourse of the 'student-as-consumer' was not deployed in the way policymakers suggested as a way of leveraging high quality provision (IRHESF, 2010) or as forecasted by Naidoo and Jamieson (2005). Benefits for students included an improved focus on service levels but, as outlined above, there were unintended consequences for both students and staff. This leads to the conclusion that the power of the 'student-as-consumer' discourse may have been overstated.

The following sections review the additional discourses deployed by staff and students beyond the discourse of the 'student-as-consumer'.

6.5 Additional discourses

The third research question considers additional discourses available for describing and accounting for the pedagogical relationships, and how they were deployed. The term ‘additional’ rather than ‘alternative’ is expressly used as there are assumed to be multiple discourses which combine to describe pedagogical relationships, rather than a single discourse.

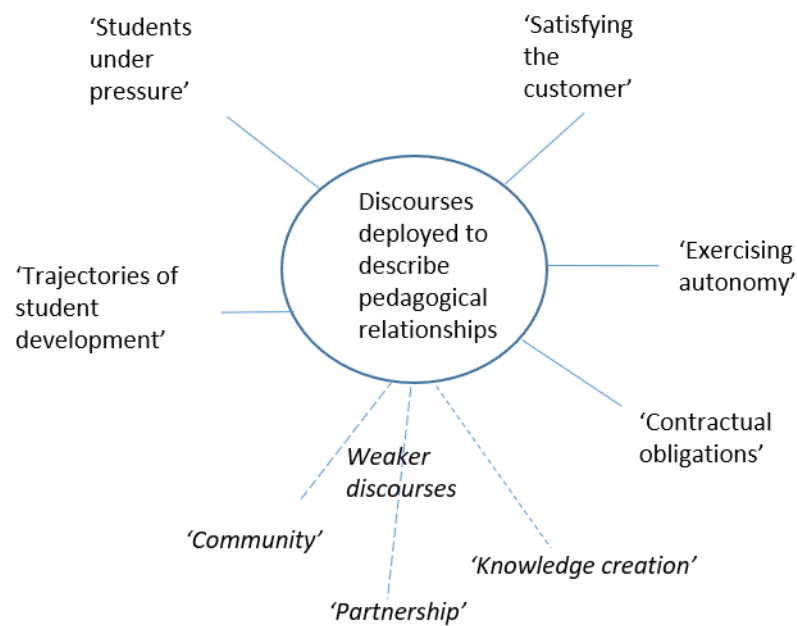


Figure 5: Discourses deployed to describe pedagogical relationships

As identified in Chapters Four and Five, the additional discourses identified were: ‘students under pressure’, ‘exercising autonomy’, ‘trajectories of student development’ and ‘contractual obligations’. The ways they were deployed across the two institutions, by whom, and for what purpose are discussed in sections 6.5 to 6.9 below. The discourses can be seen as indicative of different responses to the shifting environment in an era of mass higher education, and which were sometimes in tension. The discourses positioned students differently in pedagogical relationships and this could produce clashes. For example, in ‘students exercising their autonomy’, students were positioning themselves as independent agents exercising choice about the way they learned, which contrasts with the discourse of ‘trajectories of student development’ deployed by staff which made pedagogically driven assumptions about how students engage with learning.

6.5.1 'Students under pressure'

The discourse of 'students under pressure' emphasises the difficulties faced by students at university, including financial constraints. The constructions of contemporary students in University A and B contrasted with the depiction of a 'typical' successful graduate, who is assumed to derive economic benefits from being at university but also wider benefits such as greater confidence and increased status. The constructions also contrasted with the depiction of the student as a future contributor to society. In a review of the literature on the wider benefits of higher education Brennan *et al.* (2013) emphasised a range of important benefits to society emerging from having undertaken higher education, with citizenship, civic engagement, lower crime, health and general well-being as the most frequently mentioned.

A key finding from the doctoral study was the variations in the ways the discourse of 'students under pressure' was deployed by staff and students. Students' accounts described pressure as out of the ordinary, minimised the pressure by representing pressure as part of student life, as socially acceptable, or highlighted strategies for coping with stress such as studying with others or going out with friends. Staff tended to normalise student pressure without recognising the individual differences in the circumstances facing each student and downplayed its complexity by characterising stress as a problem to be solved by 'getting the balance right', thereby implying the solutions were always within the control of the student. Some students also talked about the idea of 'getting the balance right' and sought to seek out other activities such as going out with friends as a counterbalance to the pressure. There was therefore a tendency overall to minimise the significance of pressure for students. The normalisation of pressure as just something to balance, risks overlooking possible implications of pressure for student mental health and wellbeing. Vulnerability, as described by Furedi (2017), portrays students as having reduced agency and at risk of psychological harm. The idea of vulnerability was also addressed In Chapter Two, where students were positioned by policymakers as both vulnerable and lacking agency in the face of a higher education system which was not fully formed as a market (Brooks, 2017).

It can be argued, based on the findings, that insufficient attention has been given to the pressures faced by students and the way their personal circumstances and non-academic responsibilities impact on their construction of student identities. However, since my field visits, there may have been increased attention on this, with more focus on student wellbeing and mental health, and consideration of the effects of social media.

In University A, Rachel, who was the first in her family to go to university, commented on the portrayal of university by family and friends as a carefree and romantic time of life, whereas her own key concerns revolved around her finances:

'they said "oh you party all year and the friends you make are the ones you'll make for your whole life and this is where you'll meet the love of your life" ...I wasn't going to be out there partying all the time because I wanted to save money' [Rachel, year 2 Humanities Student]

Brooks (2017) pointed out that pressure also affects students' ability to commit to their studies:

'little consideration is given to the factors (such as financial pressures and caring responsibilities) that may make it difficult for some students to devote long hours and high levels of energy to their studies' (p.10).

The pressure on students was strongly portrayed in University A where there were financial pressures, pressures of work, family commitments and anxieties about personal achievement as well as concerns about future employability. In University B, students also highlighted time pressures as a key difficulty in completing their assessments to a high standard. The pressure of expectation to be independent learners was arguably greater in University B than in University A. For example, students in Humanities were expected to lead seminar discussions, whereas there were comparatively lower expectations of students in University A, particularly in the Business School where there was a more transactional approach to learning and teaching.

Being under pressure was frequently constructed as a student struggling. However, struggling can be portrayed both negatively and positively: negatively, as harmful to mental health, and more positively, as a necessary component of intellectual endeavour. Has the marketised environment made a difference to the idea of struggling or has struggling always been a feature of student life? Leathwood and O'Connell (2003) conducted a study in a post-1992 university and identified at that time that 'struggle was a constant theme in the data' (p.607). The three major areas of struggle identified by students at that time were financial issues, confidence in their ability, and institutional factors. By institutional factors, the authors referred to a lack of support and expectations to be independent learners, such that first year students felt they had been expected to be independent too early and left to 'sink or swim'.

All three aspects of struggling were indeed reflected in this doctoral study, with the theme of independent learning most directly relating to pedagogical relationships. In University A, student needs were a central concern and students reported that they liked to be directed and expected staff to be more responsive and supportive given the increased fees. In University B, the discourse of independent learning was more in evidence although being an independent learner was portrayed as a characteristic which was developed over time and, in the context of a curriculum framework which was scaffolded, became progressively more demanding across the years of the programme (see section 6.4.4). It seems that contextual differences were making a difference to how pressures were described. There was a gap between staff expectations of being a particular sort of student as expressed by different trajectories of student development and students' abilities or desires to meet those expectations.

There were additional ways besides the three areas identified by Leathwood and O'Connell (2003) in which students felt pressurised, which included family pressures and the fear of the competitive job market. Family pressures included pressure to do well and the dependency by students on families for financial support. In a study in a post-1992 university, Harrison *et al.*, (2015) identified that families, and specifically parents, were a strong reference point in financial matters. A typology of six types of participants' attitudes towards debt was identified ranging between 'debt-savvy' and 'debt-resigned'. In this doctoral study, the students did not tend to construct themselves as debtors, and constructions of the student as 'paying customers' or 'investors' were more prevalent. Financial pressures tended to be minimised by downplaying the significance of the amounts owed. This could be a way of coping with the pressure of knowing how much is owed by putting off the thought of it until later or, alternatively, students were ignorant of the student loan contract and the high rates of interest they would need to pay in the future.

Staff were also constructed as being under pressure. The burden weighed highly on staff in University A, where there was a more performative culture, and where staff described themselves as personally accountable for student achievement. Taylor and McCaig (2014) in their report on the impact of student number controls, choice and competition highlighted that:

'staff felt more pressurised, more accountable than ever, and increasingly more stressed and that this was, in part, due to the perception that business models

were becoming sharper and bureaucracies more overbearing'. (Taylor and McCaig, 2014: 53)

This description of staff under pressure and feeling accountable was vividly described by the Programme Leader in University A, who constructed staff as having little control over their workload and under increasing pressure to meet deadlines set by the University.

6.5.2 'Exercising autonomy'

This discourse was particularly striking as it positioned students not as passive consumers but as autonomous decision-makers about their educational lives. Students portrayed themselves as making a range of choices including being strategic learners, choosing to prioritise a social life or even disengaging from studies and no longer constructing themselves as students who study. In other cases, students were portrayed as having little choice over their study and working patterns, with some students unable to co-ordinate their shift patterns at work with their studies. This discourse highlights the impact of student circumstances, for example, difficulties arising from financial constraints or even from being commuter students, sometimes resulting in disengagement from their studies. Whereas staff accounts seemed to assume that students were always aspiring to be the best they could be, students in some cases indicated that they were taking a 'good enough' approach.

Mann (2001) describes alienation as an estrangement from the higher purposes of education caused by the particular social conditions of being a university student which work to exclude the student and make them feel like a stranger in a foreign land. The social conditions mentioned are conditions in which there was:

'a greater focus on performativity and functionality; a greater focus on efficiency and effectiveness at the expense of complexity and ambiguity; and a greater sense of the life course and especially the educational life course, as institutionalised, following normatively and inexorably the same 'prescribed' path' (Mann, 2001:9).

Although this article was written many years before this research took place, the social conditions mentioned still resonate today and this could account for the construction of students as disengaged. However, the discourse of exercising autonomy deployed in this study suggests that students, rather than constructing themselves as being outsiders, constructed themselves as active decision-makers in terms of their engagement with the university with some agency in the way that they chose to participate.

The discourse of 'exercising autonomy' co-existed with the discourse of 'students under pressure', as students mapped out their own way through university in accordance with their personal circumstances.

6.5.3 'Trajectories of student development'

'Trajectories of student development' focuses on competing philosophies underpinning student development. These discourses can be linked with current conversations about higher education pedagogies which might support or counter the idea of the 'student-as-consumer'. Three main discourses were identified relating to student development: 'transformation', 'delivering learning' and 'creating independent learners'. All three discourses can be problematized and connected in different ways to the idea of the 'student-as-consumer' in a marketised environment. The aim here is to consider the purposes for which the discourses were deployed in this study and how far they facilitated opportunities for learning.

'Transformation'

The function of the transformation discourse in the University A documents was to paint a positive image of the student trajectory, legitimising the idea of a common path towards being a successful graduate and at the same time, undermining any idea that students might struggle with their education. In this way, it supports the idea of the student as a homogenous being and university being primarily about a route to future employability, positioning the university as the service provider. Universities have for some time been constructed as widening access and transforming student lives through being the 'providers of life chances for individuals' (DBIS, 2009:2).

Different ways of deploying a transformation discourse were identified and discussed in Chapter Four: transformation as improving life chances, transformation as producing successful graduates and transformation as the development of the whole person. This links with three different conversations in higher education: first social mobility, second employability, and third, transformative learning. Based on transformation theory (Mezirow and Taylor, 2009), transformative learning draws on both humanist and constructivist assumptions and proposes that individual transformation involves a change in a learner's frame of reference or way of seeing the world, often through a process of critical reflection on experience and based on a desire to change. It is predominantly seen as inherently good

(Taylor and Cranton, 2013) and therefore lends itself to positive rhetoric. Transformative learning conceptualises the teacher as potentially playing a significant role in encouraging learning, with the learner as an 'autonomous, largely self-directed individual' (Howie and Bagnall, 2015:357). The University documents did not foreground these aspects. Although this discourse was identified in University A documents, it was not deployed in practice by either staff or students. For example, students in University A did not generally describe themselves as needing better life chances and mentioned their connections to the community as well as their individual journey to success. Staff in University A and B deployed two other discourses: 'delivering learning' and 'creating independent learners'.

'Delivering learning'

The discourse of 'delivering learning' is linked to the idea of the 'student as a consumer' and transactional learning. Tomlinson (2013) described the possible consequences of a consumer-driven approach, namely 'consumer-based learning' which positioned the student as able to exert pressure on institutions and was characterised by service provision, a culture of litigation, instrumental credentialism, and immediately gratifying forms of curricula content and delivery. The implications of this approach were claimed to be a potential breakdown in the pedagogical relationship between teacher and learners, with the teacher possibly constructed as a faulty provider. Although the culture of service provision and instrumental learning were observed in this study, in other ways the construction of pedagogical relationships in practice in Universities A and B did not fully match this description. The discourses were varied and uneven across the institutions and subject disciplines, the students did not construct themselves as powerful and the staff were highly committed to maintaining good relationships with students.

The strongest example of this transactional approach was in the Business School in University A, where staff constructed the pedagogical relationship as a 'deal', where staff had to 'deliver' their part of the bargain. The learning was directed to performing well in the final assessment, the accounting curriculum was adapted to student needs and the pace of teaching took account of the progress of the weakest students in the group. The mode of delivery was through workshops where practice questions were completed, with additional practice exercises provided outside the class and online support provided by the Programme Leader who responded to email queries within an agreed timeframe, usually the same day. The unintended consequences of this approach were that the stronger students complained of repetitive sessions, dropped out of sessions and formed self-study groups. This might

imply the legitimacy of the lecturer's authority was questioned and be indicative of the breakdown of pedagogical relationships. However, first year students in the Business School were generally appreciative of teaching that was directive and linked to the assessment. Most of all they were appreciative of reassurance and staff that who made them feel confident.

This learning and teaching approach was popular with students who said they felt secure that they would achieve good grades. They were not positioned as responsible for their own development into graduates. The Business School Programme Leader in University A expressed some reservations in the interview about the lack of intellectual challenge provided by the transactional approach, which closed off openings for broader learning by limiting opportunities for the development of critical thinking skills, although she was publicly committed to the transactional approach. There are some contradictions here in adopting a transactional approach, as arguably such critical thinking skills would be essential for student accountants moving into a professional context. However, the priorities of the institution, revealed in the Student Forum discussions, indicated strong pressure on staff from the institution to achieve high student satisfaction. The nature of the assessments, which were largely examinations accredited by a professional body, were used to justify the pedagogical approach. In contrast, in an interview with the University B Programme Leader, it emerged that the equivalent subject curriculum did emphasise the importance for student accountants to develop critical thinking skills. This pointed to factors other than discipline differences being significant and led to the conclusion that a key factor in opening opportunities for learning was the willingness or not of the individual Programme Leader to resist the deployment of the consumerist discourses which were circulating in the institution and more broadly in society.

'Creating independent learners'

The independent learning discourse encompassed the idea of university as a place for students to become ready for the world beyond university as well as become self-directed learners, able to manage their own studies and think for themselves. Independent learning has been constructed as valuable for both the individual and society (Leathwood, 2006) as students develop skills which will benefit them in future careers. It was deployed by staff to avoid the 'telling' approach to teaching, and to help students develop 'academic fitness' [Irene, Programme Leader, Humanities, University A]. The learning and teaching approach was typified by the idea of the traditional seminar in Humanities in University B, where staff

facilitated discussions which depended on students having read and reflected upon set readings. Students were positioned initially as beginner historians but capable of becoming more expert as they progressed through the degree. Assessments expected students to be capable of analysing arguments and defending a particular viewpoint. Becoming independent learners was linked by Humanities Programme Leaders in both University A and University B to the idea of joining a wider community of historians.

The discourse of 'creating independent learners' also justified allowing students to struggle and therefore links to the discourse of 'students under pressure' by normalising student struggles as a rite of passage. It countered the idea of dumbing down education through the adoption of parenting metaphors which emphasised growing up, for example, taking away 'comfort blankets' from students, thereby contradicting the assertion that universities were increasingly infantilizing students (Williams, 2013).

However, the discourse of independent learning existed alongside the discourse of 'service provision' in both universities, whereby staff could respond to individual needs. Although the discourse of 'service provision' and the discourse of 'independent learning' may seem contradictory, there is an argument that the combination of the two approaches was fruitful for students. Furthermore, although the discourse of 'independent learning' was less prominent in the Business School in University A, there were unexpected consequences. There were examples of students forming social groups to learn together. Hockings *et al.*, (2018) argue that support from peers is a powerful source of independent learning development and could be further encouraged in universities. However, in this study their flexibility and emergent nature, and the exclusion of staff from these social learning groups were described by students as key factors in their popularity.

The concept of 'trajectories of student development' is reminiscent of the work of Perry (1999) who studied how students cope with the intellectual complexity of higher education. He argued, based on accounts of student learning, that there is a progression in student intellectual development through a series of stages and which may continue over a lifetime: starting from students explaining knowledge as being 'right' or 'wrong' to developing independence of mind, accepting the world as pluralist and ultimately taking principled positions. Although his research was conducted in a different context and timeframe and at an elite American institution, the work, first published in 1970, has shaped current thinking about student development. When considering this staged theory of student development

in connection with this study, it is striking that, overall, the development discourses identified in this study focus not just on student intellectual development but on what staff and institutions can actively do, or are obliged to do, for the student in 'delivering' learning, 'creating' independent learners and 'transforming' students. This highlights an absence of discourses for student development which give weight to the autonomy and freedom that some students may wish to have in leading their own development.

6.5.4 'Contractual Obligations'

The discourse of 'contractual obligations' will be discussed with reference to two different levels of obligations: first, in a national higher education context, there is a social contract between society and the university which informs its ethos as an institution and is reflected in institutional documents and second, in a local context, there are obligations created in a transactional approach to learning which have implications for the formation of relationships between staff and students.

The social contract between society and higher education, which is referred to as a 'gentleman's agreement' on roles and responsibilities (Maassen, 2014) is increasingly described in economic terms. Williams (2016: 619-20) argues that the social contract is no longer founded on an exchange of institutional autonomy for the production of knowledge for the public good. Instead, there is a move towards the production of more individualised knowledge outcomes 'which can be used to reap a national economic return'; and a move to 'a focus upon social inclusion and social mobility in the form of individual employability, increased earnings and job security'.

A shift in the social contract in higher education would become evident not only in policy documents but in institutions through a reliance on the staff to implement practices based on new values and thinking. If this shift towards an economic model has indeed taken place, then this study has demonstrated, based on interviews with staff and students and observations of interactions in practice that, at the level of the learning and teaching relationships, such significant changes have played out unevenly.

Some staff were openly resisting a change to a more economic or transactional model and this study demonstrated that different responses existed within the same institution. Staff portrayed themselves in the throes of dilemmas or battling with students to maintain their version of the ideal pedagogical relationship. In University B, this was encapsulated by the

description of a Humanities lecture as a 'battle' with students who wanted answers rather than a range of considered opinions. Even the Programme Leader in University A, who most readily accepted the repurposing of the university as a service provider, was strongly aware of the tensions between the institutional strategy which promoted student employability and success, and a learning and teaching agenda which promoted intellectual development for its own sake. The complexity may be partly due to the nature of learning and teaching itself, which contains at the same time both public good aspects and private good aspects (Marginson, 2011) and therefore can never entirely be reduced to a consumer transaction. The sharing of new knowledge and the creation of programmes can be seen as a public good in itself, whereas the gaining of a qualification to enable entry into a profession or higher earnings can be seen as a private good. It was the attempts by staff to reconcile these two purposes of learning and teaching which was illustrated in talk about obligations in student-staff relationships.

Student talk in both institutions studied revealed expectations that as fee-payers they would all be receiving a good quality education and the emphasis was on the obligations of the university and staff to deliver this against stated targets. In this study, staff were portrayed as under most pressure where the environment was most customer focused (Business School, University A). In student talk, examples such as not providing feedback on time, not providing adequate directions about assessments and failure to respond to emails within a reasonable timescale were expressed not just as underperformance but as breaches of obligations, although not breaches of contract. The implications are the added pressure on staff and institutions to deliver education and the downplaying of the role of the student in their own education. In the Student Forum meetings, Programme Leaders in both institutions reinforced a sense of tightening contractual obligations when they explained to students that there were sanctions for staff not meeting targets, which were framed by managers as reprimands or punishments.

At the same time, there was a loosening of the student obligations. For example, in students' accounts in both universities, students did not feel obliged to attend meetings with their personal tutors and instead constructed these opportunities as a matter of personal preference. Regan (2012) highlights the side-lining of reciprocal obligations between staff and students as follows:

‘The current discussion of consumerism in higher education focuses largely on what the providers are obliged to do for the consumers, against the background of rising tuition fees. This framework does not always sit comfortably with lecturers in the context of a learning and teaching relationship, as it appears to ignore the reciprocal obligations lecturers and students have to one another’. (Regan, 2012:14)

So, what kind of obligations are portrayed as stemming from pedagogical relationships in higher education? The study showed that as well as financial obligations, both moral and social obligations were relevant. Moral obligations refer to the student’s duty to fulfil their role as a student and would be based on considerations of what is right or wrong based on a set of values. Social obligations refer to the obligation to follow society’s traditions and social etiquette in the interests of society. In the case of pedagogical relationships, it may be less about moral obligations but obligations which stem from the familiar and unscripted roles that are played by students and staff. Regan (2012) argued that there are obligations which derive from the functions of the roles that are voluntarily held by each party in the relationship as follows:

‘the function of lecturers is to use their professional knowledge and skills, in order to take actions that could reasonably be expected to facilitate learning for all students with whom they have a learning and teaching relationship...the function of students in higher education is to participate fully with all aspects of their learning, to the best of their abilities’. (Regan, 2012:20)

Whereas lecturers in the study portrayed a strong sense of their obligations to students and to support them beyond the required minimum, students did not construct obligations in this way. Students described themselves as more autonomous in their decision-making about their participation. Accounts showed that they did not feel obliged to participate fully, indicating that fulfilling the obligations stemming from pedagogical relationships were not a priority. Students were aware of the often unspoken obligations stemming from staff-student relationships as evidenced by the consistency in their depictions of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ students and ‘good’ and ‘bad’ lecturers. Students who walked out of classes in University A defended their actions based on the best use of time as a scarce resource, with a view to their individual gain, suggesting that economic or financial obligations override a commitment to role obligations or social etiquette in the form of polite classroom behaviour.

From the students’ accounts, there was also complexity due to the multiple roles they adopted in addition to being a learner and a fee-payer, for example, acting as a programme

representative or a student representative of the university at open days. Fulford (2018) usefully described the pedagogical relationship in terms of obligations falling short of a legal contract. The essence of creating a legal contract is defining exactly what it should contain, which does not fit well with addressing the uncertain and unexpected outcomes of encounters in education. In the interviews and Student Forum meetings for this study, not a single student referred to a written agreement, contract or Student Charter and pedagogical relationships seemed to operate within a space between documented contractual obligations as embodied in a Student Charter or the Academic Regulations, and unspoken rules of custom and practice. At times students said they were reluctant to speak out. For example, they described academics as powerful and discussed their inability to question academic judgement. At other times they expressed concern when obligations or promises made by institutions and staff were not honoured. For example, personal tutors sometimes promised a lot of academic guidance through an open-door 'see me anytime' policy, but then were unable meet the expectations raised by this. Additional obligations, such as guaranteed turnaround times for emails, were mentioned in University A and assessment feedback turnaround times were promised by staff in both universities but the commitments were not always kept (and were not always described as reasonable given the workload pressures on staff). Furthermore, at times, students in this study were happy to position themselves as beyond these obligations, effectively outside the pedagogical relationship, whether as 'party-goers' or 'disengaged students'.

Overall, the discourse of contractual obligations functioned to highlight the complex nature of relationships between staff and students and the moral and social aspects of these obligations alongside the financial obligations.

6.6 Resisting discourses

Before discussing resistance in relation to pedagogical relationships it is necessary to consider the assumptions which underlie this discussion. The idea of resisting a discourse, for example, by deploying an alternative one, suggests that a binary relationship exists between two connected discourses. From a critical discourse perspective, a discourse can be an individualised choice, an act of resistance taken up for a particular purpose and therefore the individual context of the talk is important. Where patterns appear across the data then there is reason to take into account the wider contexts, for example, academic subject discipline,

institutional context and political context which influence the take-up of discourses. It is therefore unwise to suggest that one discourse can be neatly countered by another. For this reason, the term 'additional discourses' was used in the study rather than 'alternative discourses', which might imply one discourse neatly replaces another. An example would be that ideas of 'partnership' which, despite their strong presence in the literature, did not in this study strongly counter ideas of the 'student-as-consumer'. A less binary way of thinking would involve considering the connections between multiple discourses which operate concurrently.

Discourses create subject positions with which individuals may or may not align themselves and voicing interests creates potential spaces for resistance. For example, the 'trajectories of student development' discourses created gaps or discursive spaces between how staff positioned students and how students positioned themselves. In relation to pedagogical relationships, resistance comes, therefore, from speakers challenging the way pedagogical relationships are currently being defined and described by others. This was evident in the following accounts of practices, as follows:

- Students were undermining ideas of 'traditional' pedagogical relationships and challenging the current depiction of pedagogical relationships in wider society. An example of this would be the way students resisted the construction as transactional learners and formed their own peer study groups and discussion forums. Another example would be the resistance of the construction of themselves as personal tutees with close relationships with staff in favour of talking to peers, thereby reinforcing a discourse of 'exercising autonomy';
- Students challenged the discourse of 'creating independent learners'. This involved a range of strategies including students constructing themselves differently as 'strategic learners', or as 'party-goers' who had interests beyond studying, again reinforcing the discourse of 'exercising autonomy';
- Students challenged the consumerist discourse by resisting the construction of the student as a future graduate with advantages in the job market, as well as by doubting the graduate premium. Students resisted the construction of students as debtors and talked of deferring their financial concerns, only reinforcing the discourse of 'students under pressure'.

Programme Leaders acted as interpreters of the institutional discourses and showed agency in complying with or resisting discourses. For example, one Programme Leader justified a rejection of the 'student-as-consumer' discourse based on her experiences of a different educational environment. Resistance was also attempted through asserting alternative visions of pedagogical relationships such as subject communities or by presenting a different role for the student such as 'partner' or a 'critical thinker'. Those Programme Leaders resisting the consumer discourse also portrayed themselves as less under pressure from the institution and willing to try things out and define their own learning and teaching practices.

The study indicates that the consumerist mechanism was not working as anticipated and this may be of interest to policymakers whose writing assumes that students are a homogenous body. Eloquent visions of the future in prospectuses and strategy documents were not succeeding in countering consumerist discourse and this rhetoric did not take account of the material realities facing universities. Even practices in place which supported alternative discourses of 'partnership' were not recognised as such by students. Although Programme Leaders had autonomy to deploy alternative discourses, pressures from the institution to 'satisfy the customer' were in evidence.

6.7 Discourses and the implications for learning opportunities

A learning opportunity suggests a moment or series of occasions where learning can happen. These can be formal opportunities recognised and facilitated by a university and its representatives or private moments. However, learning may also happen in unexpected and unanticipated ways that might not be visible or recognisable by an institution. For the purposes of this thesis a 'learning opportunity' relates to opportunities created through interactions or potential interactions between students and staff, or sparked by such relationships. Implicit in this definition is the idea that not all opportunities may be taken up because they are perhaps resisted or declined.

How does the idea of learning opportunities link to other ideas about learning and what other assumptions are at play? Does the student construct the learning opportunity, is it provided, or is it a combination of practices? In adult learning, self-directed learning is a central concept (Garrison, 1997), along with 'andragogy' (Knowles, 1970), which suggests that adult learning can be defined as a unique field of practice. These ideas have been recognised as pillars of theory but have also been criticised for the lack of attention they give to the context of

learning (Merriam, 2001). This links to the theoretical position in this thesis, that the world is socially constructed, and that learning is constructed in a social context and formed through practices.

What is the connection between learning opportunities and talk? Discourses create possibilities for what can or cannot be said in a particular context. They also create boundaries around what can or cannot be said in a particular context. This being so, then the discourses circulating can form an important part of the learning context. Opening up opportunities suggests creating more diversity and the possibilities of learning in different ways. Closing down opportunities suggests fewer opportunities or making some kinds of relationships less feasible than others.

In this section I argue, based on the evidence from this study, that the defining aspects of pedagogical relationships were underpinned by five discourses. Furthermore, I argue that these discourses created opportunities for particular kinds of relationships and acted as forces which could open or close opportunities for learning. I also consider two important questions: first, 'who benefits?' if these discourses are acknowledged and treated as 'reality' and second, 'what might this mean for higher education pedagogy?'

1. The 'satisfying the customer' discourse, when operationalised in practices, was generally deployed in such a way as to constrain the pedagogical relationships, narrowing the purpose of education and limiting opportunities due to the instrumentalisation and reinforcing of education as an individual, rather than a shared, experience. It restricted space for intellectual engagement and critical thinking in favour of instrumental learning, setting lower expectations of students. A key example in the study was the reduction of the pedagogical relationship to a fifty-fifty 'deal'. When students described themselves as customers, they often portrayed themselves as disempowered customers, and in tension with staff in pedagogical relationships, subject to academic judgement about their work, and not as influencers, even in the Student Forum meetings where they had a voice. Only a small minority of students reported that they were motivated to achieve more in order to secure value for money for their increased fees. The narrowing of pedagogical relationships to key transactions benefits those who wish to measure performance and demonstrate improvement against quantitative measures. Associated discourses of 'service provision' and 'employability' reinforce the focus

on the individual student as a unit of measurement. Continuing to implement pedagogies based around satisfying the student glosses over the complexity of pedagogical relationships, masks the tensions between students and staff and fails to nurture students' potential.

2. 'Students under pressure' – this discourse constrained the pedagogical relationships by typically limiting opportunities for student-staff interactions. For example, financial pressures precluded students from entering university or forced them to change the way they participate. This discourse tended to portray increasing anxiety and a closing down of opportunities for learning for its own sake, by foregrounding other competing priorities such as a focus on the outcomes of learning (the need to achieve high grades), or by talking about work and study as a necessary insurance against future uncertainties, or even the need to acquire graduate status to meet family expectations. The depiction of students under pressure draws attention to a range of pressures, including those beyond the academic context, which might be invisible to staff. In normalising pressure as part of institutional life, attention is not drawn to any underlying factors which might stem from government policies such as student funding policies and insufficient mental health resources. Insights from the way students talk about being under pressure might be valuable to staff when reviewing pedagogy. The normalisation of pressure is embedded in relationships in a way which is unspoken or insufficiently discussed. The three year model of student development which underpins many undergraduate programmes may be adding to the pressures on students due to its inflexibility, particularly for students who work or have additional responsibilities.
3. 'Exercising autonomy' – the assertion of autonomy by the student in deciding how to engage with learning activities indicated a challenge to 'traditional' student-staff relationships with the student making decisions about the mode and extent of engagement and the priority of education within their lifestyle choices. It opens up the idea that there are many ways of talking about learning and being a student, other than 'engaged' or 'disengaged'. The student is able to justify their actions through deploying discourses of personal autonomy in order to explain how they manage their circumstances, including financial arrangements. These include radical concepts of being a learner with a decline in importance of pedagogical relationships for some students, and in some cases learning itself becomes less central to the idea

of being a student. However, some staff resist this discourse by describing students as non-compliant with expected behaviours such as attendance and participation, and this may be out of a concern for the impact on student satisfaction measures in the institution. The presence of this discourse should not be ignored and this willingness to exercise autonomy rather than comply with consumerist rhetoric could be interpreted as positive. Asserting the freedom to learn in different ways may well be recognised as important for future higher education pedagogies.

4. 'Trajectories of student development' – the importance of staff as key facilitators of learning opportunities was still present in all three discourses: 'transformation', 'delivering learning' and 'creating independent learners'. These discourses promote institutional and staff views of student development and are deployed to emphasise routes to student success, which in turn benefits the reputation of the institution. The anticipated constructions of student-staff relationships as relationships between equals through discourses of partnership did not emerge in University B. The absence of trajectories around becoming researchers or scholars also contributed to the narrowing of learning opportunities. Based on the students' interest in learning in informal social groups both face-to-face and over social media, future pedagogical relationships might depend on developing more flexible and innovative ways of supporting learning, for example, using technology for more remote study support and promoting increased interaction with peer learners.
5. 'Contractual obligations' – there was evidence of the constraining of pedagogical relationships by staff needing to focus on performance measures. The closing down of opportunities represented by this discourse was signified by the backdrop of sanctions and punishments for staff who did not meet their performance targets. There was a shift towards quantifying what the staff should provide for students, but there was still evidence of supportive student-staff relationships continuing to be based on the individual needs of learners. The discourse downplays the students' role in their own education and puts aside the intrinsically uncertain and unexpected outcomes of education. Alongside the tightening of expectations around how staff should help students now that they were fee-payers, there was a corresponding loosening of obligations for students, for example, personal tutoring meetings were described by students as optional encounters. Attempts to reduce relationships to a form of contract may benefit the institution by mitigating risks, but are

counterproductive when both staff and students prefer to develop pedagogical relationships based on trust and respect. This might provide evidence, for those interested in higher education pedagogy, of the inappropriateness of considering pedagogical relationships as a form of contract. This point was underlined by the absence in student talk of any reference to contractual documents such as student contracts or charters.

In summary, the discourses highlight the distance and tensions between staff and students and attempts to narrow the gap through promoting ideas of partnership or relaunching personal tutoring arrangements did not seem to resonate with students. Four out of the five discourses were restrictive. This suggests an urgent need for raising awareness in the sector of how contemporary discourses are narrowing learning opportunities in this era of marketisation. However, on a more positive note, the research also showed that some programme leaders are able to resist the discourse of the student as consumer and do encourage critical thinking. In the face of the need to develop new pedagogies for higher education, a positive approach would be to build on the students' desire to exercise autonomy and freedom about how they learn.

In the next two sections I consider possible institutional and disciplinary mediation of students' and staff discursive constructions.

6.8 Differences between the institutions

It has already been pointed out that the two institutions cannot be assumed to be similar just because they are both post-1992 universities. They shared some similarities in being campus universities with diverse student populations but were located in different regions of England and had different local contexts and institutional histories. In this section I am considering how far institutional dynamics might have shaped the discursive constructions that have been revealed in the study. Was there a collective framing which might explain the differences between the institutions?

Based on the documented analysis of staff and student interactions, five similar discourses were identified in the two institutions, which suggests participants were drawing on the same culturally available discourses and that these discourses were available to these respondents in different locations and contexts. However, the documentary analysis showed that the

universities had different visions of the way they anticipated students and the institution would progress in the future. For example, University A described itself as a 'provider' of life chances to students, whereas University B's vision was more collaborative and emphasised partnership.

A striking difference was the intensity of the deployment of a consumerist discourse, which was more marked in University A than University B. Looking first at University A, could it be that the institutional framing in University A was influential in that a 'provider' narrative emphasises the role of the institution in enabling student success and downplays the role of the student in educating themselves? In the study, the student Forum meetings did provide some evidence of the ways staff positioned themselves as desiring to meet the institution's increasing demands and targets to improve student satisfaction. On the other hand, the idea of a powerful institutional framing does not satisfactorily explain why consumerist discourses were able to be resisted by individual staff in Humanities in University A and how other discourses co-existed. For example, there was a less acute focus and concern in the talk of Humanities staff with providing student satisfaction. This difference might be explained by other factors such as the individual agency of lecturers who felt empowered to resist the dominant discourses based on their past experiences or based on their understanding of developing critical thinking in their own discipline. Overall, rather than a collective institutional framing, the accounts point to the divisive nature of the consumerist narrative in University A and underline the way that discourses co-existed and were taken up unevenly.

In University B the disconnect between the discourse of partnership in the institutional documents, on the one hand, and staff and student discourses on the other, have been documented in the study. However, was there something in the self-framing of University B as a forward-looking and collaborative institution which might encourage certain patterns of discourses and help define the boundaries of what is possible in student and staff talk? For example, an important difference between the institutions was the greater optimism in University B about student development, for example through being a critical learner. Furthermore, in the Business school in University B a student studying accountancy was described as a person developing critical thinking in preparation for carrying out future responsibilities in society and capable of thinking creatively about the best course of action, rather than someone applying given protocols. Despite this, the study overall does not bear out the idea that the institutional differences alone are strong enough to shape the patterns of discursive constructions.

6.9 Differences between the subject disciplines

How far does disciplinary difference explain the differences in the ways that pedagogical relationships are described in the study? As highlighted earlier, subject discipline was of differing importance to different groups and academic identity was stronger amongst staff than students.

In Humanities in both universities staff deployed the idea of developing a community of learners, although this did not resonate strongly with the students, who emphasised their individual learning. History students in University B explained that they were encouraged to acquire subject knowledge as individual independent learners, to form their own opinions on topics and argue a case. Furthermore, the idea of being or becoming a researcher in a specific discipline was not prominent in student or staff talk in either university. In a Business School it might be anticipated that familiarity with language of business means staff would more readily position students as powerful consumers, particularly in a competitive market. However, there were factors other than subject discipline which could explain the differences in the deployment of discourses in the study.

The data showed that the agency of the individual staff was important in deploying or resisting consumerist discourses. Staff themselves accounted for their resistance to the consumerist discourse by referencing factors such as their previous educational experiences and professional practice. For example, a business practitioner in University B who had become a programme leader resisted the student-as-consumer discourse on the basis that a university education needed to be more academically challenging.

Other examples in the data shed light on a combination of factors other than subject discipline which were influencing student discourses. For example, students talked about how they chose their courses and in some student accounts potential employment opportunities after graduation were prioritised. Family expectations of achieving a good degree classification were also mentioned as well as financial considerations. Furthermore, students in both subject areas deployed a range of discourses and subject studied was not more likely to lead to a consumerist discourse amongst students. In conclusion, both subject

discipline and institutional framing were less powerful than might be anticipated in accounting for the discourses deployed.

6.10 Towards a conceptual framework for pedagogical relationships

What does the mapping of constructions of students and discourses in this study show about pedagogical relationships? Pedagogical relationships are about much more than learning and teaching relationships. They depend on the interconnection of the environments which shape the possibilities for relationships (as, for example, in personal tutoring). I argue that current constructions of pedagogical relationships underestimate the importance of obligations stemming from relationships in higher education and also underestimate the complexity and concurrency of discourses which construct them.

Before drawing together the ideas in this discussion chapter, I will recap the expectations from the literature about how pedagogical relationships will develop. Naidoo and Jamieson (2005) predicted a new role for the student as the mechanism for marketisation with implications for pedagogical relationships:

‘The student–consumer thus emerges as the focus of competition and a modernizing force that will bring about increased efficiency, diversity and flexibility to the higher education sector’. (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005:270)

This largely was in tune with policy expectations from the White Paper in 2011 when the student was conceived as driving forward education:

‘Better informed students will take their custom to the places offering good value for money. In this way, excellent teaching will be placed back at the heart of every students’ university experience’ (DBIS, 2011)

Expectations were that the biggest impact would be on pedagogical relationships, which would be transformed. Relationships between staff and students that were perceived to be ‘integrated’ would fragment.

‘Education is likely to be reconceptualized as a commercial transaction, the lecturer as the ‘commodity producer’ and the student as the ‘consumer’. In this way, previously integrated relationships between academics and students are likely to become disaggregated with each party invested with distinct, if not opposing, interests.’ (Naidoo and Jamieson 2005:271)

This study shows that the consumerist mechanisms have not worked in the way anticipated. First, making a one-off choice of educational provider does not on its own make the student into a consumer. Second, the above description talks of staff-student relationships as 'previously integrated' but staff-student relationships have long been an area of debate. Personal tutoring, for example, has frequently been cited as problematic within a mass higher education environment (Stephen *et al.*, 2008; McFarlane 2016). Third, the description of market frameworks driving division between staff and students did not hold true in practice in this doctoral study. Even in the most transactional examples of relationships in the Business School at University A, the staff were keen to 'go the extra mile' with the students. Greater tensions were reported between the demands made centrally by the institution and those Programme Leaders who were trying to implement the improvements and efficiencies.

Naidoo and Jamieson (2005) further attempted to provide a vision of the consequences of consumerism across a marketised sector:

'In addition, in elite universities and departments students are least likely to push for changes because they understand that a combination of the university and the subject has a very high exchange value in the external job market. By contrast, students studying loosely framed and classified subjects in less elite universities are more likely to exert pressure on faculty for change, and faculty are more likely to be receptive. What this means is that the consequences of consumerism are likely to be felt more strongly at the more vulnerable institutions which admit students from disadvantaged backgrounds'. (Naidoo and Jamieson 2005: 271-272).

There are several important assertions here which should be considered. As the study did not include pre-1992 universities, it is not possible to comment on the relative strength of consumerism in comparison with more prestigious institutions, however, comments can be made about whether students exerted pressure on faculty for change, whether staff were receptive to change, and whether the consequences of consumerism were felt strongly.

Students in both University A and University B did not construct themselves as agents pushing for change. For example, in University A, changes were portrayed as largely driven by centralised initiatives, such as 'student-friendly' timetabling and new assessment strategies, which had unintended consequences (as described in Chapter Four). In University B the discourse of 'creating independent learners' was deployed by staff to directly counter the discourse of the 'student-as-consumer'. As non-elite institutions, these universities might be considered more vulnerable than the highly selective institutions, but there was clear

evidence that staff were not uniformly receptive to discourses of consumerism, an example being the Humanities Programme Leader in University A. The connection between consumerism and the type of institution was not 'proven' because of the unevenness of the adoption of the consumer discourse.

Is the one model, the consumer model, adequate therefore for a representation of pedagogical relationships? The above vision of pedagogical relationships described by Naidoo and Jamieson (2005) suggests that students in constructing themselves as consumers have lost sight of themselves as learners. Regan (2012) argues that a failure to identify with that role has important consequences:

'if they don't identify with the role of a learner, they will not be aware of the moral obligations derived from that role' (Regan 2012:16)

However, this study did not concur that the contemporary environment has led to a wholesale shift from one student identity to another. Students constructed themselves both as engaged learners and consumers depending on the context of the conversation and the purpose of the discourse. In arguing for an alternative for the popular consumerist construction, a new conceptual framework should incorporate the various challenges and opportunities facing students and staff. At the same time, it can be argued that student-staff relationships are not intrinsically economic ones, as suggested by policymakers, even though they cannot be entirely divorced from environmental conditions.

The literature around pedagogical relationships in a marketised environment tends to focus on sweeping changes that have 'overtaken' the sector and may be described as irresistible (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005) but they may not be inevitable (Tomlinson, 2013). The findings from this study showed concurrent influences on pedagogical relationships which reflected contemporary pressures and therefore pedagogical relationships can be seen as dynamic and responsive to the local environment. Spiecker (1984) refers to theories which act informally as guiding forces and vary according to local national conditions, resulting in a dialogue in the mind of the educator who constructs understandings about learning and teaching, and by extension has the power to resist different constructions of the pedagogical relationships. For example, discourses at the institutional level might not always be reflected at the programme level: constructions of the relationship as 'partners' (Healey *et al.*, 2014) or ambitious visions such as students as 'change agents' (Dunne and Zandstra, 2012) did not

feature strongly in the data despite them featuring in the University institutional documents. It can be concluded that staff and students had little use for these discourses and that they primarily serve the interests of the institutions. The universities, in a bid to attract student fee income in a competitive environment, seemed to deploy discourses which create a parallel world where the struggles of education and everyday life are absent.

This empirical study of pedagogical relationships has highlighted discourses, each of which was underpinned by influences from competing spheres:

- the world outside the classroom with pressures from family, work and finances embodied in students under pressure;
- the world of institutional and governmental policies which influence strategies and create the boundaries within which relationships are played out;
- the academic world which creates learning and teaching theories which staff adopt or resist;
- the day-to-day learning environment which students choose to engage with in different ways;
- and the social and moral environment within which staff and students work and study and which creates obligations between them.

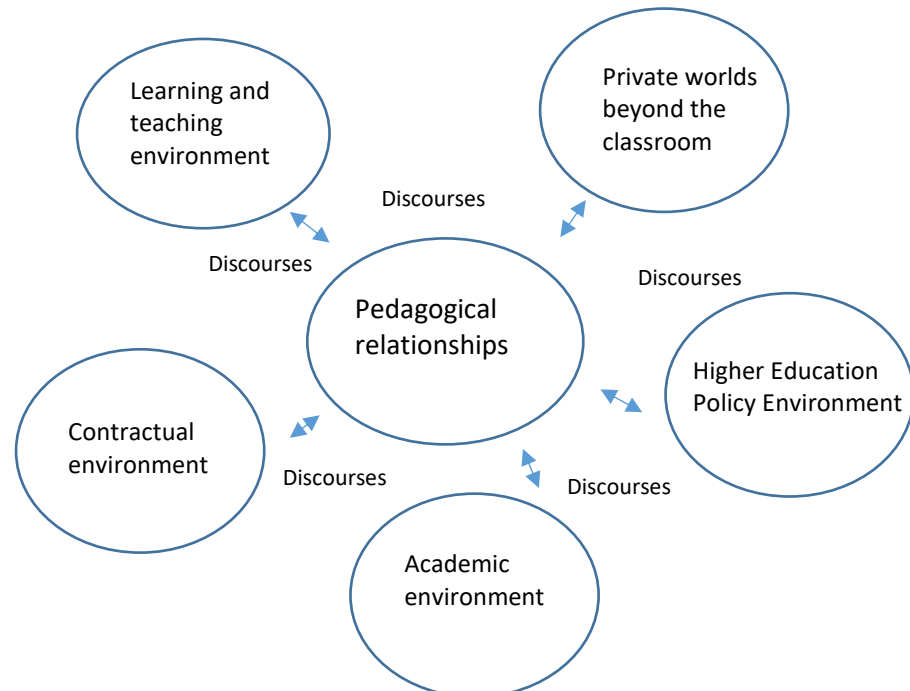


Figure 6: Towards a conceptual framework for pedagogical relationships

In other words, pedagogical relationships (see Figure 6 above) can be understood as complex constructions which have the following characteristics: they are distinct from other

relationships because of their role in making human development possible (Spiecker, 1984); they are perceived differently by student and staff members involved due to their different levels of experience and different understandings of learning theories; they are time-limited, as the student will outgrow the need for support or create new relationships; and they are not simple interactions but necessarily complex, dynamic and responsive to surrounding environments.

6.11 Discussion of the conceptual framework

This conceptual framework aims to move forward the thinking that has emerged during this research and is proposed as a way of encouraging wider discussion of the often tacit understandings about pedagogical relationships in universities. The five elements of the framework are described as dynamic and responsive environments and have been identified based on the analysis of student and staff accounts and consideration of the discourses identified and discussed in the study. Each element of the framework is described below before the strengths and limitations of the framework are discussed.

(i) Higher education policy environment

This element refers to the world of institutional and governmental policies which influence strategies and create the boundaries within which relationships are played out. It acknowledges the influence of the prevailing national policy narratives on institutions and the interpretations by staff and institutions in a performative environment. As discussed in the literature review chapter, government policy may seek to change reality, but policy can also be understood as narrative or discourse which draws on other discourses. In this study, the 'satisfying the consumer' discourse provided vivid examples of the influence of a 'student-as-consumer' narrative on student-staff relationships and how this might be deployed unevenly within and across institutions. It is helpful for academics to identify and question the source and meaning of taken-for-granted discourses that they deploy and that are deployed by those around them who work in higher education, some of which emanate from the policy environment. The acceptance or resistance of discourses can perpetuate the effects on staff-student relationships and the normalising of discourses can then potentially feed back into the language used in society, including by policymakers themselves.

(ii) Learning and teaching environment

This consists of the day-to-day learning environments, whether physical and material or online, in which interactions between staff and students take place. The study showed that there can be differences between how staff and students experience these environments and justify their ways of engagement. The discourse of 'exercising autonomy' indicated that students wished to have flexibility in how they engaged with the learning and teaching environments, whereas staff might interpret this as disengagement. Another example was personal tutoring, where arrangements were criticised by students as intrusive and perceived as optional encounters. On the other hand, the availability and accessibility of one-to-one meetings was valued, particularly in relation to coursework feedback. Staff facilitated learning forums were less appreciated than informal forums. There is much to explore, and I argue in the study that Student Forum meetings are a rich source of information and are under-used as a means of understanding staff and student perspectives. Staff and students could benefit through a closer examination of how student-staff interactions are working in practice

(iii) Private worlds beyond the classroom

Accounts of the world outside the classroom are often brought to bear by students in understandings of their interactions with staff. Examples include students' prior experiences at school and in the workplace as well as their position within their families. The discourse of 'students under pressure' highlighted external pressures from family, work and finances. Staff also make assumptions about the constraints under which students operate, and these are under-explored, particularly in relation to students' commitments and need to work alongside learning.

(iv) Academic environment

Lecturers as 'academics', are specialists in their subject areas but are also fulfil a role as professional learning and teaching 'practitioners'. Staff development schemes in universities typically include learning and teaching programmes which encourage the application of understandings from learning and teaching theories. There are complex reasons why institutions and staff favour particular learning and teaching approaches and these are influenced by government policies, promoted by policy bodies, informed by quality enhancement initiatives, and driven by external quality assurance frameworks such as the NSS. The discourse of 'trajectories of student development' highlighted differences in how

such learning theories are put into practice in student-staff interactions. There is scope for more discussion between colleagues about the assumptions which underpin these practices.

(v) Contractual environment

The social and moral environment within which staff and students work and study creates obligations between them. The introduction of documents such as student contracts and charters attempt to describe relationships as a form of contract but may have little influence on what happens in practice. Understandings of what constitutes 'good' behaviour in an academic environment seemed to be consistently held in this study, however student accounts reported a willingness to challenge or disrupt role expectations. Students in the study had a looser sense of obligations whereas staff were held to increasingly demanding standards. The exploration of obligations is an area that could be further explored between students and faculty as a way of improving the communication around the expectations of student-staff relationships.

6.11.1 Evaluation of the framework

The strengths of the framework are that it provides a novel insight into pedagogical relationships. It encourages staff to question the assumptions which underpin their relationships with students. This is particularly relevant in the current environment where pedagogical relationships are being rethought by academics due to the constraints and opportunities presented by the global Covid-19 pandemic. Other stakeholders might benefit from discussing the influences which affect the formation of pedagogical relationships. Policymakers and universities, in constructing the 'student experience', tend to minimise or ignore the role of staff in creating learning experiences. Notably, Sabri (2010) refers to the absence of the academic from higher education policies. This study has highlighted a discourse of 'staff under pressure', portraying how they work to fulfil their obligations, often going beyond what is expected. This conceptual framework places staff firmly back into the discussions of learning and teaching relationships.

The framework has been derived from a study of two institutions and could be further enhanced by drawing on a wider sample of institutions. Further discussion with actors outside the university such as policymakers could potentially enrich the framework, for example, there could be further exploration of the assumptive worlds of policymakers (Sabri, 2010). Furthermore, since the data for this study was collected, priorities within institutions

may have changed. Developments such as the TEF framework have been overshadowed by responses to the Covid-19 global pandemic. However, this means there are further opportunities and an urgent need to apply this conceptual framework to reconsider student-staff relationships.

This chapter has considered the findings from University A and B in relation to relevant literature and proposed a new conceptual framework for pedagogical relationships. Chapter Seven will draw conclusions from the study as a whole, evaluate the research and its contribution and propose areas for future research.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

In this study I aimed to explore the development of pedagogical relationships in two English modern universities in an era of marketisation. In this concluding chapter, I will further summarise the main findings from University A and University B in the context of the wider higher education environment and consider the implications of the acceptance of each of the five discourses identified as a ‘true’ account of reality. I will then critically evaluate the study, highlighting the limitations before discussing the claims to significant and original contributions to knowledge. The chapter will then identify how the findings of the research can be applied elsewhere and discuss the implications of the research for key stakeholders. In the final sections of the chapter, I will focus on recommendations for future research before presenting some concluding remarks.

7.2 Consideration of the findings

This section briefly reviews the main arguments and conclusions presented in the thesis in relation to the three research questions and considers the implications of the findings.

7.2.1 Research Question One (RQ1)

How do students construct themselves through their talk?

The study found that the construction of the ‘student-as-consumer’ was just one of multiple and concurrent constructions deployed by staff and students. These constructions were important because they positioned the student and staff differently in pedagogical relationships.

The language of the ‘student-as-consumer’ was in evidence in both universities studied, particularly in respect of students constructing themselves as ‘paying customers’, although not as demanding customers. It was also in evidence in the construction of practices based on a transactional service provision approach, most evident in the Business School in University A. Alongside the construction of the ‘paying customer’, the construction of student as ‘investor’ was typically deployed to emphasise investment not only of money but of

personal effort, whereas students tended to construct themselves as a 'paying customer' at times when they wanted to assert their 'consumer rights'.

The study also highlighted contrasting constructions. For example, the student as a 'party-goer' contrasted with students who constructed themselves as highly engaged learners. Additionally, the construction of the student as a social or peer learner was present in both universities in contrast to the construction of the student as an isolated independent learner.

The study revealed unexpected findings. There was a variation in both Universities between the constructions of the students in the institutional documents analysed compared to the student and staff talk. Representations of students as 'community members', 'co-creators' of knowledge and 'partners' were only weakly represented in the student interviews. Students did not portray themselves as 'critical thinkers', whereas staff deployed constructions of the student as a 'critical thinker' and also as an 'independent learner', drawing on the language of learning and teaching pedagogies.

The idea of 'partnership' was prevalent in the University B institutional documents, but there were few direct references by students to working in partnership with the University other than in the role of student representatives. The absence of constructions of students as 'partners' was surprising given the emphasis in the higher education literature on student and staff partnerships (Healey *et al.*, 2014; Streeting and Wise, 2009). Furthermore, one of the reasons for selecting University B for the study was the inclusion of a university where there might be additional discourses circulating, such as 'partnership'. This does not preclude the possibility or even the likelihood that such collaborative activities were happening in the institution, but the absence of this construction suggests that students did not talk about these activities as primarily partnership working. This has implications for universities who aim to build reputation and prestige on the basis of demonstrating particular learning and teaching approaches such as partnership working. They may be unaware that the discourses deployed are not being taken up by students and are not functioning as expected to create shared understandings of the institution's vision and strategies.

7.2.2 Research Question Two (RQ2)

Do higher education staff and students draw on the 'student-as-consumer' discourse in their interactions and in accounts of learning and teaching practices? If so, how?

This study looked at accounts of learning and teaching practices as well as interactions in Student Forum meetings in University A and B. This section considers the conclusions about the 'student-as-consumer' discourse, which was named 'satisfying the consumer'. Conclusions about the four additional discourses identified are discussed in section 7.2.3 below.

The discourse of 'satisfying the customer' positioned the staff as responsible for delivering education to meet student wants and needs and as accountable for module performance as well as student outcomes. This study has argued that students adopted a consumerist discourse as a means of expressing entitlement. Rather than as demanding consumers, students typically portrayed themselves as guarded and respectful in their interaction with staff. An explanation suggested by this doctoral study is that students constructed themselves as constrained by one fundamental aspect of the pedagogical relationship, the fact that staff were their assessors and that their academic judgement could not be challenged. This gave staff a power advantage and also positioned students as dependent on their tutors for the qualification they sought. The importance of assessment in the power relationship between staff and students was highlighted by Carless (2006), who argued that the language in which tutor comments are encoded can be a means by which staff can wittingly or unwittingly exert power over students in universities.

The study showed that some of the staff deploying the 'satisfying the customer' discourse had an instrumental focus in their practices on the assessment outcomes, justified by pressures to meet service standards and by being held accountable for student attainment. This was exemplified by the transactional approach to learning in the Business School in University A. This had unintended consequences in that the deployment of this discourse was at the expense of discourses of wider learning. It was argued in Chapters Four and Five that discourses are important as they can open or close opportunities for learning. Interactions in the Business Student Forum in University A provided vivid examples of how practices associated with 'satisfying the customer' were influencing learning and teaching practices. The Programme Leader in University A who deployed this discourse was highly focused on preparing students for the assessments and described her choice to focus on student

achievement of high grades. In contrast, the Programme Leader in University B who was teaching the same programme and who did not deploy this discourse, incorporated the development of critical thinking skills as a key part of student development.

This study has argued that subject area does not necessarily determine the choice of particular discourses over others. The evidence presented showed that Programme Leaders have a key role in interpreting and reformulating the discourses that are circulating in institutions. The two Business Programme Leaders who were both teaching Accounting responded differently to the 'student-as-consumer' discourses, with the Programme Leader in University B emphasising the need for Accountants to be critical thinkers, whereas the Programme Leader in University A seemed to accept the 'satisfying the consumer' discourse as a valid account of reality. The study has provided evidence that both staff and students have agency in deploying and resisting current discourses.

The study highlighted other discourses which contributed to the main discourse of 'satisfying the customer': one being the discourse of the 'paying customer' which functioned to express student entitlement as fee-payers and another being 'service provision', which functioned to legitimise transactional learning, prioritising a focus on higher grades over a broad education, prioritising student needs and wants and introducing practices which were aimed at improving student satisfaction. Other discourses such as 'transformation' and 'employability', were enmeshed in this discourse and co-existed with the 'paying customer' discourse. They contributed to the notion of students as outputs from a system, namely as potential successful graduates and alumni, and as individual economic units of resource. The discourse of 'investment' was deployed by students to justify expending not only money but personal time and effort. This discourse also linked with the discourse of 'employability' to justify investment as necessary in order to compete against other graduates in a potentially crowded marketplace and to acquire credentials as a form of insurance against an uncertain future (Harrison, 2019).

What are the implications of accepting this 'satisfying the customer' discourse as a 'true' account of reality? In this study, the discourse of 'satisfying the customer' functioned to shift responsibility and accountability for learning from students to staff. It reinforced the idea of the student as vulnerable and largely dependent on knowledge 'delivered' by staff who tried to organise the curriculum to accommodate perceived student needs and wants. Furthermore, it undermined the idea of the student as empowering their own learning. It has

already been claimed that senior managers and professional staff in universities largely take for granted the idea of the 'student as customer' (Temple et al., 2014) and an intensification of this discourse through its deployment within academic subject departments has been shown in this study. As the TEF is extended into subject areas with the aim of improving information for students at the point of decision-making (OFS, 2018), there may be increased pressure on staff to meet performance targets set in their subject areas. As indicated in the study, some staff were able to resist the 'satisfying the customer discourse' but this resilience may be further tested as pressure increases on staff to follow common 'good practice' in learning and teaching as defined across whole institutions. This will include the demonstration of connections between policy, practice and the impact on students (CABS, 2019) in order to be able to meet TEF subject level submission requirements. A narrowing of the purpose of education by constraining pedagogical relationships to key transactions may benefit those who wish to demonstrate improvement against performance criteria. Furthermore, the visions of higher education promoted by universities in their published documents are undermined through this discourse by an instrumentalisation which reinforces education as an individual rather than a shared experience.

7.2.3 Research Question Three (RQ3)

What additional discourses are available for describing and accounting for the pedagogical relationships, and how are they deployed?

Four additional discourses were identified in the study which constructed different representations of student-staff interactions based on different perspectives on pedagogical relationships. In this section, the implications of these discourses are summarised in terms of what this might mean if each discourse were to be accepted as a 'true' account of reality in post-1992 universities.

'Students under pressure' focused on the experiences of students and how students described coping with conflicting pressures, which in turn impacted on the way they engaged with their studies. This links to contemporary conversations about the increasing pressures on students in an environment where they talk about their degree credentials as positional goods in a congested graduate market (Tomlinson, 2008), and where there are concerns about student mental health. Staff also described themselves as increasingly under pressure and held accountable for student performance. Student talk reflected pressures relating to finances, family expectations and future employability. However, some students tended to

minimise the pressure by portraying the challenges as opportunities or motivators. Staff talk promoted the idea of 'getting the balance right' and suggested that students just needed to find the 'right way' to study or be successful, without taking account of any constraints relating to their social or personal contexts. This maxim simplified a complex situation and competed directly with the idea of learning as necessarily involving an intellectual struggle. The discourse of 'students under pressure' was not deployed in the University documentation. This suggests a gap between the institutions' portrayal of the student as a public figure and the private constructions of the students and staff, as revealed in their own words. Universities may choose to exclude such constructions from their marketing materials, as this discourse conflicts with the more positive idea of the transformation of the student.

There are implications of accepting this discourse as a 'true' account of the reality of student lives, as well as implications of ignoring the discourse. The discourse links to ideas of self-management, mental health and wellbeing and highlights a tension between constructing the student as coping with pressure or as vulnerable. Minimising the discourse of 'students-under-pressure' as a matter of juggling priorities reinforces the idea of pressure as a personal issue, to be individually managed, and places responsibility on the student to cope. The discourse of the 'students under pressure' was deployed in this study to highlight practical difficulties rather than openly discuss mental health issues. Further research might address the connection between the depiction in learning and teaching practices of the student under pressure as 'vulnerable' and the rising mental health issues which universities are currently addressing through the provision of additional mental health awareness and welfare support in universities. The absence or omission of the 'student-under-pressure' discourse in accounts of university life, such as in public facing university documents, works to support the promotion of the university to prospective students as an idyllic lifestyle choice rather than a site of demanding and sometimes stressful intellectual engagement.

A recognition and further discussion of the prevalence and complexity of this discourse in institutions could provide further insights into how students talk about their struggling or coping. Acknowledging the interplay between academic struggle, which may be depicted as a necessary component of being a student who learns, and stress that might be exacerbated by other non-academic factors, might be helpful for staff and students to better understand local contexts and how wider factors influence their environments.

‘Exercising autonomy’ – this discourse focused on students challenging the assumptions underpinning student-staff working relationships as they decided to participate flexibly within their studies. It shed light on the complex and inconsistent ways students engaged and disengaged from university life (as opposed to the expression of engagement/disengagement as binary). Students positioned themselves as making calculated judgements about attendance and blamed factors such as poor teaching in order to justify non-attendance. There was also a suggestion that students sometimes had different priorities from staff, who worked on the basis that students should always be aspiring to be the best, whereas some students suggested that a ‘good enough’ approach to study was one valid way of navigating through university. Evidence presented showed that students portrayed themselves as autonomous individuals who could actively create their own learning opportunities and spaces and devise their own priorities. This contrasts with discourses of academic excellence upon which the English higher education system has been built.

In contrast to the idea of the ‘student-as-consumer’, the discourse of ‘exercising autonomy’ asserts the freedom of the student to navigate university in different ways by making decisions about how study, and acknowledges that family, working lives and social lives are intertwined. There are different implications of staff accepting this discourse as a ‘true’ account of the reality of contemporary student lives, as well as implications of ignoring the discourse. Accepting the construction of the student as an autonomous learner and decision-maker radically challenges the traditional idea of pedagogical relationships (Spiecker, 1984) and the paternalistic role of academics. It asserts the freedom to navigate university in different ways and undermines the idea of the student as a being that can be nurtured according to predefined learning and teaching strategies agreed between academics. It challenges the way that the purposes of the university are described. This leads to questioning the ways institutions are voicing and communicating that purpose on behalf of students. Ignoring or dismissing this discourse might leave more space to foreground discourses which function to categorise students in a more simplistic way, for example, as either ‘engaged’ or ‘disengaged’ with education. Students’ construction of themselves as autonomous decision-makers resists a portrayal as compliant and passive consumers in a performative system, and represents a challenge to a system which measures attendance or logging in online as a proxy for intellectual engagement and assumes that being absent from the classroom is evidence of intellectual disengagement.

‘Contractual obligations’ – Overall, the discourse highlighted the uncertainty and dilemmas resulting from the complexity of obligations towards staff and the university which were moral, social and political as well as financial. There is a link to consumerist discourses where pedagogical relationships are narrowed down in terms of contractual obligations between parties in a transactional arrangement. The implications of this discourse are to formalise pedagogical relationships through setting expectations and targets which are known and anticipated in advance, for example, a commitment to strict marking and feedback turnaround times, and specified 48 hour email response times. The implication is to standardise learning and teaching practices into sets of approved ways of learning, which specify the scope of how staff and students might interact.

This discourse described how commitments and obligations towards each other and the University were complex, more so than a consumer-service provider relationship might represent. Obligations between students and staff were expressed as a set of unwritten rules, for example, there was a common understanding of the ways to be a ‘good’ student and a ‘good’ lecturer. Breaking the rules was described as legitimate by students where they were expressing their entitlement to a ‘better’ experience, for example, walking out of a ‘bad’ class or lecture was justified by saying that staying would be unproductive and a waste of time. However, this disruption stopped short of being described as a breach of contract and there were few consequences. Attempts to reduce relationships to a form of contract might benefit institutions by mitigating risks, but are counterproductive when staff and students value relationships built on respect and trust. Overall, the data in the study supported the idea that staff-student relationships in practice consist of obligations which fall short of a contract (Fulford, 2018).

‘Trajectories of student development’ – This discourse focused on different ideas about student academic development. The analysis revealed different ways of talking about student learning experiences, with staff in University B in the same subject areas concerned with ‘creating independent learners’ and ‘service provision’. Where students in University B were described as being supported in order to assist in their development into more independent learners, then this discourse could be seen as co-existing with a discourse of customer service in a coherent way. Notably, the ‘trajectories of student development’ discourse worked alongside a discourse of parenting, which was deployed by one lecturer to explain and account for their involvement in the development of the student, whereby the lecturer as parent attempted to set boundaries and expectations and to treat each ‘child’

fairly as they grow up. These positions in the staff account contrasted with ideas such as infantilization of the student (Williams 2013, Furedi 2017) in which the student is positioned as stuck in childhood rather than developing into adulthood.

The discourse of 'creating independent learners' is an example of a trajectory which relied on a staged process of student development which can be applied to all students regardless of external factors or the individual context of students. In this way, trajectories of student development are more positive in their construction of the student than the 'satisfying-as-consumer' discourse, but have a heavy reliance on the academic as a facilitator of learning. This discourse contrasted with the more chaotic discourse of 'exercising autonomy' which undermined the idea that learning development can be neatly forecasted and plotted like a trajectory on a graph.

The implication of recognising the 'reality' of these different development discourses which were circulating within the institutions is to recognise that some academics, in positioning themselves as experts in 'learning how to learn', still have the power to influence the development of pedagogical relationships by choosing particular ways of talking. Similarly, some staff are able to resist consumerist discourses which they are not prepared to deploy. In this way, academics in the study can be seen as both vulnerable to the pressures of the marketised environment, as seen in the Student Forum meetings in University A, and capable of countering dominant discourses by asserting alternative ones such as 'community' and 'partnership', although these discourses were only weakly taken up by students.

Within a critical discourse (CDA) approach, documents, texts of conversations and accounts of practices are all viewed as discursive materials which contributed to the meaning of the world. For example, Fairclough (2001) connected text, discourse practice and social practice in a three-dimensional framework of analysis to give a coherent account for the reader. In giving a full account of the discourses deployed, the study has painted a complex picture, showing not only that there were strong discourses, but also weaker ones such as 'community', 'partnership' and 'knowledge creation'. Furthermore, there were variations between institutional and discourses deployed in practice and tensions between the ways discourses were deployed by staff and students. For example, as mentioned earlier, the study highlighted the way that students and staff minimised the discourse of 'students under pressure' for different reasons. Alongside this, there was additional complexity in that students constructed themselves as autonomous and knowingly transgressed the unwritten

rules of pedagogical relationships. Furthermore, Programme Leaders were able to resist and reinterpret the dominant discourses. I have therefore argued for reconceptualising pedagogical relationships in a way which takes account of their dynamic complexity as revealed through discourses. This framework offers an opportunity to take a fresh look at learning environments in universities and start conversations between staff and students about how relationships are shaped and formed by contemporary discourses in each local setting, thereby avoiding a narrow view of student-staff relationships.

7.3 Limitations

This part of the chapter provides a critical reflection on the study. The philosophical approach, which drew on social constructionism, determined the boundaries of the research in terms of the nature of reality and my position in the research as a sceptical listener. Some methodological limitations were anticipated or identified during the pilot study and design stages and their effects have been mitigated and detailed in Chapter Three, the Research Approach. Criticisms of discourse analytic research and social constructionist approaches were also discussed. For example, the limitations of a dependence on texts and both the benefits of considering situated language in use and also the wider social context were discussed in Chapter Three (also see Burr, 2003:174-175). The concept of 'limitations' might suggest a measuring against a set of agreed criteria, however, there is no common agreement about what these criteria should be for a qualitative study. It is therefore necessary to consider the type of research and practices within the relevant research community, in this case a community of discourse analysts. Limitations have been identified below which relate to the scope, ethical considerations as well as the generalisability and application of findings.

7.3.1 Limitation: A limited sample of English higher education institutions.

The study focuses on two modern universities and does not include other types of institutions, such as Russell Group institutions or private universities. However, the study did not aim to include a representative sample of institutions. Initially, the study was going to be based in one post-92 institution, but including another university gave more opportunities for observing how a wider range of discourses were deployed. The sample size was therefore increased for theoretical reasons to include an institution which espoused a partnership approach to learning and teaching. Furthermore, the research design took account of the practical constraints of my position as a researcher and a doctoral student with limited time and financial resources as well as being a part-time employee with regular teaching

commitments. Additionally, careful scoping was required due the need to work within the constraints of the academic year and university calendars. This meant careful planning of the data collection to minimise the number and costs of visits needed and maximise the research opportunities per visit. A future study with more resources might include a broader range of institutions.

7.3.2 Limitation: Generalisability

The research intentionally focused on two English post-92 universities and therefore the findings cannot be assumed to be transferrable to other institutions. The discourses highlighted in this study may be indicative of discourses which are circulating in the sector and may have relevance to present-day situations. However, only further research will establish their generalisability. Taylor (2001b:317) argued that ‘discourses do not just disappear’. I am further arguing that more attention should be given to the four discourses identified in addition to the discourse of the ‘student as consumer’.

The findings can be best understood in terms of the specific time period in which the research was conducted and there are limitations in terms of generalisability to other time periods. For example, if student fee arrangements are changed and/or new performance measures are introduced, including via the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) (DBIS,2015), this could alter the nature of conversations within institutions. However, the additional discourses identified are argued to be of sufficient importance and have an associated history such that they are likely to maintain their efficacy in the near future.

7.3.3 Limitation: Ethical considerations

Limitations can refer to those characteristics of design or methodology that have impacted or influenced the interpretation or presentation of the findings of the research. One limitation of the study which affected the presentation of the findings was the anonymization of the two institutions to preserve the confidentiality of the participants and to meet the ethical requirements for the study. This meant that, in presenting the analysis of the institutional documents, it was not possible to use detailed examples from the published documents or direct quotations or institution-specific specialist terminology as this might identify the institutions and by association staff participants. For example, typing terms into a search engine can identify publicly available documents. Future studies which might rely less on individual participants could overcome this problem. For example, some CDA analysis

has concentrated on media discourse and a study of university discourses in social media posts might extend the work of the documentary analysis started in this study.

7.3.4 Limitation: Application of findings

Constraints on application to practice or utility of findings can result from the ways in which the study was designed. Critical discourse analysis does not aim to solve a particular problem or recommend practical solutions but can be understood as a critique, a disciplined, systematic study of written or oral discourses. ‘Discourse analysis *as critique*’ refers to the situation where critique emanates from the analysis itself as opposed to a kind of critique which draws on empirical data to support pre-formed arguments (Nonhoff, 2017). In this way, ‘discourse as critique’ aims to encourage demystification and ‘open up new opportunities, whilst acknowledging that struggles continue’ (Taylor, 2001b:328). Although not advocating solutions, in section 7.5 below implications for interested parties are presented based on the findings and conclusions from this study.

The next section identifies how the study makes claims for contributions to knowledge.

7.4 Summary of contributions to knowledge

In this section, I justify the importance of the research findings before going on to explain how the answers provide new understandings in three areas: contributions to field of study, contributions to theory and methodological contributions. Each claim will be justified with reference to previous work in the field and how these contributions might be valuable.

7.4.1 Contribution to field of study

Despite the significant changes in the internal processes of universities there has been a shortage of empirical evidence about the influences of marketisation on students and staff in universities, particularly in relation to learning and teaching discourses. In particular, competing metaphors and alternative discourses such as ‘student-as-partner’ (Healey *et al.* 2014) were becoming more frequently deployed in the higher education literature and taken up in certain institutions. Given that almost half of young people in England were moving into higher education at the time of the study (increasing to 49% according to Adams from The Guardian as of 28 September 2017), I considered it highly important to understand more

about how contemporary students constructed themselves in relation to their university learning experiences.

This study has contributed to the existing body of knowledge by adding to the literature on the how students are conceptualised through the gathering of empirical data in order to examine pedagogical relationships in two English university settings. I have investigated the taken-for-granted conceptualisations of the 'student-as-consumer' with a particular focus on the learning and teaching relationships in practice. The inclusion of a university which was recognised as adopting a 'student-as-partner' approach and a particular focus on post-92 universities was valuable in order re-examine assumptions about how the consumer discourse might be deployed in universities and in order to examine the case that was being made for partnership as a counter to the 'student-as-consumer' discourse (Healey *et al.*, 2014; Streeting and Wise, 2009). The research I have presented in this thesis responds to calls by Naidoo and Jamieson (2005) for research on the 'student-as-consumer' in higher education, given the paucity of research on the implications of consumerism for student learning. It also sought to explore the suggestion by Naidoo and Jamieson (2005) that the pedagogical relationship has necessarily been distorted: 'the limited findings arising from various national contexts has indicated that the reconceptualization of the complex relationship between students and teachers to that of 'service provider' and 'customer' is likely to be corrosive of both sides of the relationship' (p. 272).

The limitations of the scope of the study were acknowledged in section 7.3. Nevertheless, this study adds to the knowledge base by revealing additional discourses which compete with the discourse of consumerism. The strengths of the work lie in the way that I have gone beyond the taken-for-granted conceptualisation of students and gathered empirical data which allows the examination of other possible student constructions. The focus on students and staff talk, both in interviews and in interactions in practice in two institutions and two similar subject departments, allowed discourses to be systematically analysed in different settings.

The study has built on the work of previous authors who have looked at the pedagogical relationship from a conceptual perspective (Bailey, 2000; McCulloch, 2009; Tight, 2013; Tomlinson, 2016; Williams, 2013). This empirical evidence, based on student-staff interactions and talk, showed similarities to others' work, for example, the findings of Tomlinson (2016) on the ambivalence of students towards the 'student-as-consumer' idea.

The work builds on ideas of alienation and disengagement (Mann, 2001) by shedding further light on the ways students and staff perceive their learning and teaching relationships as multiple, complex and shifting. It challenges the assumptions made about the way the consumerist mechanism is assumed to work, with students positioned as agents of change (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005). I have also questioned the idea of seeking one enduring metaphor for the student, as each can be contradicted by opposing evidence from this research: for example, the infantilization of students (Williams, 2013) through the assertion of the autonomous student, the sovereignty of 'her majesty the student' (Nixon *et al.*, 2018) through the powerlessness of the student in the face of academic judgement. This undermined the idea that there is only one way of talking about pedagogical relationships and contrasts with the efforts of institutions to promote ideal types of relationships, for example, for personal tutoring arrangements.

By focusing on student interactions in practice in student forums and in interviews, this has enabled new insights into contemporary discourses which are circulating and comparisons to be made between published visions of the university and accounts of experiences provided by staff and students. The findings highlighted variations between institutional messages and discourses on the ground, highlighting that the presentation of aspirational discourses by the Universities did not resonate with staff and students, who probably have little use for them.

7.4.2 Theoretical contribution

Conceptual frameworks to date have not taken into account the multiple, dynamic and shifting nature of the accounts of relationships as portrayed in this study. Literature has tended to focus on the irresistible nature of sweeping changes that have 'overtaken' the sector (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005) and whether these changes are inevitable (Tomlinson, 2014). The findings from this study showed concurrent influences on pedagogical relationships which reflected contemporary pressures and therefore pedagogical relationships can be seen as dynamic and responsive to the local environment.

As detailed in the review of literature in Chapter Two, Spiecker (1984) described the pedagogical relationship as binary and highly dependent on the 'parent' in the relationship who uses informal theories to guide the learner based on local or national conditions. More recently, McWilliam (2016) suggested a rethink was necessary in an era of big data and networked learning communities. Based on the findings of this research, what was needed

was the construction of a conceptual framework that presented the shifting complexities and temporary nature of relationships and provided new insights into different constructions of relationships in practice. In arguing for additions to constructions of student-staff relationships beyond the 'student-as-consumer' relationship, I have proposed a new conceptual framework to take account of this dynamic nature and complexity of pedagogical relationships. The defining aspects were underpinned by five discourses which created opportunities for particular kinds of relationships and acted as forces which could open or close opportunities for learning.

This empirical study has highlighted discourses which brought competing spheres into accounts of pedagogical relationships:

- the world outside the classroom with pressures from family, work and finances embodied in students under pressure;
- the world of institutional and governmental policies which influence strategies and create the boundaries within which relationships are played out;
- the academic world which creates learning and teaching theories which staff adopt or resist;
- the day-to-day learning environment which students choose to engage with in different ways;
- and the social and moral environment within which staff and students work and study and which creates obligations between them.

In other words, I argue that pedagogical relationships can be understood as complex constructions which have the following characteristics: they are distinct from other relationships because of their role in making human development possible (Spiecker, 1984); they are perceived differently by student and staff members involved due to their different levels of experience and different understandings of learning theories; they are time-limited as the student will outgrow the need for support or create new relationships; and they are not simple interactions but necessarily complex, dynamic and responsive to surrounding environments.

7.4.3 Contribution to methodological approaches

The qualitative aspect of this research has advanced my knowledge in two areas: into the benefits of using pilot studies as a part of doctoral research (see Chapter Three, Research

Approach) and as an example of applying discourse analysis as a novice researcher. In particular, I have asserted the value of testing out methods and research questions in advance of the main study, which contributed to enhancing the research design and to the development of research skills. In the case of this study, there was a combination of an analysis of discourse in documents with the analysis of texts from conversations, which allowed discourses to be traced across institutions and subject areas. The approach was extended into a new area, namely the analysis of student-staff interactions in university committee meetings, of which there are few, if any, examples of CDA analyses by higher education researchers to date.

The study adds to the scarce literature on the practicalities of doing discourse work by providing an example of a discourse study in two large organisations. An illusion of simplicity is created by step-by-step guides to discourse analysis, for example, Potter and Wetherell (1987) provide a ten step guide and compare the craft skill to learning to ride a bicycle, a feat which most can master but only after a number of attempts. Gee (2014b) provides a set of twenty eight tools and aims to provide a practical 'how-to' approach. However, the author of this toolkit also asserts that there remains a mystery around doing discourse work which might depend on factors such as 'taste, innovation, risk taking and good choices (and luck) about what to study' (Gee, 2014b:4). Smith (2014) explains that CDA is in its relative infancy, and its eclecticism and flexibility in choice of methods can be considered both a strength and weakness and warns that this 'can render the budding critical discourse analysts uncertain as to whether they are "doing it right"' (p.76). In contrast, Antaki *et al.* (2003) suggests six pitfalls for discourse analysts which represent ways of 'doing it wrong'. The lessons I learned from this study reinforce the advice of many qualitative researchers, that this is a messy and time-consuming process which can involve many changes of direction and blind allies.

Discourse analysis is regarded as a craft skill and in common with other qualitative studies, my approach evolved rather than being an 'off the shelf' application of one particular method. The study provides a basis for further work by other researchers as it details the stages of discourse analysis, including a pilot stage. In particular, although qualitative research is recognised as a 'messy' approach, authors tend not to dwell in their publications on the difficulties along the way. Researchers might find the analysis approach adopted useful, which applied discourse analysis to texts of interactions and interviews as well as documents.

7.5 Implications

The section discusses implications of the discourses in the study for key stakeholders in higher education and reflects on the study with a view to how it might free up thinking and widen understanding. It then discusses the implications of the conceptual framework proposed in Chapter Six.

7.5.1 Policymakers

The study challenges the depiction of students as a homogenised body and argues that there can be negative effects of discourses in higher education which have far-reaching consequences for students and their families. According to government policy documents, the discourse of the 'student-as-consumer' is empowering, however, this was not so in practice. The study emphasises the dangers of focusing on one particular discourse and argues that multiple constructions of the student are important, beyond that of an economic being. The students' construction of themselves as 'investors' indicated their commitment to learning as well as to making financial contributions. The discourse of 'students under pressure' described how contemporary students talk about struggling, not just intellectually, but in coping with a range of issues which can be connected with current policies, including increasing debt, the need to do paid work, personal and family pressures to achieve and concerns about employability and the competitive job market.

7.5.2 Institutions

The research could be helpful in informing the strategies of institutions. In particular, institutions could reflect on the way students see themselves and how far these differ from the university culture and aspirations. The absence of the discourse of 'partnership' highlighted a lack of evidence in this study that students at present describe their relationships as partnerships. This may be disappointing for University B. The examples of the Student Forum meetings were indicative of the kinds of relationships that were being encouraged in practice through staff-student interactions and these were at odds with the declared values of the universities. Universities should not assume that the discourses deployed in their internal or promotional materials will automatically be reflected in student and staff talk or that students and staff might find these documents helpful. A case in point is the absence in student talk of ideas of scholarship and research. The multiplicity of competing and compelling discourses present in student and staff lives provides a possible

answer, along with the likelihood that these documents may be created with other audiences in mind beyond the university. Universities might, however, wish to reflect on the question as to why they continue to promote visions which are ideological when the realities described are so starkly different.

7.5.3 Academics/Programme Leaders

Staff may be surprised to find that students reported making positive decisions to behave in ways that the staff may have assumed was disengagement. They might learn from the range of different relationships that students were forming with staff in this study and the accounts of difficulties with traditional personal tutoring arrangements. They might reassess their opinions of students who are considered non-engagers/attenders and explore how students can be encouraged to create and take up learning opportunities with others who wish to be social learners. Furthermore, staff might recognise the role they might play in complying with and resisting performative cultures. The example of the contrast between the two Accounting subject areas, with one university taking a transactional approach to learning whilst the other incorporated opportunities for critical thinking, demonstrated that there are different possibilities for Programme Leaders in interpreting and reframing learning in their subject areas, such that the 'student-as-consumer' discourse does not always dominate. The study might be educative in the way it informs Programme Leaders of the importance of the discourses they deploy and highlights the possibilities for resisting discourses or combining them, for example, the combination of an independent learning approach with a service provision approach in University B. Colleagues who work in the field of higher education pedagogy might find it valuable to consider the examples and analysis of discourses circulating beyond the 'student-as-consumer' discourse, and the ways in which some discourses are more likely to open up opportunities for learning, as summarised in Chapter Six (see Section 6.6).

7.5.4 Academics/Researchers

Undergraduate students did not construct themselves as future researchers, part of a research community or as critical thinkers. This is in contrast to the fact that the proportions of undergraduate students achieving higher degree classifications (and therefore assumed to be capable of critical thinking) has been increasing in universities in recent years. More explicit explanations about the purpose and functions of a university might be helpful as student talk revealed that they understood little about the work of academic researchers or

way the universities operated. More transparency about pedagogical approaches adopted, including about research-informed teaching where appropriate, might help students understand the ways staff describe the pedagogical relationships and lead to improved relationships.

7.5.5 Students

This study has given voice to students about the way they see their learning and their relationships with staff. In this way, space has been given to additional constructions of the students that have not usually been heard. It contests binaries such as 'engaged' and 'disengaged' by highlighting the different ways of being a student, even to the extreme of revealing accounts of being a student at university without an intention to study. Students may be interested in knowing that fellow students conceptualise themselves in different ways and consider that there is more than one way to be a student.

The pressures on students have been revealed and the normalising of academic pressure by both staff and students in an environment of increasing external pressures links to increasing concerns about student welfare and mental health. In recognising the different ways to be a student this contradicts the homogenised views on which policy and practices are typically built. In moving to a mass education system, space was created for a more diverse range of students and continuing assumptions made by staff about students always aspiring to academic excellence have been questioned in this study as students portrayed themselves as strongly autonomous and able to set their own priorities. Students frequently struggled but also, on a positive note, there were many constructions of students as highly 'engaged learners'. Students drew on a range of resources and two areas were highlighted for future research which seem to be generally underestimated, namely the importance of families as well as peer learning groups. Families were an important reference point in student-decision-making about their educational choices. Peer-learning groups took place in optional spaces (either physical or online) and were emergent, did not have staff as members and so were hidden from view, and were not imposed as part of the set curriculum. The implication is that the resourcefulness of students might be underestimated as they find ways to learn collaboratively beyond the interactions required by the formal curriculum. This has implications for the sorts of facilities and spaces offered to students both on and off campus.

7.5.6 Implications of the proposed conceptual framework

In Chapter Six I identified a framework for looking at the context of the discourses and relationships identified in the study. How might the proposed framework be utilised by others? In this section I consider who might use it and for what purpose, as well as considering the kinds of questions it might raise for Universities A and B. I then look at how far, if at all, this framework might have implications for policymakers in the contemporary environment.

Individual teaching staff in universities are encouraged as part of their professional development to reflect on their practice. I argue that a focus on activities, or what is done, could be enhanced by more thinking about the kinds of relationships that are being constructed between students and staff. If staff used the framework, they could analyse both the local and the broader context in which they interact with students and consider the range of environments which influence the construction of relationships. This approach has potential advantages as it acknowledges that relationships are jointly created, it allows for different types of relationships and importantly, it does not reduce pedagogical relationships to the formation of a bland 'student experience'.

By discussing the five environments (policy, learning and teaching, contractual, academic, and worlds beyond the classroom) the framework can be used as a tool to discuss, in an in-depth way, how pedagogical relationships are being constructed in an institution and the discourses which support these relationships (see Figure 6). The framework facilitates the uncovering of day-to-day working relationships and contrasts with the tendency, identified in this study, by some institutions, to promote top-down ideal visions of relationships from the perspective of being providers of the 'student experience'.

Whilst the pressures on institutions to lead successful marketing campaigns and develop a university image have already been documented (Chapleo and Sullivan, 2017), less has been written about how these visions conflict with everyday realities. This study has argued that learning and teaching relationships are multiple and complex and the contribution by academics to the formation of relationships with students needs to be further acknowledged. As detailed in Chapter Two, academics and institutions have previously sought to select a single most appropriate metaphor for the student (e.g. student-as-producer, student-as-partner, etc.). By looking at pedagogical relationships in a broader way, discussions could be widened to recognise the different relationships that are possible or desirable within a

programme of study. Furthermore, by looking at the five aspects of the conceptual framework, more critical and fruitful questions could be asked by faculty. Examples which might arise from the consideration of the framework in Universities A and B could be: (i) what would happen if staff were to resist the dominant student-as-consumer model? (HE policy environment) (ii) could students be given more recognition as autonomous learners? (Private worlds beyond the classroom) (iii) do current assumptions about student development trajectories need updating? (Learning and teaching environment) (iv) do staff need to reposition themselves as key to pedagogical relationships? (Academic environment) (v) how far, and how, are staff held accountable for creating 'successful' learning relationships (Contractual environment)? As well as bringing back staff into the picture, this might also create avenues for new conversations and broaden discussions beyond the 'student-as-consumer' debate.

I have argued earlier that the extent and importance of staff contributions to facilitating learning and teaching relationships seems to have been overlooked in focussing on the student experience. It is timely to review this situation, not least because many improvements and innovations, for example as responses to the Covid-19 pandemic, require staff co-operation for their implementation.

Referring back to the initial question at the start of this section about the implications for policy as well as practice, it is not clear how the outcomes of such discussions might possibly influence policymaking. For example, how could a view of students as autonomous individuals be reconciled with the views of recent government policymakers, who frequently describe students as a homogenised rather than a disparate group? A complex understanding of pedagogical relationships would inevitably inconvenience policymaking as the interests of different groups would have to be evaluated. Nevertheless, it would challenge the simplistic construction of the student as a customer, as a mechanism for driving forward quality in higher education, because staff and student positions would be revealed as more varied and uncertain than consumerist discourses suggest. The benefit would be that policymakers would focus on wider definitions of the student (other than the student as an economic unit), ones based on empirical evidence from student and staff accounts, which might lead to the consideration of more varied and flexible ways that students wish to engage with university learning.

However, my considerations here are tempered by uncertainty around how researchers are able to influence policy in practice. Bagshaw and McVitty (2020) describe how the world of policymakers can seem like a closed community to outsiders and that the representation of academic staff in policymaking is typically undertaken by Vice-Chancellors as representatives of their institutions. The formation of social media groups and online groups such as Wonkhe have raised the profile of discussions around policy issues and trade union bodies have contributed to policy consultations, but ultimately it is politicians who make decisions, and factors other than research evidence can be more influential.

As marketisation is likely to remain in English universities under the current Conservative government, my recommendation is that educational researchers continue to identify and mitigate the negative impacts of its effects and stimulate new conversations. This could be through a combination of sharing examples of the ways marketisation is changing the way staff and students interact and by discussing alternative discourses and practices which reflect the ways students and staff wish to work together. My thesis aims to enable both these things.

7.6 Recommendations for future research

Having completed a thorough analysis, new lines of enquiry arise. These ideas for future research are not failings of the study, but stimulated and made possible by it.

7.6.1 Extensions to the current study

A further phase of the study could look at pedagogical relationships in a wider range of institutions, for example, Russell Group and research-intensive institutions, to see whether similar discourses are in evidence and how they are deployed. A second study could examine more closely the idea of 'staff under pressure' and their vulnerability in the current environment. The study suggested that staff were most under pressure in an environment where the 'student-as-consumer' discourse was prevalent. Further research could examine the way that staff cope with pressure and how this discourse is deployed in universities. A third area would be to focus on the construction of staff by students, which would add to the understanding of how contemporary students portray their relationships with staff. Initial analysis showed a similarity across the students in terms of their expectations of staff and their perceptions of 'good' and 'bad' lecturers. In particular, student perspectives on the dysfunctional nature of personal tutoring could be explored further to encourage a beneficial

dialogue about the purpose of personal tutoring and the commitments, contributions and obligations of both parties.

7.6.2 Contribution of families to student decision-making

The topic of collective family decision-making may be an area for future research, focussing for example, on the student's relationships with their families and the sacrifices families make for their relatives to attend higher education. Christie (2009) discussed student transitions to university and, although mentions of family are limited, one student talks about going to university as being about defying family expectations.

There are just a few examples of research studies in this area. Brooks (2003) looked at the influence of families and peers on decision-making, based on interviews with students in a sixth-form college and who were from a lower middle-class background. The study emphasised the influence of friends as well as family and the heterogeneity of the middle classes. A case can be made for further research which explores student decision-making based on actual choices made rather than intended choices, and takes into account the effect of funding arrangements on a wide range of students, including mature and part-time students.

Future studies could also look at government documents such as White and Green Papers and other government publications to examine the depiction of families and how they are portrayed, for example, as representing a barrier to students rather than as a supportive resource. For example, Taylor and McCaig (2014:37) refer to situations where families have a 'lack of prior experience' of the system or the professions, implying disadvantage through their class, or through families being a burden on those students who are also carers.

7.6.3 Students exercising autonomy

The study highlighted the discourse of 'exercising autonomy' and a number of examples were described where voluntary peer learning emerged. These were in some instances a direct response to dissatisfaction with transactional or repetitive teaching. In some cases, absence from the classroom was substituted with personal study at home or the formation of informal study groups, both face-to-face and online. More research could be conducted on the ways students are exercising autonomy in learning in the context of a performative learning environment. Macfarlane (2015) discussed issues of 'freedom to learn' and 'decision-making

autonomy as adults' in relation to the current environment in higher education and argued that more research into performativity is needed from a student's, rather than a teacher's, perspective.

7.7 Concluding comments

The aim of this thesis has been to explore how pedagogical relationships have been developing in an era of marketisation, and this chapter has brought this study to a conclusion. A summary of the key findings has been provided in relation to the understanding of pedagogical relationships and the limitations of the study have been presented. This led to setting out the contributions to knowledge that the study has provided and outlining messages for key stakeholders. Areas for future research have also been identified.

The impact of the research is outlined in a separate impact statement. I conclude with a brief comment on the impact of learning on my personal development and on my practice. This doctoral study is part of an ongoing process of learning to develop my research skills. It also allows me to develop the capacity to identify and reflect on contemporary discourses in the higher education environment, thereby enabling me going forward to consider how best to resist, counter or reframe them, particularly when they lead to the closing of opportunities for student learning.

List of Appendices

Appendix A Timeline of the Higher Education Policy Context in England

Appendix B Example of Analysis: Evaluating pilot study qualitative interviews

Appendix C Example of Analysis: Constructions of students in University A

Appendix D Example of Analysis: Constructions of students in University B

Appendix E Example Interview Questions for Students

Appendix F Example Interview Questions for Staff

Appendix G Examples of Working Documents

Appendix A: Timeline of the Higher Education Policy Context in England

Research activities relating to this study in *blue italic text*

Month	Year	Event/Change
July	2004	Higher Education Act 2004
Sep	2005	Publication of first National Student Survey (NSS) results
Sep	2006	Introduction of deferred variable tuition fees in English universities up to £3,000
Nov	2009	'Higher Ambitions: The future of universities in a knowledge economy' (DBIS)
May	2010	General Election – Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition
Oct	2010	Independent Review of Higher Education and Student Finance (Browne Review)
Jun	2011	White Paper: 'Students at the Heart of the System'
Sep	2012	Cap on tuition fees in English universities raised to £9,000
Dec	2014	Research Excellence Framework (REF) results published (period 2008-2013)
<i>March</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>Pilot study conducted</i>
Sep	2015	Cap on UK & EU domiciled undergraduate student numbers removed in English universities
Nov	2015	Green Paper: 'Fulfilling our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice'
May	2016	White Paper: 'Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice'
<i>Jun</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>Ethical approvals granted for study</i>
Jun	2016	Referendum – UK voted to leave the European Union
Jul	2016	Theresa May became Prime Minister
<i>Sep</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>Data collection starts</i>
Sep	2016	Trial for the Teaching and Excellence Framework (TEF) starts
Jan	2017	National Union of Students (NUS) call for boycott of National Student Survey (NSS)
<i>April</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>Data collection finishes</i>
April	2017	Higher Education and Research Act 2017
Jun	2017	General Election – Conservative minority government
Jun	2017	First TEF results published
Sep	2017	Cap on tuition fees in English universities raised to £9, 250 subject to a 'TEF' rating of 'meets expectations'
Sep	2017	Trial year 1 for Subject Level TEF started
Jan	2018	Creation of the Office for Students
Sep	2018	Trial year 2 for Subject Level TEF started
Jun	2019	Review of post-18 Education and Funding (Augur Review)
Jul	2019	Boris Johnson became Prime Minister

Appendix B: Example of Analysis: Evaluating pilot study qualitative interviews

Following the collection of data and the transcription of the interviews, I reviewed the success of the pilot interviews with reference to the work of Kvale (1996) which identifies six points to consider when assessing quality in qualitative interviews:

1. The extent of spontaneous, rich, specific and relevant answers from the interviewee
2. The shorter the interviewer's questions and the longer the subject's answers, the better
3. The degree to which the interviewer follows up and clarifies the meanings of the relevant aspects of the answers
4. The ideal interview is to a large extent interpreted throughout the interview
5. The interviewer attempts to verify his or her interpretations of the subject's answers in the course of the interview
6. The interview is 'self-communication' – it is a story contained in itself that hardly requires much extra description and explanation

I then reflected up on Kvale's criteria and how far these criteria applied to my research process. The first three points relate to the practice of collecting the relevant data, whereas the second three points refer to the 'ideal' interview scenario. From this description of the cognitive process which the researcher might be undergoing during the interview I noted that a portion of the analysis is happening during the interview rather than afterwards, thereby emphasising for me the importance of honing questioning techniques and my own skills as a researcher.

Spontaneity (*The extent of spontaneous, rich, specific and relevant answers from the interviewee*)

Spontaneity was evident in the student interviews, particularly where participants responded by challenging each other or giving examples. Spontaneity is to be balanced against the need

for well-considered answers, particularly when asking for the opinion of an expert, for example, an academic staff member. This led me to consider whether interview questions should be provided in advance. For this pilot study, indicative questions were provided to staff but not to students in advance of the interview. For the main study indicative questions were provided to all participants, allowing participants to choose if they wished to consider the subject area in advance and also making sure all participants were well-informed.

Length of Response *(The shorter the interviewer's questions and the longer the subject's answers, the better)*

Whereas it could be seen that as a rule of thumb the longer answers were likely to be more informative, a person who is loquacious can be difficult to steer back towards the topic of interest, so longer answers may not always be better. However, longer answers, even if they are not strictly relevant to the research questions would still indicate areas that are of interest to the interviewee, which might be different to those anticipated by the interviewer and therefore would be revealing.

Clarification *(The degree to which the interviewer follows up and clarifies the meanings of the relevant aspects of the answers)*

Interview transcripts were analysed to highlight examples of both good and bad practice in clarification and follow-up. There were instances where probing questions worked well but I noted that clarity could be improved by allowing participants sufficient time to respond and by refraining from asking more than one question at a time.

Interpretation *(The ideal interview is to a large extent interpreted throughout the interview)*

The fifth bullet point of Kvale's criteria suggests that there are opportunities for cross-checking of the data during the interview. This was a skill I began to develop through the pilot study. At the end of the interviews there was an opportunity to ask participants to summarise their ideas about the role of the student or add anything they wished. This gave an opportunity to compare responses with those given earlier in the interview, thereby highlighting variations as well as similarities.

Interview as a story in itself (The interview is 'self-communication' – it is a story contained in itself that hardly requires much extra description and explanation)

The sixth point refers to the idea of the interview as a story in itself, as 'self-communication', where points are clarified and meanings can easily be interpreted. At the pilot stage, I realised that I was not expecting self-contained stories as this would imply a search for a coherence which did not align with my conceptual lens. However, interviews as research events seemed to be revealing glimpses of a larger 'story' by identifying different ways of talking that might appear in the main study.

Kvale's (1996) criteria for the evaluation of qualitative interviews refer to the role of the researcher in terms of the active participation in creating relevant data and in directing the interview dialogue. In his later writing, Kvale (2006) explores this idea further through a discussion of the dominance of the researcher and the potential biases of the 'warm personal interview'. He was questioning the tendency to disregard the power dynamics of the interview relationship, considering the term interview dialogue as a misnomer as it gives 'an illusion of mutual interests' but takes place for the benefit of the interviewer (p.483). It was useful to reflect on this idea of the interview as an illusion, that despite the semblance of a conversation based on a level playing field, there is usually a power imbalance. In the pilot study the approach was certainly to create the effect of the 'warm personal interview' in order to encourage the participants to feel comfortable enough to talk about their experiences and concerns. Kvale (2006: 492) comments that in education 'teachers may tend to overlook their power with regard to the students' whereas students may be more aware of this. Indeed, power difference was discussed by the students themselves in the interviews in relation to their reluctance to contact their tutors. This experience reinforced my awareness of my position in the research and the need to carefully set up interviews in accordance with good ethical practices, such as those outlined in the BERA (2011) guidelines.

Appendix C: Example of Analysis: Constructions of students in University A

This appendix is provided as an example of analysis which was conducted in order to identify different constructions of the student in University A based on interviews with staff and students. As explained in Chapter Three, the Research Approach, this was the first of two stages and was followed by the identification of discourses.

The following constructions of students emerged through an examination of talk in University A:

'Paying Customer'

Students from both subject areas deployed the language of the student as 'paying customer'.

'You hear it a lot though don't you? I pay nine grand for this – they could do that, that, that'. [Rachel, year 2 Humanities Student]

'I think we're paying for a service, the same way you go into a shop and you pay for something – you expect to receive what you're paying for. So I definitely agree that we are customers to the university'. [Dawn, year 3 Business Student]

Rachel suggested that the idea of the paying customer was a position repeated by others, whilst Dawn also aligned herself with the idea of the paying customer and she seemed to express a sense of entitlement.

There was a contrast between the ways Programme Leaders characterised students. The Humanities Programme Leader argued that she rarely heard the language of the consumer when interacting with students:

'Very, very rarely actually, very rarely if at all. In a way, they're the employers strictly speaking but I never feel that I'm treated as their employee, that they're coming here, they're demanding. Remarkably not – no!' [Irene, Programme Leader, Humanities]

On a personal level, Irene had had experience of a system of free education and she took the position that it was both morally and socially wrong to charge fees:

'it is just totally and utterly wrong to indebt the young for something which should be given free of charge'. [Irene, Programme Leader, Humanities]

The Business Programme Leader described the difference that increased fees had made as follows:

'they think "I'm paying all this money" and therefore "I should have the modules that I want, the programme I want, the marks I want"...And I think back to what students used to be like when they weren't paying nine thousand pounds a year. And they were much less demanding. And as the fees have gone up, they have become increasingly demanding' [Beverley, Business Programme Leader]

The Business Programme leader characterised the students as expressing a strong sense of entitlement. Students also seemed to construct themselves as paying customers when expressing their consumer rights.

'Investor'

The student-as-investor was a construction primarily deployed by students from both subjects rather than by staff. Dawn described herself as an investor in education and justified her interest in being a student representative on this basis:

'for me it's – university is an investment and I wanted to get the most out of it'.
[Dawn, Year 3 Business Student]

She later added:

'it's an investment in my future I'm paying for. And you're only here for three years, there's not a lot of time to make a lot of changes, so it can be quite disheartening. Was it worth coming here? When my lecturers aren't engaging, or they're not ready, they're not prepared. It can be quite demotivating'. [Dawn, Year 3 Business Student]

Like the 'paying customer' this construction also involves payment, but it goes beyond a short-term transaction. The construction of the student as an 'investor' highlighted the reliance of the student on the performance of the staff to realise the investment they were making.

Whereas some students seemed uncertain what they were paying for, Dawn expected her investment to buy her a place amongst other students in the marketplace:

'And I think it's got that much more competitive. There's so many more people going to uni now, whereas before a degree it was "oh wow, you've got a degree" whereas now it's "what degree have you got - have you got a first, have you got a 2:1?"' . [Dawn, Year 3 Business Student]

This reinforced the competitiveness of the job market, which was also referred to by both the Programme Leaders.

Dawn also referred to the relative position of different universities. She made a distinction between a student who was investing in a vocational qualification, such as a student nurse, and those like herself who have made a big decision to 'invest' in an education, despite other routes such as apprenticeships being available. Her key concern was making sure she achieved a return on this investment:

'I wanted to know that university was actually going to be worthwhile to me'.
Dawn, Year 3 Business Student]

The repetition of phrases such as 'worth it', 'worthwhile' begged the question of how that judgement of 'value' was being made and what were the criteria? For Dawn, her main justification for becoming a student representative was to maximise her investment:

'I don't want to be just turning up. I want to make sure I've got the best resources available to me. I want to make sure that the lecturers know what they're talking about. That I'm not just kind of another number, that they know me as a person and I want a good level of education out of this. I want the support, I want to know it's worth me being here.' [Dawn, Year 3 Business Student]

The repetition of 'I want' emphasised her focus on her own needs and her expectations. She emphasised that the way she wanted to maximise her investment and to secure the outcome she wanted was by developing a personal relationship with the lecturer, thereby foregrounding the pedagogical relationship.

The investment was seen in terms of both money and personal effort:

'So I think having the right motivations is quite crucial and then obviously having the ethics – the work ethics to do outside study, which is what a lot of university is based on' [Dawn, Year 3 Business Student]

Karl was slightly more cautious about regarding paying fees as an investment, but described his raised expectations of university and of standards of teaching:

‘you expect your degree to get you a job than can make the whole investment worth it. I mean I don’t exactly view study as an investment, but I mean I certainly want to do something further than my degree and when you spend the nine thousand pounds you expect to get a great standard of teaching all across different universities’. [Karl, year 2 Humanities Student]

He compared the fees he had paid to those paid in other countries and this reinforced his view that when you pay high fees you expect certainty about the return on that investment in terms of both high quality teaching and a job at the end. In summary:

‘you expect to get a lot from it’. [Karl, year 3 Humanities Student]

This construction deployed by students from different subjects suggests that discipline may not be a factor in indicating the stances likely to be adopted by students.

Students described their individual reasons for regarding their education as an investment. For some students the payback on this investment was expressed in terms of making their families proud of them, for example, being first in family to go to university. This positioned staff as guarantors of a hypothetical future return and students as seeking a return on their education, regardless of the quality of their own input, and also reliant on the performance of the staff to realise the investment.

Whereas students characterised investment as an investment in time and effort towards an unknown future return, this can be contrasted with the more overt and short-term rewards identified by the Business Programme Leader, namely good grades:

‘if they meet me halfway, then they know that there will be success – as in there will be high marks’ [Beverley, Programme Leader, Business]

This construction of ‘student-as-investor’ seemed to be an alternative to the idea of the ‘paying customer’, through a focus on money spent and effort expended in order to gain enhanced job opportunities or enhanced social standing. The construction served to simplify a complex process (that of education), which depends on a complex set of variables including the student’s own input, to a direct causal connection between student fees paid and

anticipated outcomes in terms of both a high quality university experience and future opportunities.

'Novice'

Business Students portrayed themselves and other students as lacking in confidence, needing a lot of direction and most of all some reassurance to succeed in their academic studies:

'that's all we need, that reassurance from teachers' [Ava, Year 2 Business Student]

This lack of confidence was reinforced by the way the students Liam and Ava in the paired interview still referred to staff as 'teachers' rather than 'lecturers', despite being in their second year of studies. Humanities students also portrayed themselves as nervous and sometimes unwilling to speak out in seminars, resulting in awkward silences in the class.

The Humanities Programme Leader also portrayed students as lacking confidence and sometimes anxious at talking in front of their peers. When students had not completed their reading, they were not necessarily seen as lazy but as requiring academic training. For example, she argued that to learn how to read required practice:

'because how to read it, how to distil out what is actually the hypothesis, what does the author want to tell us, how is the author using the evidence, is something they still have to learn' [Irene, Programme Leader, Humanities]

Overall, students were portrayed by Irene as capable but often being insecure in their abilities and needing reassurance, particularly the mature students:

'The lack of confidence is particularly with mature students actually, who are often - from life experience and jobs they have done – very good but are very insecure in their abilities. And it's often I find myself not giving them any concrete advice but talking them up' [Irene, Programme Leader, Humanities]

In contrast the Business Programme Leader did not regard every student as capable and remarked on one Business student who, amongst the novices, had not been fully initiated:

'I've taught people with no aptitude for the subject. I'm thinking of a particular student last year who could barely work her own calculator. And that is – hard and quite soul-destroying' [Beverley, Business Programme Leader]

She also portrayed the students, although novices, as feeling secure rather than nervous, which she attributed to the amount of exam preparation she offered:

‘they feel secure and they know that I will help them get through that exam and I will make sure in the classroom that they are well prepared for that exam’
[Irene, Programme Leader, Business]

‘Mini-adult’

The construction of students as ‘mini-adults’ highlights their personal and emotional development, which students described as important, but which did not recur in staff talk. Below are three examples from student interviews:

‘it’s a nice phase into adulthood for me...I needed to move away, like learn about myself and get some independence’ [Dawn, Year 3 Business Student]

‘it’s like the big break for people, isn’t it?...it’s more about the independence jump, where you’re allowed to do your own thing, live your own life, do what you want. And that’s what people like about it’. [Rachel, year 2 Humanities Student]

‘I think it also sets you up to be an adult in a weird way because you have all these deadlines and you learn how to stick to deadlines’ [Tanya, Year 3 Humanities Student]

Dawn described going to university as a transition into adulthood and an opportunity to become more independent, which was also important for Rachel. Tanya also directly linked learning, and specifically coping with managing assessments, to a process of growing up.

‘Critical thinker’

This was a construction deployed by staff rather than students and more so by the Humanities Programme Leader than the Business Programme Leader. In this construction the student questions, engages with topics and ideas in a critical way, thereby facilitating a pedagogical relationship based on intellectual engagement with others.

The Humanities Programme Leader had a clear view of the ideal student as a ‘critical thinker’:

‘a student who has his/her own ideas and engages with the topics in and individual, original way, asking questions, finding new angles, relating it maybe

to his or her own life situation. And who is bringing something new to the debate.’ [Irene, Programme Leader, Humanities]

Although the Business Programme Leader also portrayed the ideal student as asking questions, she explained that parts of the Accounting curriculum focused on repeatedly practising techniques in a mechanical way:

‘you have to have a go. It’s not reflective, it’s not about “I want you to think about this concept”. It’s about “get your calculator out, get your pen out and work through this problem in a logical way!” [Beverley, Business Programme Leader]

Business students did not mention being critical thinkers and referred to an idea of education where learning was about rewards for personal effort made in pursuit of the acquisition of knowledge, and in particular to gain a qualification:

‘if you put in more effort and go to your seminars you get more knowledge and you know- you learn more and then that piece of paper is actually worthwhile because you’ve actually done something with your life’ [Ava, Year 2 Business Student]

Business students placed emphasis on a directive approach whereby they expected staff to explain how they could meet the assessment requirements. In the following excerpt, Liam explains further and describes a ‘good’ lecturer as follows:

‘she would make us feel comfortable and tell us “the question is asking this from you, this is what they require. And you’re going to approach it in this way”’. [Liam, year 2 Business Student].

‘Community member’

Student and staff talk did not consistently foreground the idea of being members of a community. The Business Programme Leader did not construct students as part of a community, but the Humanities Programme Leader described how subject communities formed, reporting how in some years the student groups become extremely close:

‘So the Classics students they communicate closely amongst themselves but also with us as a team. I am sure they are on Facebook together in some ways. I don’t know’. [Irene, Programme Leader, Humanities]

Two business students, Liam and Ava, who were living at home, portrayed themselves both as paying customers and as members of a family community but also mentioned being part of a community within the University. Liam characterised one of the most important things about being a student as belonging, through gaining access and participating in something bigger than yourself. In the following excerpt Liam refers to the University community:

‘I think of myself as a student because I’m paying to be part of an institution. I’m paying to be here....I’m a student. I feel like I’m part of it. I’m part of the University ... it’s more than paying fees. We’re getting the whole – we’re interacting, we’re learning.... it’s about your input. 100%’. [Liam, Year 2 Business Student]

‘Party-goer’

The student as ‘party-goer’ was a construction portrayed by students across different subject areas, but not deployed by staff. Students referred to the student as academically focused but also as social beings – whether it was going on nights out or being part of a group of students who studied together or just exchanging messages on social media. However, the ‘party-goer’ was a pejorative description of a student who did not prioritise academic studies. Karl also commented that some students chose universities based on the extra-curricular activities:

‘some students see the social aspect of it more than the whole academic aspect of it and sometimes that drives people to study at a certain university’. [Karl, year 2 Student]

He also described how their academic work suffered as a result:

‘they kind of prioritise their social life and then they kind of do everything at the last minute and start asking all the questions that could have been answered previously’ [Karl, year 2 Humanities Student]

Both Business and Humanities students differentiated themselves from those who focused on partying:

‘I think it started off focused on the education aspects of university and now it’s got to the point where people are more excited about the whole party-like culture about it.’ [Grace, year 2 Humanities Student]

'I know they didn't come here to get a degree, they came here to get away from home, to party a bit'. [Dawn, year 3 Business Student]

Grace pointed to a shift in the perceived role of the student. Dawn, in her interview responses made comparisons to paths others have taken and constructed her identity in relation to her friends and family, for example, her parents who didn't go to university. She was frustrated by other students on her course who did not take up opportunities. She was shocked not only by the lack of work ethic of these 'party-goers', but also by the unfairness and the wasted opportunity as many of her peers who had not attended university said they did not see university as right for them:

'it's so frustrating because there are so many people that feel like they can't be here'. [Dawn, year 3 Business Student]

Constructions of students who prioritised their social lives tended to be made of 'others' rather than themselves, for example, 'others' skip classes to go out with their friends. However, there was one student who portrayed himself as a 'party-goer' and who had dropped out of a previous university because of the distractions of an intense social life:

'University X has quite a night life there. Literally I was so caught up in that, because X has a good student society. I mean, every single person you meet there would love to know you...because being near the beach as well, so all of these clubs there and everyone just living there. Everyone's saying "what are you doing today, do you want to come?" Especially in my class. I used to go with my Business class. We always used to go, do social events, stuff like that.' [Liam, year 2 Business Student]

This account suggests that the construction of the student as 'party-goer' is not unique to University A.

'Pawn'

A construction of student as 'pawn' suggests the student is being manipulated as 'someone who is being used for another's purposes' (Tight, 2013:292). Although this construction was not prominent in student talk, one student described the way she felt uncomfortable about completing the National Student Survey, feeling manipulated by the University and in particular by the way that her feedback would be used to sell the University to future students on social media:

‘they want to pull you in and they try and advertise it to you by saying “oh we’re this number on the league board”– and I see a lot on social media of like advertisements for universities and that just sort of totally cheapens it’. [Tanya, year 3 Humanities Student]

‘Engaged learner’

In this construction, the student and staff accounts described the student as interested and motivated to learn, actively engaging with knowledge and participating in learning activities and sharing many of the qualities of an ‘ideal’ student. Staff also emphasised how an engaged student is comfortable in learning situations and may proactively ask questions and seek feedback from the tutor.

Students associated ‘engagement’ with an enjoyment of the subject and being to learn. Rachel had a love of reading and described herself as a keen learner:

‘it sounds silly, but it’s stuff that I find genuinely engaging so when we’re given reading I’ll sit down and I’ll actually like take down the information and I’ll really like digest it because it’s something I really enjoy. But sometimes you don’t get that, but with these current ones I really like all the stuff I’m doing. I’ve got reading in my bag now so literally once I’m done, I’m going to go read. Do you know what I mean?’ [Rachel, year 2 Humanities Student]

Students also emphasised that part of being a ‘good student’ was about being prepared and being motivated to study outside classes:

‘someone who comes to the lectures and the seminars and contributes in class, whose done the reading in their own time whose started doing like their research for the coursework or the exam that we have coming up and yes preparing early so that you can get it done before the deadline’ [Grace, Year 3 Humanities Student]

Staff also emphasised the qualities of being a keen and conscientious learner as part of the qualities of an ideal student:

‘So the ideal student – is the student who has in intrinsic interest in the subject, and who comes here because he/she wants to learn more about it.’ [Irene, Programme Leader, Humanities]

‘The ideal student would be interested, would have good attendance, would ask questions, would do the reading... oh and would obviously have some ability.’ [Beverley, Programme Leader, Business]

Furthermore, an 'engaged learner' was described by the Business Programme Leader as comfortable in learning situations, comfortable enough to ask questions, regardless of how well they grasped a topic:

'So if I'm doing compound interest on a semi-annual basis and they don't really understand the formula- if they don't ask – I might as well be talking gobbeldy gook to them...And so I feel things are working well when they are comfortable enough to ask a question. That they feel they can ask me any question – even if it's a stupid question – so I'm never going to think it's a stupid question. But you have to get that kind of rapport going.' [Beverley, Programme Leader, Business]

In this excerpt, the Programme Leader is highlighting not only the importance of the qualities of the student, such as readiness to engage, but her perception that the staff member plays a key role in constructing the engaged learner by facilitating an environment where students can learn. There is a link here with the student as potentially a 'critical thinker', where staff portrayed critical thinking as going beyond engagement.

'Disengaged learner'

Staff and students' accounts portrayed the disengaged student as a student who was likely to have poor attendance or be passive or a non-contributor in class. There would be a distant relationship with staff, if any. Staff referred to disengagement as being about levels of interest, motivation and participation. A 'disengaged' student was described as follows:

'not showing real interest in the subject, who is difficult to motivate or who even expects to be motivated in the first place, and not engaging, making it difficult then to have a meaningful communication, be it in class, be it in a tutorial, because the student might not read, might not have anything to contribute' [Irene, Programme Leader, Humanities]

The portrayal of the disengaged student has much in common with the idea of the 'bad' student:

'the bad student doesn't attend doesn't attend, doesn't participate doesn't do any work or leaves the work to the last minute, i.e. the night before the exam, complains about the grade when they haven't put any effort in and has no aptitude' [Beverley, Programme Leader, Business]

'someone who doesn't come to lessons or lectures or turns up late. You know, just on their phones. Walking late into the seminar' [Ava, Year 2 Business Student]

‘the student who hasn’t done the reading, who doesn’t turn up to lectures, who does the coursework last minute, the student who doesn’t want to contribute in lectures’ [Grace, Year 2 Humanities]

This suggests a description of the student based on a judgement of whether the student displays expected behaviours.

‘Struggler’

This construction puts together the academic and the personal struggles that a student might experience. Staff particularly highlighted the way students struggled academically, but took actions to minimise the struggles. As mentioned earlier, the Business Programme Leader described how some students struggled academically were made to feel ‘safe’. The Humanities Programme Leader also seemed to anticipate the academic struggles that would be faced by students by facilitating the seminars and adapting her teaching according to the needs of the group. In the following excerpt she portrayed the difficulties some students encountered in third year in reading and interpreting texts and her reluctance to let them struggle:

‘Even at third year – it depends very much on the groups, but I tend to very much have a role to identify – to help them identify “What is the debate here? What does the text tell us or what could the text tell us about it? How can we interpret it?” It still needs quite a bit of prompting - so the idea that I can tell them “you have now read chapter three of I don’t know which text- discuss it!” It’s difficult.’
[Irene, Programme Leader, Humanities]

Students gave accounts of struggling with a variety of aspects of their lives. For example, students’ accounts portrayed themselves as struggling with a range of activities from communication with lecturers, grasping the requirements of essay, to understanding feedback, to going to see a tutor. This mature student gave a particularly vivid account of struggling with university life (albeit at a previous institution):

‘I went to X, when I first left sixth form. I’m 23 now. I was 18 when I went to X. I lived out. I lived out because I wanted to experience living away from home. And you know, I think at that stage in your life, when I went through that – I was quite young. I wasn’t quite independent. I had my parents paying for my bills. So when I went to X it was all at once. I had to pay for my electricity bills. Then I had to set up my wifi. I had that in my flat. I had to get along with my flatmates. And that impacted my studying A LOT. I got homesick. I missed my Mum’s cooking. I had to kind of like - I used to go to Iceland to get Pizza fingers for a pound. And obviously it wasn’t a nice thing but I didn’t know how to cook. So, I think it was quite a challenge. And for that reason I didn’t really focus that much

on my first year. I met quite nice people there. But then I thought to myself, I thought, you know, this isn't for me.' [Liam, year 2 Business Student]

This construction overlaps with the student as 'mini-adult' but considers the student lifestyle as well as the academic aspects of their University experience.

'Social learner'

The student is portrayed as collaborating with other students and studying together. Such collaboration would typically be informal learning and happened beyond the classroom and was not usually visible to staff. This aspect of student learning was not mentioned by staff. Students described the importance of the social aspects of learning and in the following extracts were linking having a social life with being able to form relationships with others to facilitate learning:

'you have to have a social life to be a perfect student. Because there's a social aspect of it too – where you have to work with other people on some projects- so if you're sort of on our own all the time it might be harder to form relationships to do that - because you can't sort of just blank off.' [Karl, year 2 Humanities Student]

'So I've seen in a lot of my seminars, you have to come prepared, with your knowledge. Because sometimes the lectures, the slides and stuff they do get expanded on. But it's getting along with your fellow students as well because that is key...you need to get along with your fellow pupils because you're all in this together.' [Liam, year 2 Business Student]

The social aspect of learning was portrayed as a feature of student life outside the classroom. Ava only had classes on two days per week but travelled to the campus to study with her friends:

'I only come in uni for two days – but on the other three days when I haven't got uni I do come into uni and do work with my friends. I feel I get more out of that.' [Ava, Year 2 Business Student]

Karl also mentioned how some students formed informal groups to study together:

'So we would organise one – let's say maybe after the lecture, or someone had booked a study room in the library and people would say "do you want to come along – and we can study all together?" [Karl, year 2 Humanities Student]

This construction contrasts with the idea of the student as ‘independent learner’, which was not prominent in student talk.

‘Future Employee’

Employability is linked to the idea of the ‘student-as-consumer’ through the assumption that a consumer is in effect buying a qualification which would help provide better job prospects. Many of the students in University A were already employed, some of whom were mature students. Grace, who portrayed herself as an engaged student, described her reasons for attending university as being about enjoyment of the subject but also as about future employment prospects:

‘I just wanted to continue education and ensure that I could get a good job in the future’ [Grace, Year 2 Humanities student]

However, some students suggested that employability was not always the primary reason for studying at university:

‘But now people go to university to have the social life and pretty much know that they’re not going to end up doing anything better than anyone else’. [Tanya, Year 3 Humanities Student]

This student questioned the assumption that, for her generation, the degree was a passport to a future career, pointing to the idea that the graduate premium might be a myth.

Staff also took account of the student as a future employee, with the Business Programme Leader recognising the need for accredited business qualifications and the Humanities Programme Leader acknowledging the pressures on students of the competitive job market.

‘Strategic learner’

Being a ‘strategic learner’ involved the student exercising choice about their participation in order to maximise the use of time and resources. For example, students skipped lectures for different reasons, for example, to prioritise finishing assessments.

Ava mentioned skipping lectures to avoid the long commute into campus and portrayed herself as sometimes regretting the decision when she could not understand the lecture

materials. Liam agreed and suggested that his evaluation of the teacher was pivotal in deciding whether to attend:

'I'm the same. It takes me roughly forty minutes to drive here. And say if we had this teacher that doesn't really engage with us, I would think I can just catch up on my laptop. But as a student I would always recommend to any other student face to face - or being there in person is always better than sitting at home and looking through the stuff, because you're engaged. At least if you don't get something in that moment you can ask'. [Liam, Year 2 Business Student]

The Humanities Programme Leader, in discussing why students skip classes, suggested some students are selective about the topics they study:

'they choose an essay topic and attend only the relevant class'. [Irene, Programme Leader, Humanities]

There is a link here to the idea of the student investor. She portrayed this as a faulty investment strategy and suggested that the student was then likely to produce a mediocre essay because a good essay needed to reference concepts discussed in other classes. This construction of a strategic learner was confirmed in students' accounts:

'I was behind in my research for my coursework. So I just didn't go to the lecture because the lecture wasn't going to help me and I know that's bad, but it wasn't going to help me so I just thought I might as well skip it' [Grace, year 2 Humanities Student]

'I was exactly the same. It's usually about I'm behind on the piece of work that's counting towards my grade and then it's usually the lecture for that thing and I'm like well "I've got the information for that particular subject I'm focusing on - so like missing that extra four hours on something I'm not going to be working towards for a final mark, seems kind of like I'm wasting my time". That sounds bad but I prefer to prioritise my work that's going to count towards something' [Rachel, year 2 Humanities Student]

The Business Programme Leader did not characterise students as either 'independent' or 'strategic learners' who needed to make decisions about their participation and individual study time, but rather characterised students as just needing to attend and follow the guidance:

'I think if I'm totally honest if they just turned up to every class and did the seminar work in class with me they should be able to get a decent grade in the

exam – without actually doing much outside of class’ [Beverley, Business Programme Leader]

‘Business Partner’

This construction of the student was only deployed by the Business Programme Leader. This was a form of co-operation with students where staff and student efforts would be combined to achieve success. This reworked the teacher-student relationship and reframed it as a process of negotiation where a ‘deal’ was struck between staff and students:

‘I expect them to meet me halfway. That I will write material, I will provide support and so on but they actually at the end of the day have got to turn up to class, do the work, and basically meet me halfway’ [Beverley, Business Programme Leader]

Appendix D: Example of Analysis: Constructions of students in University B

This appendix is provided as an example of analysis which was conducted in order to identify different constructions of the student in University B based on interviews with staff and students. As explained in Chapter Three, the Research Approach, this was a first of two stages and was followed by the identification of discourses.

The following constructions of students emerged through an examination of talk in University B:

'Paying customer'

The term 'student-as-consumer' has been used in many forums as an umbrella term denoting the changing relationship between the student and the university in a marketised environment. In a higher education context this metaphor implies that education is considered as a good to be consumed by the student and to be provided by the university as a service-provider. The term 'consumer' overlaps with 'customer' and 'client'. The suggested differences, as mentioned in Chapter Two, have been linked to the basis, intensity and the anticipated length of the relationship, although the terms are often used loosely and interchangeably in conversations (Molesworth *et al.*, 2011). 'Client' tends to focus on the development of a longer term relationship, for example, in the way a university might keep in touch with alumni. Students in their talk did not tend to construct themselves as 'clients', in that they did not tend to focus on longer term relationships with staff or the University or expect their expressed preferences to be individually met as in a client relationship. Where improvements were being sought, they tended to be sought collectively, as evidenced through the system of student representatives in the Student Forum meeting.

However, students in University B did tend to construct themselves as 'customers' when discussing exchanges or transactions for which they paid, and therefore the term 'paying customer' is used in the study as a more relevant category than 'consumer' or 'client'. This construction, used primarily by students, involved references to the student paying fees and expecting services in return and also asking themselves whether the exchange represented value-for-money, as in the following excerpt:

'I would hope for the amount I'm paying I would get a good learning experience out of it' [Clare, Year 2 Business Student]

Students like Clare were expressing that their expectations of the University had increased due to being fee-payers and that increased payments should equate to higher quality. This positions the University staff as responsible and accountable not only for the learning opportunities but also for the satisfaction experienced by the student.

'Investor'

This construction is linked to the idea of the 'paying customer' and focuses specifically on the idea of return on investment both in terms of both effort and money expended. Here, the student anticipates that fees paid now, like a good investment, will bring future benefit in the form of a particular outcome, such as a first-class degree:

'If I were to say what I'm paying, I feel I would say I want to come out with a first just to make the amount I've paid worth it. That's what's in the back of my head'.
[Clare, Year 2 Business Student]

Staff did not deploy this discourse, but when questioned about whether the payment of fees made a difference, the Humanities Programme Leader emphasised that even the most instrumental students in University B recognised the need for personal effort:

'Some people are doing it as a means to an end, of course, but I think they get the fact that you can't just – to do well you've got to kind of put the effort in'.
[Elizabeth, Programme Leader, Humanities]

This construction of student as 'investor' omits any discussion of the quality of input from the student or the non-monetary benefits of a university education.

'Critical thinker'

Staff tended to construct the ideal student as a 'critical thinker', where the student questions, engages with topics and ideas in an original way, thereby facilitating a pedagogical relationship based on developing a questioning mind-set:

'here with the degree I think we're in a way empowering the students to ask the questions that they wouldn't normally ask. To think about things in a different way. Not just accept that there's a rule and this is how the rule is applied, but to give them the ability to criticise. And say 'well why is that rule in place. Is that the right rule? Should we be changing it? What power have we got to change it?' [Nadine, Programme Leader, Business]

In this example, Nadine, the Business Programme Leader was discussing her expectations of accounting students and aligned the idea of critical thinking with the development of professional values. Students in University B did not refer to themselves as ‘critical thinkers’.

‘Independent learner’

As an ‘independent learner’ the student is portrayed as self-reliant, takes responsibility for their own learning and is resourceful in seeking support. Students also characterised independent learning as becoming self-motivated learners who learn how to learn:

‘I don’t expect to be spoon-fed everything’ [Clare, Year 2, International Business Student]

‘I quite like researching for myself, so looking at the books and looking at the journals [Susie, Year 2 Business Student]

‘I think there’s certain parts of university that isn’t actually about learning of the subject, it’s actually about learning, the work, the way you work and how you work independently, because obviously what works for you isn’t going to work for me, and vice versa. So, I think it’s a large part of it...’ [Naomi, Year 1 Humanities Student]

Being an independent learner was a construction recognised by both staff and students. For example, in Humanities, three or four students led the seminar each week:

‘It’s sort of you’re being trusted. You’re not being spoon-fed information, it’s – you’re being trusted to find extra information, you’re being trusted to basically play teacher.’ [Quiana, Year 3 Humanities Student]

There was a connection made with the way a ‘critical thinker’ was described by staff as having ‘independence of mind’. This meant not taking anything at face value, and was described as an important way to be a student:

‘So, what we want from a student and what we try and put in now as well in the first year, particularly in the first year, building up to the third year, is independence of mind. And if you look at the benchmark statement for history, it talks about ‘qualities of mind’, but one of the qualities of mind is independence of mind’. [Elizabeth, Programme Leader, Humanities]

‘Engaged learner’

The term ‘engaged’ was frequently deployed by staff and students but as a construction it was problematic because of its vagueness. It could describe different things and often meant little more than being a ‘good student’. The first aspect of the ‘engaged learner’ was about a willingness to take up opportunities for learning and just describes a basic level of participation. ‘Engagement’ was a proxy for ‘turning up’.

‘I value education and I like the process of learning and gaining new knowledge. I want to turn up to everything I can and I’m always gutted if I can’t turn up to anything’. [Quiana, Year 3 Humanities Student]

However, turning up does not necessarily signify that there was engagement with learning. In the following example, the same student describes receiving feedback. She not only turns up but engages with a recommended process, a process which involves talking to her tutor about an assignment:

‘They’re good with the feedback. You can see all their markings and you can go back to them and sit and go – ask for further feedback. So they’ll talk you through it as well, which I really enjoy’ [Quiana, Year 3 Humanities Student]

The student seems comfortable in the learning situation, if somewhat passive, and proactively follows the process, but the engagement is being driven by the tutor who has marked the work and talks through the comments.

The term was also deployed by staff to show an active intellectual engagement, more than being physically present, and as such overlaps with the idea of the student as a ‘critical thinker’:

‘the ideal student is someone who has done the reading in advance of the lecture, has prepared for the seminars, who asks questions, who asks ‘reasonable’ questions maybe I should say – ‘informed’ questions, but generally if a student doesn’t understand something that they will ask a question’. [Nadine, Programme Leader, Business]

A ‘critical thinker’ tends to be associated with an advanced level of skill which goes beyond handling difficult material. The difference between an ‘engaged learner’ and an ‘independent learner’ is the focus on learning through recognised interactions with others rather than as a solitary activity.

'Disengaged learner'

This construction has much in common with ideas of a 'bad' student and encompasses a range of behaviours adopted by students, from students not participating in classes, having poor attendance records and not feeling comfortable in learning situations. Students referred to peers who did not contribute in class:

'Part of it, I understand, is social anxiety and they don't want to [contribute]. Others, they haven't read the seminar prep. Or they are just completely disinterested in the topic so they don't want to be part of it. So they're just turning up there to get their like – a tick that they've been – for attendance' [Quiana, Year 3 Humanities Student]

It also implies a distant relationship with staff, if any. Students who had poor engagement were portrayed by staff as isolated and not integrating into the culture of learning:

'it was a social kind of uncomfortableness. They didn't feel comfortable in the seminars. They didn't feel like they knew what was going on.' [Elizabeth, Programme Leader, Humanities].

The issue was described as more acute amongst students who had not socialised into the University culture:

'they didn't get much out of it because they hadn't learned about how it worked and therefore they just stopped going.' [Elizabeth, Programme Leader, Humanities]

The issue of disengagement was portrayed as a complex and not well understood. The Business Programme Leader also suggested that there might be a lack of understanding or work reasons or even laziness:

'I think some of them skip classes - yes, because they're working, but that's not the only excuse. The other excuse is they can't be bothered. They don't see the importance of it. They expect to just come to university and leave with a good degree without necessarily putting in or fulfilling their side of the bargain.' [Nadine, Programme Leader, Business]

There is also a connection here between disengagement and the idea that pedagogical relationships entail moral obligations, which can go unfulfilled.

‘Strategic learner ‘

Strategic learning was a construction acknowledged by both staff and students, whereby in contrast to being a passive service user, the student actively exercises choice in order to maximise the use of time and resources for their own individual purposes:

‘Some people as well don’t necessarily turn up because it doesn’t apply to their essay question that they’ve already picked. If you do pick it quite early on they sort of select which seminars to go to that will be most helpful for them’. [Helen, Year 2 Humanities Student]

This construction fits with the idea of strategic learning where students adjust their engagement according to their perceptions of the criteria for success set by others (Mann, 2001). This contrasts with the idea of collaborative learning which was promoted in the University B documents. Examples of strategic learning included only attending sessions relevant to the assessment, prioritising completing assessments over attending face-to-face sessions and second-guessing the perceived value of a lecture in order to decide whether to attend.

The implications for pedagogical relationships are complex in that students might be considering multiple factors beyond the learning opportunity in deciding whether to attend sessions. There may be a link between decisions about learning engagement and perceptions of the difficult job market. Both value for money and developing employability were motivations for some students not to skip classes:

‘the way I see it, I’m paying for it, so I’m just losing money in that way...’I’d say the fees is one of the main things that’s – no, not the main thing – because that’s my motivation to learn – it’s difficult. ..I want to leave university being more employable than someone else. [Clare, Year 2 Business Student]

If value for money is a key consideration then this could cause changes in the way learning is planned, for example, to make sure every session is ‘worthwhile’. Being a ‘strategic learner’ links with the idea that only what is assessed counts for the student. Further questions arise from the assumptions on the students’ part that learning is predictable and that the amount and quality of learning can accurately be gauged in advance.

‘Party-goer’

Students frequently referred to the social aspects of university life.

The 'party-goer' is fully engaged in the social life of the University, which is portrayed as revolving around alcohol:

'so much of university socials – even just going out with your friends, rely on getting drunk. Although it's great being the sober friend, there's only so many times you can do it without it being relived every single time because you sort of know what everyone's going to do'. [Quiana, Year 3 Humanities Student]

In contrast to the sober friend, the 'party-goer' student prioritises socialising over academic work and is associated with a poor attendance record and disengagement from study. It was not just 'others' who were described as 'party-goers'. There was an impression in students' accounts that the construction as 'party-goer' described students early on in their careers but then tended to diminish. In the following example, the final year student describes how he delayed going to university but then changed his mind based on his experience of visiting friends during a gap year:

'Well a lot of my university experience came from when actually I was visiting my mates. I took a little chunk of time out when I wasn't in education, so I went and visited quite a few mates and I went up to university just to see what I was missing out upon. But my – my vision into it was very obscured by the fact I didn't attend any classes or anything like that. So, it was literally like I saw a lot of the nightlife and stuff like that. And I thought – 'this would have been easy'. But when you actually get to it – you have to tailor your own experience. [Graham, Year 3 Humanities Student]

Staff did not make any reference to party-going in the interviews and referred to work or other external pressures in accounting for student absences or disengagement.

'Struggler'

This refers to how the student struggles intellectually, for example, some Business students struggled with data analysis, or the struggle is with another aspect of university life. For example, this may be a student who is struggling to find part-time employment:

'I do Open Days. With the job shortage here - it's quite difficult for any student to get a job here because there's not enough, there's more students than there are jobs. [Susie, Year 2 Business Student]

Intellectual struggle was presented by staff as a valid part of university experience and the remedies portrayed as within the control of the student. Weaker students at the University

were positioned as lacking in confidence rather than ability and going through stages of development from 'feeling lost' in year one to being capable of running seminar discussions themselves in year three.

The Business Programme Leader also identified international students as struggling academically and having to change programme or year. Also, as Senior Tutor she described how she regularly spoke to students with issues about attendance or family problems or academic work.

'Pawn'

Some students positioned themselves as disempowered by the University and the higher education system (Tight, 2013). They were concerned about the level of fees and described their relationship with the University as being undermined by a suspicion of exploitation:

'To me because of the ways the fees are I feel that the university is very much run like a business. I don't feel it's run any differently. I feel like it's – to me we were discussing this the other day and we were like "do they make money out of us?" We were trying to work it out because we were like "where does all this money go? They must make some sort of money out of us." [Susie, Year 2 Business Student]

There was a suggestion here that students might be being exploited by the University and that there was a need for more transparency.

'Community member'

The Humanities Programme Leader positioned students as potential community members, whereby the student participates in a learning community. This takes away the focus from the student as an individual learner and emphasises the idea of sharing knowledge. Here, the ideal of community operates at the level of subject or discipline rather than at the institutional level and embracing the whole University.

'Well I do say at Open Days as part of my spiel – "we're all historians – you might be a beginner historian – but we're a community of historians" – and you know it doesn't always work – but I do believe it. I think that helps doesn't it? I do believe it. And if we can achieve that feeling of a community of historians then I think people won't go "well I paid nine grand for that" – sort of thing.' [Elizabeth, Programme Leader, Humanities]

In this excerpt Elizabeth constructed the student as community member as directly counter to the idea of the 'student as consumer'.

Rather than physical communities, students referred to the numerous chat groups they belonged to for different purposes. For example, student representatives in the Business School used them for relaying information to their peers. In a group interview with Humanities students, spaces without staff present were portrayed as important informal communities with peers:

'Like you can be so much more relaxed on Facebook group chats with each other rather than having to post it on Blackboard and let the tutors actually see it' [Helen, Year 3 Humanities Student]

'I've had a conversation with friends and it's sort of like when we've been discussing an essay we have sort of have like a – not a heated debate – but like a conversation about it and then it makes it so much clearer' [Graham, Year 3 Humanities Student]

'Future employee'

Students tended to portray themselves as mindful of their future careers. Reasons for volunteering to become student representatives were to develop employability, to be involved with change projects or to have fun. Students were less likely to mention student voice and democratic representation of their peers:

'My friend did it last year. And I saw how much like a valuable experience it was to her. And I was like - I kind of want that sort of experience as well. I don't just want to be sat on the side-lines not really doing anything to help' [Susie, Year 2 Business Student]

'And why do did I do it? Because I thought it would be quite fun, to help my CV. I already do quite a bit outside uni but I thought something else inside uni would be quite good' [Quiana, Year 3 Humanities Student]

Staff in both the Business School and Humanities were mindful of employability. The Business Programme Leader positioned herself as career-focused and retained student presentations as an assessment method because of their value for graduate interviews as a 'marvellous employability tool'. She also talked of helping students think about what it means to be an employee and have a pension, but at the same time encouraging students to see themselves as 'investors' who should think critically and know the right questions to ask.

Appendix E: Example Interview Questions for Students

1. Can you please tell me your name and what you are studying at university?
2. What do you enjoy about the experience of being a student at university?
3. Why did you volunteer to be a student representative?
4. Can you think of an example of a good student at university? What are they like? What do they do to succeed? And a bad student?
5. Can you think of an example of a good tutor or lecturer – what are they like? And a bad tutor or lecturer?
6. Are there any particular kinds of learning and teaching approaches you prefer? (e.g. lectures, seminars, workshops, projects etc.)
7. Can you think of an example of a ‘good’ learning experience – what was it like? What really makes you want to get involved?
8. Can you think of an example of a ‘bad’ learning experience– what was it like? How could it have been improved?
9. If you think about the things that you didn’t like about your studies this year, what would you change?
10. Have you or other students you know ever skipped classes? Why?
11. Do any of your modules involve online learning? How does that work? Is it different from face-to-face learning? How?
12. How do you interact with people on your course? (e.g. Moodle, online discussion, social media etc.)
13. Do you think student expectations have changed at all over the last few years? If so, how?
14. Some people see students as customers or consumers. What do you think of that?
15. Do you think the level of fees you pay makes a difference to how you feel about being a student? How?
16. Do you think the subject that students study makes a difference to their expectations?
17. What do you plan to do after university?

Appendix F: Example Interview Questions for Staff

1. Can you just briefly say your name and what your role is at the university?
2. How would you describe your role (what you do) as a tutor/ lecturer/ academic learning advisor?
3. Can you think of an example of a 'good' learning experience – what was it like?
4. Is there any particular type of learning and teaching approach you personally prefer? (e.g. lectures, seminars, workshops etc.)
5. Can you give an example of a 'bad' learning experience – what was it like?
6. Have you noticed that students sometimes skip classes? If so, why do you think they do this?
7. Are there any ways in which you are planning to change the learning experience/the way you teach? How? Can you give an example?
8. Do any of your modules involve online learning? How does that work? Is it different from face-to-face learning? How?
9. How do you interact with students on your modules outside the classroom? (tutorials, Moodle, online discussion, social media etc.?)
10. Do you think student expectations have changed at all over the last few years? If so, how?
11. What do you personally think about the idea that students are customers or consumers? Do you see them as consuming higher education? Why? Why not?
12. Do you think the level of fees makes a difference to students? How?
13. Do you think the discipline/subject they are studying makes a difference to those views?

Appendix G: Examples of Working Documents

This appendix includes examples of working documents which were created to aid the analysis. These examples do not aim to fully represent the process and further analysis also happened during the drafting and re-drafting chapters. Writing is integral to the process of analysis as a way of working through ideas (Gibson, 2009.)

Example 1: Interview Notes

Example 2 Timeline of Student Forum meeting

Example 3 PowerPoint slide showing constructions of students

Example 4 Extract from annotated transcript

Example 5: From constructions to discourses

Example 6: Mapping of Potential Discourses

Example 7: Describing a discourse: 'Students under Pressure'

Example 8: Applying Parker's (1992) criteria for identifying discourses:
'Students under pressure'

The table below maps the activities and outputs against three stages of analysis.

Task	Activities	Example provided
1. Identify/Create text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcription. A process of listening, transcribing and checking • Read and re-read many times • Read the notes written up just after the interview/observation • Load in NVivo. Print out each transcript, make notes and annotate • For Group interviews or Student Forum meetings, create summary timeline for each transcript noting key phases of the text. 	<p>Example 1 Interview notes</p> <p>Example 2 Timeline of Student Forum meeting</p>

Task	Activities	Example provided
2. Identify constructions of students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List the constructions and consider what each construction achieves in the context. • Review the constructions across the texts. Note any absences. • Write up a description of the student constructions for each university. • Create a table of constructions. Consider overlaps between constructions. • Share draft ideas through presentation to doctoral seminar 	<p>See Appendices C and D. See Table 1 (Chapter 4) and Table 3 (Chapter 6)</p> <p>Example 3 PowerPoint slide</p>
3. Identify discourses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft a list of potential discourses. Look at the definition of big 'D' Discourses (Gee, 2015) • Re-read the texts and highlight examples of these discourses. • Write up a definition of each discourse • Think about how the discourse functions in connection with other discourses. • Compare discourses against the criteria (Parker, 1992) 	<p>Example 4 Mapping Discourses</p> <p>See Table 2 (Chapter 4) and Table 4 (Chapter 5)</p> <p>Example 5 and 6</p> <p>Example 7 Example 8 Evaluation of discourses</p>

Example 1: Interview Notes

Interview Notes – (Year 2, Business Students)

Location: Classroom University A

Setting: Standard classroom, recently decorated – new tables and chairs. Quiet.

Pre-interview: Students were waiting outside the classroom. The interviews were originally planned to be separate, but they requested to do the interview together. They seemed cheerful and happy to help. We briefly discussed how a paired interview might work.

Main body: The dynamics seemed to work – one being a rep and the other a friend from the same subject area.

The ideas that stood out:

- They want clear directions – tension here with the idea of a student as independent
- How much they still talk as if they are at school – use the word ‘teacher’ rather than lecturer, want discipline
- Their demands are not unreasonable of staff – e.g. punctuality
- They mention the importance of feeling connected/ having a connection with staff (also in the pilot study)
- Out of class they want emails asking them how they are doing and if they need any help – they want to feel in their comfort zone all the time. Where does it end?
- They are looking for individual personalised feedback – tension here with the constraints of the mass system
- They reject the idea of being consumers – very clear on this - they are buying the right to be part of an institution
- Motivation comes from family pressures, making family proud rather than from their own desires, which have been suppressed
- Both prepared to put aside their preferred paths on advice of family e.g. choosing business over art
- Continual mention of a task-oriented approach - ‘focus’ and ‘engagement’ (transaction)
- Want to participate and be included
- Recognition of social anxiety – students fear of asking questions in front of peers
- The absence of talk about ‘debt’ – it is Student Finance that is funding. There is recognition of the cost by the student who is working at Waitrose in the year that Student Finance won’t fund
- Importance of sixth form in shaping ideas of university – focus on reputation and rankings by university advisors

Post-interview

- University as a struggle – not intellectually but against temptations offered by the lifestyle – e.g. going out clubbing, out to eat, to the beach etc
- Students are not really aggressive in wanting more, but demand is increasing e.g. expecting chatty emails from staff, very specific guidance
- Is the introduction of formative feedback encouraging a dependency? Comfort blanket?
- The importance of the personal tutor. Students want consistency – the successful personal tutoring in year 1 was not carried out in year 2. There is a danger in disrupting relationships if new schemes are discontinued – it just creates dissatisfaction.
- They didn’t seem to be aggressive about poor teaching – students voting with their feet by leaving in the break.
- Confidence of students is mentioned again.
- Stress on the value of face to face communication. Skipping lectures is recognised as not a good strategy, but it is a calculated one – students do work at home (as suggested in the pilot) It still happens despite the new 2 day timetable.
- There is some recognition of the social aspects of learning, particularly by the student who has been to a different university
- Idea of sacrifice – both have given up something they like doing to be at university – one an offer of a job as a sales exec, and the other a place at art college
- The rep adds experience – able to compare with a previous experience at university

Method

- How far does the friendship affect the interview – do they just tend to agree with each other?
- They seemed relaxed though in a way that they might not have been alone – note they both described themselves as shy/quiet
- Sometimes they talk at the same time and this overlap will make the transcription more difficult
- Some of the language they use is very informal and grammatically incorrect – how far will this be reflected in the transcript?

Example 2: Timeline – Student Forum meeting

Start	Participant	Section	Comment	Approx. Line
0.00	All	Introductions	Going round the circle	
2.50	B and W	Aims	How shall we run the meeting?	39
6.00	P1	Year 3	Can we have materials in advance?	80
15:50	P1	Year 3	Business Society Opportunity (Not relevant/transcribed)	201
20:25	P2	Year 3	Can we have a briefing for the Business Project?	204
26:11	P2	Year 3	Lectures are not engaging	290
27:37	P2	Year 3	Email response times 'It's kind of a service standard'	318
36:25	P3	Year 2	Timetabling – gaps between classes 'It's just like a waste of time'	432
41:25	P3	Year 2	'Lectures aren't really relevant'	486
49:30	P5	Year 1	Assessment and feedback timeliness 'extremely worried and quite a bit frantic'	592
59:45	P5	Year 1	Consistency of information 'There's so many contradictions'	721
1:10	P5	Year 1	'Everyone loves Accounting'	864
1:11	P7	Year 1	Compressed Timetabling 'People are dozing off'	877
1:16	P4	Year 3	Information on Study Abroad 'Like how can we finance it?'	954
1:24	P4	Year 3	Visiting Lecturers 'Are they under the same rules?'	1019
1:26	P4	Year 3	Lecture Capture 'What's not to like?'	1042

Example 3: PowerPoint Slide showing constructions of students

The following was a provisional set of student constructions presented at a doctoral student seminar at UCL, IOE on 22 Nov 2019

Business Partner – a form of partnership arrangement between the university and students

Community member – values participation in the university or family community

Critical thinker – questions, engages with topics and ideas in an original way

Disengaged learner – does not participate and has poor attendance

Engaged learner – interested in learning and participates

Explorer – wants to explore their own potential

Future employee – directs efforts towards securing future employment

Independent learner – is resourceful in gaining new knowledge and relies on own abilities

Investor – anticipates that investments made now will bring future benefit

Mini-adult – inexperienced and not ready for the big wide world

Partner – a form of student engagement where joint staff and student efforts enable positive change

Party-goer – prioritises socialising over academic study, compared to the 'sober friend'

Pawn – disempowered and manipulated by the university and the higher education system

Paying-customer – pays fees and expects services in return

Social learner – collaborates with other students and shares learning

Provisional and
emerging
conceptualisations
of students

Example 4: Extract from annotated transcript

This is an example of a section of a paired interview. Colours were used to highlight potential constructions and discourses.

106 DG: Now, thinking about lecturers. Can you think of an example of a good lecturer—what are they like? ¶

107 like? ¶

108 A: I'm quite a quiet person. And one of my seminar teachers she participates everyone. ¶

109 L: She engages with the whole class. ¶

110 A: Yes, she engages with the whole class. For example if I was quiet for a whole one hour she would make him talk. I think that's really important to get other students' opinions on things and making them talk and being more confident. ¶

111 make him talk. I think that's really important to get other students' opinions on things and making them talk and being more confident. ¶

112 them talk and being more confident. ¶

113 L: That way you've got everyone involved and you've got everyone's input. ¶

114 A: And just emailing them, telling them 'hope you guys are well and you know, everything is good' ¶

115 L: I've seen especially when the teacher involves you in the lesson you learn more. Because you feel as if they are engaging with you and so you feel a type of connection, like we have something going here. They're trying to teach you something, so especially when a person is quiet. I've got a teacher actually in my last seminar and he was literally 'you, give me the answer!' And I just said whatever

116 as if they are engaging with you and so you feel a type of connection, like we have something going here. They're trying to teach you something, so especially when a person is quiet. I've got a teacher actually in my last seminar and he was literally 'you, give me the answer!' And I just said whatever

117 actually in my last seminar and he was literally 'you, give me the answer!' And I just said whatever

118 actually in my last seminar and he was literally 'you, give me the answer!' And I just said whatever

119 was in my head. It was the wrong answer. He told me the right one and he said 'I know why you thought that but this is what you should be thinking'. And that made me understand more. Lecturers like that. All of them—they're all perfect! [A laughs. L laughs] ¶

120 thought that but this is what you should be thinking'. And that made me understand more. Lecturers like that. All of them—they're all perfect! [A laughs. L laughs] ¶

121 like that. All of them—they're all perfect! [A laughs. L laughs] ¶

122 DG: I doubt it! [laughs] ¶

123 L: There are obviously—I've got one seminar teacher. He's in for one day a week. He's told us he teaches at a different institutions. So when he comes in the class it's more relaxed, it's reading off the board, it's kind of a bit.. ¶

124 teaches at a different institutions. So when he comes in the class it's more relaxed, it's reading off the board, it's kind of a bit.. ¶

125 the board, it's kind of a bit.. ¶

126 A: All over the place ¶

127 L: All over the place. I think we might be in the same class? ¶

128 DG: What do you mean? ¶

129 L: We've got the lecture slides, the PowerPoint slides and that's what we learn off. But if you're not going to expand or engage us or involve us in the work, or if you're just reading off, which we can do on the laptops at home, I don't feel I learn as much. ¶

130 going to expand or engage us or involve us in the work, or if you're just reading off, which we can do on the laptops at home, I don't feel I learn as much. ¶

131 on the laptops at home, I don't feel I learn as much. ¶

132 DG: So you like the face-to-face? ¶

133 L: It's the best. It's the best thing. ¶

134 A: In one of my seminars there's these girls that are always sitting at the back. And they're constantly talking. And the seminar teacher won't say anything even though it's distracting the whole class. Even though people are looking back, she wouldn't say anything. And the students were telling them to be quiet and they still wouldn't listen. I mean, obviously we're more independent—we don't need that guidance—but I feel like if someone's disrupting for so long you should tell them ¶

135 In one of my seminars there's these girls that are always sitting at the back. And they're constantly talking. And the seminar teacher won't say anything even though it's distracting the whole class. Even though people are looking back, she wouldn't say anything. And the students were telling them to be quiet and they still wouldn't listen. I mean, obviously we're more independent—we don't need that guidance—but I feel like if someone's disrupting for so long you should tell them ¶

136 Even though people are looking back, she wouldn't say anything. And the students were telling them to be quiet and they still wouldn't listen. I mean, obviously we're more independent—we don't need that guidance—but I feel like if someone's disrupting for so long you should tell them ¶

137 to be quiet and they still wouldn't listen. I mean, obviously we're more independent—we don't need that guidance—but I feel like if someone's disrupting for so long you should tell them ¶

138 that guidance—but I feel like if someone's disrupting for so long you should tell them ¶

139 L: Ask them can you please leave. ¶

140 A: Just leave if you don't want to be here. ¶

Construction: ¶
'Engaged learner' in a dialogue with staff ¶

Obligations of staff portrayed as going beyond, accountable for checking on learning ¶

'Delivering learning'—narrowing scope—'telling' answers. ¶

'Delivering learning'—unintended consequences ¶

'Disengaged learner' ¶

Example 5: From constructions to discourses

This table shows how the analysis moved from thinking about constructions of the student to how these positions connect with wider conversations.

	Associated Constructions	Common function	Proposed Discourse Must relate to pedagogical relationships
1	Struggler Novice Mini-adult Engaged learner	Struggling: views education as tied up with everyday life, a struggle sometimes played out in private mental struggles	'Students-under-Pressure' (wording allows for pressure to be positive or negative)
2	Strategic learner Paying customer Investor Future employee Business partner	Investing: focused on outputs, as an individual purchaser of education and views education as a private good	'Satisfying the customer' (broader than investment or employability, wording hints at student satisfaction)
3	Party-goer Disengaged-learner Pawn	Rebelling: challenging what it means to be a student and resisting traditional constructions of pedagogical relationships	'Exercising autonomy' (more positive than rebelling and less judgemental)
4	Engaged learner Critical thinker Independent Learner	Learning: focused on the process of learning, as primarily a learner and leaves open the possibility of viewing education as a public good	'Trajectories of student development' (wording reflects the vocabulary of learning and teaching specialists and focus on paths to student development)
5	Pawn Paying customer Partner	Connecting: Focused on the way the student and staff interpret obligations as they interact	'Contractual obligations' (alludes to other forms of obligations, e.g. social and moral)

Example 6: Mapping of Potential Discourses

This table shows potential links with other discourses and whether the discourses were strongly or weakly represented across the data.

	Discourse	Associated Discourses	Comment
1	Community	Family	Variable and uneven across the data (Weak).
2	Contractual obligations	Satisfying the Customer Entitlement	Trying to reinforce obligations of staff and students. Links to the institutional environment and policy context.(Strong)
2	Exercising Autonomy	Creating independent earners Delivering learning	Accounts show range of ways that students resist expected ways of learning. Note – constructions which leave out studying, e.g. ‘party-goer’ (Strong)
3	Knowledge creation	Research-led teaching	Present in university documents but not strong in the rest of the data. (Weak)
4	Partnership	Student Engagement Co-production	Surprisingly few references to partnership in student and staff accounts. Student engagement understood in different ways. (Weak)
5	Satisfying the customer	Student-as-consumer Paying customer Service provision Employability Investment Transactional learning Delivering Learning	Link to many other discourse and constructions of students as customer, business partner, future employee and investor. (Strong)
6	Students under pressure	Development trajectories of students Employability Staff under pressure Vulnerability Parenting Infantilization	Note: Absent from university documents. Pressure to achieve – hence link to student development. Pressure to assure their future – link to employability. Note lack of confidence as students constructed as mini-adults, novices. Range of pressures, but ‘debtor’ construction is not prevalent. Imbalance of power in relationships, but students exercise autonomy. (Strong)
7	Student Development	Creating Independent Learners Transformation Delivering learning	Range of discourses reflecting different ways of facilitating learning. Links to student constructions as engaged learner/disengaged learner, critical thinker, social learner, novice.(Strong)
8	Transformation	Employability Developing life chances Graduate success	Absence in student talk, but present in university documents. Note: students not seeing themselves as ‘disadvantaged’.(Weak)

Example 7: Describing a discourse: 'Students under pressure'

The study identified the idea that students described themselves as struggling. A review of transcripts from the main study showed that the idea of struggling is complex. Students described themselves as under stress or under pressure, but this could be associated with study or with home life and could be described in both a positive and a negative way. Relevant constructions of the student include: 'struggler'; 'min-adult'; 'novice' and 'engaged learner'. When associated with intellectually demanding work, then being under pressure was portrayed as a short-term and necessary part of being a student. The pressure was also tied up with other aspects of student lives such as pressures from family, financial pressures and concern about future job prospects. The word 'pressure' rather than 'stress' is appropriate because the word 'stress' has medical connotations and the students did not talk about pressure as a medical condition.

Who is deploying this discourse? Both staff and students in University A and B. Note the absence of this discourse in university documents.

What are the associated values and beliefs? Students are experiencing pressures around fitting in academic studies with their lives beyond their studies.

What ideas are legitimised or undermined by this discourse? It legitimises the idea of student lives as complex. This contrasts with the homogenised view of students typically put forward by policymakers. It undermines the idea of the student as just a scholar. Students in the study rarely constructed themselves as scholars or researchers.

What subject positions are created by this discourse? Students are positioned as strugglers and strategic learners and staff become a resource.

What was the function of the discourse? The discourse of the 'students under pressure' was deployed in this study to highlight practical difficulties facing students rather than openly discuss mental health issues

What did this suggest about pedagogical relationships? This suggests that pedagogical relationships are not developed in isolation and local contexts are important.

Give an example of how it connects to other discourses? Connects to 'exercising autonomy' as students under pressure justify their decisions about how they engage with their studies based on being under pressure in different ways.

What are the implications of this discourse? The discourse highlights a tension between constructing the student as coping with pressure or as vulnerable. It links to ideas of self management, mental health and wellbeing. Minimising the discourse of 'students-under-pressure' as a matter of juggling priorities reinforces the idea of pressure as a personal issue to be individually managed and places responsibility on the student to cope.

Each discourse was evaluated against a further set of criteria (see Example 8 below).

Example 8: Applying Parker's (1992) criteria for identifying discourses:

Adapted and applied to the discourse of 'Students under pressure'

	Criteria*	Understanding	Example/notes:
1	A discourse is realised in texts	Discourses are actualised by means of texts and go beyond individual intentions. Discourse analysis, then, involves turning objects into texts, and locating those texts in discourses.	Analysis of interview conversations and meetings find discourses which go beyond what one individual says. The pattern of conversations across contexts is important rather than individual talk. 'Students under pressure' occurs across transcripts from both institutions.
2	A discourse is about objects	Previous instances of the discourse and other related discourses are alluded to in talk.	Different people talk about the discourse in different situations. Students and staff compare, e.g. pressures at university compared to 'A level', pressures in year 3 compared to year 1 of studies
3	A discourse contains subjects	What 'role' are they having to adopt to tell or hear this message?	'Students under pressure' positions students as vulnerable or suffering or potentially subject to mental health issues. Alternatively, it can position the student as intellectually challenged. A staff member might take the role of a parent, e.g. normalise the stress as part of the development trajectory. Lecturer in loco parentis.
4	A discourse is a coherent set of meanings	Identify examples which paint a 'reality' that can be distilled into statements about that reality.	'Students under pressure' e.g. statements about how students portray the different sources of pressure – such as finance, family, work pressures or how pressure is normalised or portrays students as vulnerable
5	A discourse refers to other discourses	Identify contradictions between different ways of describing something. Consider the interrelationship between different discourses in an analysis.	'Students under pressure' refers to other discourses: e.g. 'exercising autonomy' - a way of talking that students deploy to justify their actions when under pressure and focuses on the strength of the student as a decision-maker rather than vulnerability.

	Criteria*	Understanding	Example/notes:
6	A discourse reflects on its own way of speaking	<p>Consider the opposite position implied.</p> <p>Consider others' understanding of a discourse to bring it out.</p> <p>(1) Reflect on the terminology being used; (2) treat the discourse itself as an object; and (3) reflect on the term used to describe the discourse.</p>	<p>'Students under pressure' –the alternative was considered where the students are not under pressure e.g. 'the party-goer' or those who are 'exercising autonomy'.</p> <p>Both staff and student ways of talking about 'students under pressure' contribute to the discourse. The analysis leads to thinking about 'staff under pressure'.</p> <p>(1) Consider also terms such as 'vulnerability'</p> <p>(2) Discourse as an object – link to other instances e.g. in the press, concerns about mental health</p> <p>(3) Reflect on how pressure can be deployed in both positive and negative ways and hence the term for the discourse should not be too negative, e.g. 'students in crisis'</p>
7	A discourse is historically located	<p>A discourse refers to past references to those objects.</p> <p>The structure and force of discourses can only be described by showing other instances of that discourse and explaining how it arose.</p>	<p>Link here to student as an object of marketisation in policy documents.</p> <p>Link to recent concerns about student mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Historical link here to the myths/stories about student life, particularly stress in year 3 and stress as a rite of passage.</p> <p>And the student who struggles and survives the adventure.</p>

Source*: Parker, I. (1992) *Discourse Dynamics: critical analysis for social and individual psychology*. London: Routledge.

References

- Adams, R. (2017) 'Almost half of all young people in England go on to higher education', *The Guardian*, 28 September. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/sep/28/almost-half-of-young-people-in-england-go-on-to-higher-education>. (Accessed: 4 January 2019).
- Antaki, C., Billig, M., Edwards, D., & Potter, J. (2003) 'Discourse analysis means doing analysis: A Critique of Six Analytic Shortcomings'. *Discourse Analysis Online*, 1(1). Available at: <http://www.shu.ac.uk/daol/previous/v1/n1/index.htm> (Accessed: 1 Feb 2016).
- Ashwin, P., Abbas, A., & McLean, M. (2013) 'Representations of a high-quality system of undergraduate education in English higher education policy documents', *Studies in Higher Education*, 40 (4), 610-623.
- Aspelin, J. (2011) 'Co-Existence and Co-Operation: The two-dimensional conception of education'. *Education*, 1(2), 6-11.
- Atkinson, P.A., & Coffey, A. (1997) 'Analysing documentary realities', in Silverman, D. (ed.) *Qualitative research: Theory, method and practice*. London: Sage, pp. 45-62.
- Attwood, R. (2008) 'Holiday brochure' prospectuses can create unrealistic picture'. *Times Higher Education*, 17 April 2008. Available at: <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/cn/news/holiday-brochure-prospectuses-can-create-unrealistic-picture/401509.article> (Accessed: 20 July 2019).
- Bagshaw, A. & McVitty, D. (2020) *Influencing Higher Education Policy*, Abingdon: Routledge.
- Bailey, J.J. (2000) 'Students as Clients in a Professional/Client Relationship', *Journal of Management Education*, 24(3), 353-365.
- Baker, S., & Brown, B. (2007) 'Images of excellence: constructions of institutional prestige and reflections in the university choice process', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 28(3), 377-391.
- Barnett, R., (2011) 'The marketised university: defending the indefensible', in Molesworth, M., Scullion, R. and E. Nixon, (eds.) *The Marketisation of Higher Education and the Student as Consumer*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 39-51.
- Barnett, R., (2013) 'The end of mystery and the perils of explicitness' in Callender, C. and P. Scott, (eds.) *Browne and Beyond: Modernising English higher education*. London: University of London IOE Press, 73-88.
- Bay, D., & Daniel, H. (2001) 'The Student Is Not the Customer – An Alternative Perspective', *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 11(1), 1-20.
- BBC News (2018) 'Ed Farmer inquest: Student died from 'toxic effects' of alcohol'. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-tyne-45979243> (Accessed: 26 October 2018).

- Becher, T. & Trowler, P.R. (2001) *Academic Tribes and Territories: Intellectual Enquiry and the Cultures of Disciplines*. Philadelphia, PA: SHRE and Open University Press.
- Beetham, H., & Sharpe, R. (eds.) (2007) *Rethinking Pedagogy for a Digital Age: designing for 21st century learning*, London: Routledge.
- Belfield, C., Briton, J., Dearden, L., & van der Erve, L. (2017) *Higher Education Funding in England: Past, Present and Options for the Future* (IFS Briefing Note BN211), London: The Institute for Fiscal Studies.
- BERA (British Educational Research Association) (2011) *Ethical guidelines for educational research*. London: BERA.
- Beutel, D. (2010) 'The nature of pedagogic teacher-student interactions: a phenomenographic study', *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 37 (2), 77-91.
- Biggs, J. (2003) *Teaching for Quality Learning at University* (2nd ed.) Buckingham: The Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press.
- Billig, M., Condor, S., Edwards, D., Gane, M., Middleton, D., & Radley, A. (1988) *Ideological dilemmas: A social psychology of everyday thinking*. London: Sage.
- Bloom, B.S. (1956) *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives Handbook One: Cognitive Domain*. London: Longmans.
- Boden, R. & Nedeava, M. (2010) 'Employing discourse: universities and graduate 'employability'', *Journal of Educational Policy*, 25 (1), 37-54.
- Boliver, V. (2015) 'Are there distinctive clusters of higher and lower status universities in the UK?', *Oxford Review of Education*, 41 (5), 608-627.
- Boyer, E. L. (1990) *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*. New Jersey: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.
- Brennan, J., Durazzi, N., & Sene, T. (2013) *Things we know and don't know about the Wider Benefits of Higher Education: A review of the recent literature*. Department for Business Innovation & Skills (DBIS).
- Brooks, R. (2003) 'Young people's higher education choices: The role of family and friends', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 24(3), 283-297.
- Brooks, R. (2017) 'The construction of higher education students in English policy documents', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 39 (6), 745-761.
- Brooks, R. (2018) 'Understanding the higher education student in Europe: a comparative analysis', *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 48 (4), 500-517.
- Brooks, R., Byford, K., & Sela, K. (2015) 'The changing role of students' unions within contemporary higher education', *Journal of Education Policy*, 30 (2), 165-181.

- Brown, R. (2014) *Competition and Choice in Undergraduate Education*. Available at: <http://cdbu.org.uk/competition-and-choice-in-undergraduate-education/> (Accessed: 01 February 2014).
- Brown, R., & Carasso, H. (2013) *Everything for Sale? The Marketisation of Higher Education*, London: Routledge.
- Bruce, T. (2012) *Universities and constitutional change in the UK: the impact of devolution on the higher education sector*. Available at: <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2012/04/16/universities-and-constitutional-change-in-the-uk-the-impact-of-devolution-on-the-higher-education-sector/> (Accessed: 23 July 2019).
- Burr, V. (2003) *Social Constructionism* (2nd ed.) London: Routledge.
- Busby, E. (2018) 'One in five university students say they do not drink any alcohol', *Independent*, 24 September. Available at: [studentshttps://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/students-drinking-university-teetotal-freshers-week-nus-alcohol-consumption-a8549381.html](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/students-drinking-university-teetotal-freshers-week-nus-alcohol-consumption-a8549381.html) (Accessed: 26 October 2018).
- Callender, C., & Scott, P. (2013) *Browne and Beyond*. London: University of London IOE Press.
- Carless, D. (2006) 'Differing perceptions in the feedback process', *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(2), 219–233.
- Cassidy J., & Shaver, P.R. (eds.) (2008) *Handbook of Attachment theory, research, and clinical applications* (2nd ed.) New York: Guilford Press.
- CFPU (2010) *Manifesto for the Public University*. Available at: <https://publicuniversity.org.uk/manifesto/> (Accessed: 16 July 2019).
- Chandler, D. (2007) *Semiotics: the basics* (2nd ed.) Routledge: London.
- Chapleo, C. & O'Sullivan, H. (2017) 'Contemporary thought in higher education marketing', *Journal of Marketing in Higher Education*, 27 (2), 159-161.
- Chartered Association of Business Schools (CABS) (2019) 'TEF at subject level: summary of pilot guide for 2018-2019. Available at: <https://charteredabs.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Summary-%E2%80%93-TEF-at-subject-level-pilot-guide-2018-19-in-template.pdf> (Accessed 1 November 2019).
- Christie, H. (2009) 'Emotional journeys: young people and transitions to university', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 30 (2), 123-136.
- Clayson, D. E., & Haley, D. A. (2005) 'Marketing Models in Education: Students as Customers, Products, or Partners', *Marketing Education Review*, 15 (1), 1–10.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007) *Research Methods in Education* (5th ed.) London: Routledge Falmer.

- Collini, S. (2012) *What are universities for?* Penguin UK.
- Conrad, P. (2012) 'What are Universities For? By Stefan Collini – review', *The Guardian*, 19 February. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/feb/19/what-universities-for-collini-review> (Accessed: 17 December 2012).
- Costley, C., Elliott, G., & Gibbs, P. (2010) *Doing Work-based Research: Approaches to Enquiry for Insider-Researchers*. London: Sage Publications.
- Cribb, A., & Gewirtz, S. (2013) 'The hollowed-out university? A critical analysis of changing institutional and academic norms in UK higher education', *Discourse*, 34(3), 338–350.
- Davies, M., & Barnett, R. (2015) *The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Thinking in Higher Education*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dearing, R. (1997) *National Committee of Enquiry into Higher Education*, London: The Stationery Office.
- Deci, .E., & Ryan, R. M. (eds.) (2002) *Handbook of Self-Determination Research*. New York: University of Rochester Press.
- Denscombe, M. (2010) *The Good Research Guide for small-scale social research projects* (4th ed.) Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Department for Business Innovation and Skills (2009) *Higher Ambitions: The future of universities in a knowledge economy*. London: DBIS.
- Department for Business Innovation and Skills (2011) *Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System*. London: DBIS.
- Department for Business Innovation and Skills (2015) *Fulfilling our Potential: teaching excellence, social mobility, and student choice*. London: DBIS.
- Dickerson, C., Jarvis, J., & Stockwell, L. (2016) 'Staff – student collaboration: student learning from working together to enhance educational practice in higher education', *Teaching in Higher Education*, 21 (3), 249-265.
- Dunne, E., & Zandstra, R. (2011) '*Students as Change Agents: new ways of engaging with learning and teaching in Higher Education*'. Bristol: University of Exeter/ESCalate/Higher Education Academy.
- Edley, N. (2001) 'Interpretative repertoires, ideological dilemmas and subject positions', in Wetherell, M., Taylor, S and Yates, S. (eds.) *Discourse as Data: A Guide for Analysis*, pp. 189-228, London: Sage.
- Edwards, D., & Potter, J. (1992) *Discursive Psychology*. London: Sage.
- Ek, A.-C., Ideland, M., Jönsson, S., & Malmberg, C. (2013) 'The tension between marketisation and academisation in higher education', *Studies in Higher Education*, 38(9), 1305–1318.

- Emerson, L., & Mansvelt. J. (2014) "If they're the customer, I'm the meat in the sandwich: an exploration of tertiary teachers' metaphorical constructions of teaching", *Higher Education Research & Development*, 33(3), 469-482.
- Emery, C., Kramer, T., & Tian, R. (2001) 'Customers vs. products: adopting an effective approach to business students', *Quality Assurance in Education*, 9 (2), 110–115.
- Fairclough, N. (2001) *Language and power*. Essex: Pearson Education.
- Fairclough, N. (2002) 'Critical discourse analysis and the marketisation of public discourse: the universities'. *Discourse & Society*, 4(2), 133–168.
- Fairclough, N. (2010) *Critical Discourse Analysis: the critical study of language* (2nd ed.). London: Longman.
- Fraser, B. J., & Walberg, H. J. (2005) 'Research on teacher-student relationships and learning environments: context, retrospect and prospect', *International Journal of Educational Research*, 43(1–2), 103–109.
- Fulford, A. (2013) 'Satisfaction, settlement and exposition: conversation and the university tutorial', *Ethics and Education*, 8(2), 114–122.
- Fulford, A. (2018) 'Contracting with students: re-thinking higher education as invitation to treat', paper presented to the Centre for Higher Education Research (CHES), Institute of Education (IOE), UCL, London, 17 April.
- Furedi, F. (2017) *What's happened to the University? A sociological exploration of its infantilisation*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Garrison, D.R. (1997) 'Self-directed learning: toward a comprehensive model', *Adult Education Quarterly*, 48 (11), 18-33.
- Gee, J. P. (2011) 'Discourse Analysis: What makes it critical?', in Rogers, R. *Critical Discourse Analysis in Education* (2nd ed.) Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 23-45.
- Gee, J. P. (2014a) *An introduction to Discourse Analysis: theory and method* (4th ed.) Abingdon: Routledge.
- Gee, P. (2014b) *How to do Discourse Analysis: a toolkit* (2nd ed.) New York: Routledge.
- Gee, J. P. (2015) 'Discourse, small-d, Big D', in Tracy, K., Ilie, C., and Sandel, T. (eds.) *International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction*, Wiley-Blackwell and the International Communication Association, [Online]. Available at: <http://jamespaulgee.com/pdfs/Big%20D,%20Small%20d.pdf> (Accessed: 31 May 2019).
- Gergen, K. J. (1985) 'The social constructionist movement in modern psychology', *American Psychologist*, 40 (3), 266-275.
- Gibbs, G. (2001) 'Higher education as a market: a problem or solution?' *Studies in Higher Education*, 26 (1), 85-94.

- Gibbs, G. R. (2007) *Analyzing Qualitative Data*. London: Sage.
- Gibson, W. & Brown, A. (2009) *Working with Qualitative Data*. London: Sage.
- Gourlay, L. (2015) 'Student engagement' and the tyranny of participation', *Teaching in Higher Education*, 20 (4), 402-411.
- Gresty, K. A., & Edwards-Jones, A. (2012) 'Experiencing research-informed teaching from the student perspective: insights from developing an undergraduate e-journal', *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 43(1), 153–162.
- Gross, M.A., Hogler, R., & Gross, M.A. (2005) 'What the shadow knows: exploring the hidden dimensions of the consumer metaphor in management education', *Journal of Management Education*, 29(3), 3–16.
- Groves, M., Sellars, C., Smith, J., & Barber, A. (2015) 'Factors affecting student engagement: a case study examining two cohorts of students attending a post-1992 university in the United Kingdom', *International Journal of Higher Education*, 4 (2), 27-37.
- Guerrero, M., & Rod, A. B. (2013) 'Engaging in office hours: a study of student-faculty interaction and academic performance', *Journal of Political Science Education*, 9(4), 403–416.
- Gunn, A. (2018) 'Metrics and methodologies for measuring teaching quality in higher education: developing the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)', *Educational Review*, 70(2), 129–148.
- Hagenauer, G., & Volet, S. E. (2014) 'Teacher–student relationship at university: an important yet under-researched field', *Oxford Review of Education*, 40(3), 370–388.
- Halbesleben, J., Becker, J., & Buckley, M. (2003) 'Considering the labor contributions of students: an alternative to the student-as-customer metaphor', *Journal of Education for Business*, 78 (5), 255-258.
- Harrison, N., Chudry, F., Waller, R., & Hatt, S. (2015) 'Towards a typology of debt attitudes among contemporary young UK undergraduates', *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 39(1), 85–107.
- Harrison, N.(2019) 'Students-as-insurers: rethinking 'risk' for disadvantaged young people considering higher education in England'. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 22(6), 752–771.
- Harvey, L. & Morey, A. (2002) *Enhancing Employability, Recognising Diversity*, London: Universities UK and Careers Service Unit.
- Healey, M., & Jenkins, A. (2009) *Developing undergraduate research and enquiry*. York: The Higher Education Academy.
- Healey, M., Flint, A., & Harrington, K. (2014) *Engagement through partnership: students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education*. York: The Higher Education Academy.

- HEPI (Higher Education Policy Institute) (2012) *The Cost of the Government's Reforms of the Financing of Higher Education*. Oxford: HEPI.
- HEPI (Higher Education Policy Institute) (2018) *Two-thirds of students reject differential tuition fees for different courses*. Available at: <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2018/02/22/two-thirds-students-reject-differential-tuition-fees-different-courses/> (Accessed: 30 July 2019).
- Hibberd, J. (2005) *Unfolding Social Constructionism*, New York: Springer.
- Higher Education Academy (HEA) (2011) *The UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education*. York: Higher Education Academy. Available at: <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ukpsf> (Accessed: 27 January 2013).
- Hockings, C., Thomas, L., Ottaway, J., & Jones, R. (2018) 'Independent learning – what we do when you're not there', *Teaching in Higher Education*, 23(2), 145-161.
- Holmes, L. (2001) 'Graduate employability: the graduate identity approach', *Quality in Higher Education*, 7(1), 111–119.
- Holmwood, J. (2011) 'The Idea of a Public University', in Holmwood, J. (ed.) *A Manifesto for the Public University*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 12-26.
- Howie, P., & Bagnall, R. (2013) 'A critique of the deep and surface approaches to learning model', *Teaching in Higher Education*, 18 (4), 389-400.
- Hughes, G. (2019) 'Developing student research capability for a 'post-truth' world: three challenges for integrating research across taught programmes', *Teaching in Higher Education*, 24 (3), 394-411.
- Huxham, M., Hunter, M., McIntyre, A., Shilland, R., & McArthur, J. (2015) 'Student and teacher co-navigation of a course: following the natural lines of academic enquiry', *Teaching in Higher Education*, 20 (5), 530–541.
- Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) (2017) *Not by degrees: Improving student mental health in the UK's Universities*. Available at: <https://www.ippr.org/research/publications/not-by-degrees> (Accessed: 28 July 2019).
- IRHEFSF (Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance) (2010) *Securing a sustainable future for higher education: An independent review of higher education funding and student finance*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/31999/10-1208-securing-sustainable-higher-education-browne-report.pdf (Accessed: 2 August 2014).
- Jenkins, A. (2004) *A guide to the research evidence on teaching-research relations*. York: The Higher Education Academy. Available at: <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/guide-research-evidence-teaching-research-relations> (Accessed: 1 August 2019).

- Jensen, D. F. N. (2006) 'Metaphors as a Bridge to Understanding Educational and Social Contexts', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(1), 1–17.
- Johnson, R., & Deem, R. (2003) 'Talking of students: tensions and contradictions for the manager-academic and the university in contemporary higher education', *Higher Education*, 46, 289–314.
- Jorgensen M., & Philips, L. J. (2002) *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. London: Sage.
- Kahu, E. R. (2013) 'Framing student engagement in higher education', *Studies in Higher Education*, 38(5), 758–773.
- Kahu, E. R., & Nelson, K. (2018) 'Student engagement in the educational interface: understanding the mechanisms of student success', *Higher Education Research and Development*, 37 (1), 57-71.
- Kalafatis, S., & Ledden, L., (2013) 'Carry-over effects in perceptions of educational value'. *Studies in Higher Education*, 38(10), 1540–1561.
- Kendall, G. (2007) 'What is critical discourse analysis? Ruth Wodak in conversation with Gavin Kendall', *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 8(2) Art. 29. Available at: <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0702297> (Accessed: 30 July 2019).
- Kim, Y. (2011) 'The pilot study in qualitative inquiry: Identifying issues and learning lessons for culturally competent research', *Qualitative Social Work*, 10(2), 190–206.
- Knowles, M.S. (1970) *The modern practice of adult education: Andragogy vs. Pedagogy*. New York: Associated Press.
- Kvale, S. (1996) *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. London: Sage.
- Kvale, S. (2006) 'Dominance through interviews and dialogues'. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(3), 480–500.
- Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. (1985) *Hegemony and socialist strategy: towards a radical democratic politics*. London: Verso.
- Lambert, C. (2009) 'Pedagogies of participation in higher education: a case for research-based learning', *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 17(3) 295-309.
- Leathwood, C. (2006) 'Gender, equity and the discourse of the independent learner in higher education', *Higher Education*, 53 (4), 611-633.
- Leathwood, C., & O'Connell, P. (2003) 'It's a struggle': the construction of the 'new student' in higher education', *Journal of Education Policy*, 18(6), 597–615.
- Lee, A., & Green, B. (2009) 'Supervision as metaphor', *Studies in Higher Education*, 34(6), 615–630.

- Lizzio, A., & Wilson, K. (2009) 'Student participation in university governance: the role conceptions and sense of efficacy of student representatives on departmental committees', *Studies in Higher Education*, 34(1), 69–84.
- Lochner, L. (2011) 'Nonproduction benefits of higher education: crime, health and good citizenship' in Hamshek, S., Machin, S. & Woessmann, L. (eds.) *Handbook of the economics of education* (Vol. 4). Amsterdam: Elsevier Science, pp. 183-282.
- Locke, W. (2014) 'The intensification of rankings logic in an increasingly marketised higher education environment', *European Journal of Education*, 49(1), 77–90.
- Locke, W.; Verbik, L.; Richardson, J. T. E. & King, R. (2008) *Counting What Is Measured or Measuring What Counts? League Tables and Their Impact On Higher Education Institutions in England*. Bristol: Higher Education Funding Council for England.
- Lomas, L. (2007) 'Are students customers? Perceptions of academic staff', *Quality in Higher Education*, 13 (1), 31-44.
- Lynch, K. (2006) 'Neo-Liberalism and marketisation: the implications for higher education'. *European Educational Research Journal*, 5(1), 1–17.
- Maassen, P. (2014) 'A new social contract for higher education?' in Goastellec G. & Picard. F. (eds.) *Higher Education in Societies*, Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, pp. 33-50.
- Macfarlane, B. (2015) 'Student performativity in higher education : converting learning as a private space into a public performance', *Higher Education Research & Development*, 34(2), 338–350.
- Macfarlane, B. (2016) *Freedom to Learn: The threat to student academic freedom and why it needs to be reclaimed*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Mann, S. J., (2001) 'Alternative Perspectives on the Student Experience: Alienation and engagement', *Studies in Higher Education*, 26(1), 7–19.
- McManus, R., Haddock-Fraser, J. & Rands, P. (2017) 'A methodology to understand the choice of higher education institutions: the case of the UK, *Journal of Higher Education Policy Management*, 39 (4,) 390-405.
- Marginson, S. (1997) *Markets in Education*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Marginson, S. (2011) 'Higher education and the public good', *Higher Education Quarterly*, 65 (4) 411-433.
- Marginson, S. (2013) 'The impossibility of capitalist markets in higher education', *Journal of Education Policy*, 28(3), 353–370.
- Maringe, F. (2010) 'The student as consumer: affordances and constraints in a transforming higher education environment' in Molesworth, M., Scullion, R. & Nixon, E. (eds.), *The Marketisation of UK Higher Education: the Student as Consumer*. London: Routledge, pp. 1-20.

- Mark, E. (2013) 'Student satisfaction and the customer focus in higher education', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 35(1), 2–10.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2011) *Designing Qualitative Research* (5th ed.) Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- McCulloch, A. (2009) 'The student as co-producer: learning from public administration about the student-university relationship', *Studies in Higher Education*, 34(2), 171–183.
- McFadden, M., & Munns, G. (2002) 'Student engagement and the social relations of pedagogy', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 23(3), 357–366.
- McFarlane, K. J. (2016) 'Tutoring the tutors: supporting effective personal tutoring', *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 17 (1), 77-88.
- McGettigan, A. (2013) *The Great University Gamble: Money, Markets and the Future of Higher Education*, London: Pluto Press.
- McManus, R., Haddock-Fraser, J., & Rands, P. (2017) 'A methodology to understand student choice of higher education institutions: the case of the United Kingdom', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 39(4), 390–405.
- McMillan, J. J. & Cheney, G. (1996) 'The student as consumer: the implications and limitations of a metaphor', *Communication Education*, 45 (1), 1-15.
- McWilliam, E. (2016) 'Shifting centres: pedagogical relations in the era of big data', *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 19 (1), 40-55.
- Mercer, J. (2007) 'The challenges of insider research in educational institutions: wielding a double-edged sword and resolving delicate dilemmas', *Oxford Review of Education*, 33 (1,) 1-17.
- Merriam, S. B. (2001) 'Andragogy and self-directed learning: pillars of adult learning theory', *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 89, 3-13.
- Mezirow, J. (1991) *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J., & Taylor, E. W. (eds.) (2009) *Transformative learning in practice: Insights from community, workplace, and higher education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Molesworth, M., Nixon, E., & Scullion, R. (2009) 'Having, being and higher education: the marketisation of the university and the transformation of the student into consumer', *Teaching in Higher Education*, 14(3), 277–287.
- Molesworth, M., Nixon, E., & Scullion, R. (eds.) (2011) *The Marketisation of Higher Education and the Student as Consumer*, London: Routledge.
- Murphy, M., & Brown, T. (2012) 'Learning as relational: intersubjectivity and pedagogy in higher education', *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 31 (5), 843-654.

- Naidoo, R., & Jamieson, I. (2005) 'Empowering participants or corroding learning? Towards a research agenda on the impact of student consumerism in higher education', *Journal of Education Policy*, 20(3), 267–281.
- Naidoo, R., & Williams, J. (2014) 'The neoliberal regime in English higher education: charters, consumers and the erosion of the public good', *Critical Studies in Education*, 56(2), 208-223.
- Naidoo, R., Shankar, A., & Veer, E. (2011) 'The consumerist turn in higher education: policy aspirations and outcomes', *Journal of Marketing Management*, 27(11–12), 1142–1162.
- Neary, M., & Winn, J. (2009) 'Student as producer: reinventing the undergraduate curriculum', in Neary, M., Stevenson, H. & Bell, L. (eds.) *The future of higher education: policy, pedagogy and the student experience*. London: Continuum, pp.192-210.
- Newby, H. (2012) 'What are Universities For? By Stefan Collini', *The Independent*, 24 February. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/what-are-universities-for-by-stefan-collini-7422765.html> (Accessed: 17 December 2012).
- Ng Fat, L., Shelton, N., & Cable, N. (2018) 'Investigating the growing trend of non-drinking among young people; analysis of repeated cross-sectional surveys in England 2005–2015', *BMC Public Health*, 18 (1090), 1-10.
- Ng, C. L., & Forbes, J. (2009) 'Education as Service: the understanding of university experience through the service logic', *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 19(1), 38-64.
- Nixon, E., Scullion, R., & Hearn, R. (2016) 'Her majesty the student: marketised higher education and the narcissistic (dis)satisfactions of the student-consumer', *Studies in Higher Education*, 43(6), 927-943.
- Nixon, J. (2011) *Higher education and the public good*. London: Continuum.
- Nonhoff, M. (2017) Discourse analysis as critique, *Palgrave Communications* (3), 17074.
- Nordensvard, J. (2011) 'The consumer metaphor versus the citizen metaphor: different set of roles for students', in Molesworth, M., Scullion, R. and E. Nixon (eds.) *The Marketisation of Higher Education and the Student as Consumer*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 157-169.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2005) *Teachers matter: attracting, developing and remaining effective teachers*. Paris: OECD Publications. Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/34990905.pdf> (Accessed: 25 October 2018).
- Office for Students (OfS) (2018) 'Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework: Year Four procedural guidance'. Available at

https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/da96d15a-97e6-4732-a2f5-cb2473633932/ofs2018_45.pdf (Accessed: 1 November 2019).

- Parker, I. (1990) 'Discourse: definitions and contradictions', *Philosophical Psychology*, 3 (2-3), 187-204.
- Parker, I. (1992) *Discourse Dynamics: critical analysis for social and individual psychology*. London: Routledge.
- Parker, I. (2013) 'Discourse analysis: dimensions of critique in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 10 (3), 223-239.
- Pearce, J., & Down, B. (2011) 'Relational pedagogy for student engagement and success at university', *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 38 (4), 483-494.
- Perry, W. G. (1999) *Forms of Ethical and Intellectual Development in the College Years: A Scheme*. California: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Potter, J., & Edwards, D. (2001) 'Discursive Social Psychology', in Robinson, W.P and Giles, H. (eds.) *The New Handbook of Language and Social Psychology*. London: John Wiley, pp.103-118.
- Potter, J., & Wetherell, M. (1987) *Discourse and social psychology: beyond attitudes and behaviour*. London: Sage.
- QAA Scotland (Quality Assurance Agency for Scotland) (2011) *Graduates for the 21st century: integrating the enhancement themes outcomes and achievements*. QAA 416 11/11. Available at: www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/enhancement-themes/completed-enhancement-themes/graduates-forthe-21st-century (Accessed: 1 October 2018).
- Regan, J. (2012) 'The role obligations of students and lecturers in higher education', *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 46 (1), 14-24.
- Richardson, S., & Radloff, A. (2014) 'Allies in learning: critical insights into the importance of staff-student interactions in university education', *Teaching in Higher Education*, 19(6), 603-615.
- Robbins, L., (1963) *Higher Education Report of the Committee appointed by the Prime Minister under the Chairmanship of Lord Robbins 1961-1963*, (Cmnd. 2154). London: HMSO.
- Robson, C. (2011) *Real World Research* (3rd ed.) Malden: Blackwell Publishing.
- Rogers, R., Malancharuvil-berkes, E., Mosley, M., Hui, D., Joseph, O. G., & Joseph, G. O. G. (2012) 'Critical discourse analysis in education: a review of the literature', *Educational Research*, 75(3), 365-416.
- Romei, V. and Giles, C. (2019) 'Student loan correction adds £10bn to UK government deficit'. *Financial Times*, 21 June 2019. Available at

<https://www.ft.com/content/f0a5a732-9401-11e9-b7ea-60e35ef678d2> (Accessed: 7 February 2020).

- Rubin, H. J., and Rubin, I. S. (2005) *Qualitative Interviewing: The art of Hearing Data* (2nd ed.) CA: Sage.
- Rudy, W. (1984) *The universities of Europe, 1100–1914: a history*. Cranbury: New Jersey Associated Universities.
- Saarinen, T. (2008) 'Position of text and discourse analysis in higher education policy research', *Studies in Higher Education*, 33(6), 719–728.
- Sabri, D. (2010) 'Absence of the academic from higher education policy', *Journal of Educational Policy*, 25 (2), 191-205.
- Sampson, H. (2004) 'Navigating the waves: the usefulness of a pilot in qualitative research', *Qualitative Research*, 4 (3), 383-402.
- Santa Ana, O. (2002) *Brown Tide Rising: metaphors of Latinos in contemporary American public discourse*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Scott, P. (2012) 'It's 20 years since polytechnics became universities – and there's no going back', *The Guardian*, 3 September. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2012/sep/03/polytechnics-became-universities-1992-differentiation> (Accessed: 22 July 2019).
- Scott, S. (1999) 'The academic as service provider: is the customer 'always right'?' *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 21, 193–202.
- Silverman, D. (2011) *Interpreting Qualitative Data: A guide to the principles of qualitative research* (4th ed.) Sage: London.
- Smith, M. K. (2012) *What is pedagogy?* Available at: <http://infed.org/mobi/what-is-pedagogy/> (Accessed: 10 June 2019).
- Smith, K. (2014) 'Critical discourse analysis and higher education research' in *Theory and Method in Higher Education Research*. Published online: 20 August 2014, pp. 61-79. Available at: [https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-3628\(2013\)000009007](https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-3628(2013)000009007) (Accessed: 27 July 2019).
- Smith, R. (2016) 'An overview of research on student support: helping students to achieve or achieving institutional targets? Nurture or de-nature?', *Teaching in Higher Education*, 2517(June), 683–695.
- Sousa, S. B., and Magalhães, A. (2013) 'Discourse analysis in higher education research', *Theory and Method in Higher Education Research*, (9), 81-96.
- Speer, S. (2002) "Natural' and 'contrived' data: a sustainable distinction?' *Discourse Studies*, 4 (4), 511-525.

- Spiecker, B., (1984) 'The pedagogical relationship', *Oxford Review of Education*, 10(2), 203-209.
- Stephen, D. E., O'Connell, P., & Hall, M. (2008) "'Going the extra mile', 'fire-fighting', or laissez-faire? Re-evaluating personal tutoring relationships within mass higher education', *Teaching in Higher Education*, 13 (4), 449-460.
- Stevens, L.P. (2011) 'Locating the Role of the Critical Discourse Analyst', in Rogers, R. (ed.) *Critical Discourse in Education* (2nd ed.) New York: Routledge, 183-202.
- Streeting, W., & Wise, G. (2009) *Rethinking the values of higher education-consumption, partnership, community?* Gloucester: QAA.
- Taylor, C., & McCaig, C. (2014) *Evaluating the impact of number controls, choice and competition: an analysis of the student profile and the student learning environment in the new higher education landscape*. York: The Higher Education Academy.
- Taylor, E. W., & Cranton, P. (2013) 'A theory in progress? Issues in transformative learning theory', *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults*, 4(1), 33-47.
- Taylor, P., & Wilding, D. (2009) *Rethinking the values of higher education – the student as collaborator and producer? Undergraduate research as a case study*. Gloucester: The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA).
- Taylor, S. (2001a) 'Locating and Conducting Discourse Analytic Research', in Wetherell, M., Taylor, S. and Yates, S. (eds.) *Discourse as Data: A Guide for Analysis*, London: Sage, pp. 5-48.
- Taylor, S. (2001b) 'Evaluating and Applying Discourse Analytic Research', in Wetherell, M., Taylor, S., and Yates, S.J. (eds.) *Discourse as Data: A guide for analysis*, London: Sage, pp. 311-328.
- Temple, P., Callender, C., Grove, L., & Kersh, N. (2014) *Managing the student experience in a shifting higher education landscape*. York: Higher Education Academy.
- Thorpe, A., & Garside, D. (2017) '(Co) meta-reflection as a method for the professional development of academic middle leaders in higher education', *Management in Education*, Vol. 31(3), 111–7.
- Tight, M. (2013) 'Students: customers, clients or pawns?' *Higher Education Policy*, 26(3), 291–307.
- Tomlinson, M. (2007) 'Graduate employability and student attitudes and orientations to the labour market', *Journal of Education and Work*, 20(4), 285–304.
- Tomlinson, M. (2008) "'The degree is not enough': students' perceptions of the role of higher education credentials for graduate work and employability", *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 29 (1), 49–61.

- Tomlinson, M. (2012) 'Graduate employability: a review of conceptual and empirical themes', *Higher Education Policy*, 25 (4), 407-431.
- Tomlinson, M. (2013) 'End games? Consumer-based learning in higher education and its implications for lifelong learning', *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, 17 (4), 124-128.
- Tomlinson, M. (2014) *Exploring the impact of policy changes on student' attitudes and approaches to learning in higher education*. York: The Higher Education Academy.
- Tomlinson, M. (2015) 'Between instrumental and developmental learning: ambivalence in student values and identity positions in marketized UK higher education', *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 34 (5), 569-588.
- Tomlinson, M. (2016) 'Student perceptions of themselves as 'consumers' of higher education', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 5692(March), 1-15.
- Trowler, P. (2001) 'Captured by the discourse? The socially constitutive power of new higher education discourse in the UK', *Organization*, 8(2) 183-201.
- Trowler, V. (2010) *Student engagement literature review*. York: Higher Education Academy.
- Van der Velden, G.(2012) 'Institutional level student engagement and organisational cultures', *Higher Education Quarterly*, 66(3), 227-247.
- Van Teijlingen, E., & Hundley, V. (2002) 'The importance of pilot studies', *Nursing standard*, 16(40), 33-36.
- Wenger, E. (1998) *Communities of Practice: learning, meaning and identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- White, J.W., & Lowenthal, P.R., (2011) 'Minority college students and tacit 'codes of power': developing academic discourses and identities', *The Review of Higher Education*, 34 (2), 283-318.
- Willetts, D. (2012) 'There is no 'unishambles' in education: the Minister of Universities and Science defends his reforms to student fees', *The Independent*, 25 October 2012. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/there-is-no-unishambles-in-education-8226910.html> (Accessed: 1 August 2019).
- Williams, J. (2011) 'Constructing Consumption', in Molesworth, M., Scullion, R. and E. Nixon (eds.) *The Marketisation of Higher Education and the Student as Consumer*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 170-182.
- Williams, J. (2013) *Consuming higher education: why learning can't be bought*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Williams, J. (2014) 'Defending Knowledge as the Public Good of Higher Education' in Goastellec, G. & Picard, F. (eds.) *Higher education in societies: A multi scale perspective*, Sense Publishers: Rotterdam, pp. 73-86.

- Williams, J. (2016) 'A critical exploration of changing definitions of public good in relation to higher education', *Studies in Higher Education*, 41 (4), 619-630.
- Wood, L. A. & Kroger, R. O. (2000) *Doing Discourse Analysis: Methods for studying action in talk and text*. London: Sage.
- Woodall, T., Hiller, A., & Resnick, S. (2014) 'Making sense of higher education: students as consumers and the value of the university experience' *Studies in Higher Education*, 39(1), 48–67.
- Wubbels, T., & Brekelmans, M. (2005) 'Two decades of research on teacher-student relationships in class', *International Journal of Educational Research*, 43(1–2), 6–24.
- Yin, R. K. (2009) 'Introduction: how to know whether and when to use case studies as a research method', in Yin, R. K. (ed.) *Case study research: design and methods*. Los Angeles: Sage. pp. 3–23.
- Zamorski, B. (2002) 'Research-led teaching and learning in higher education: a case', *Teaching in Higher Education*, 7(4), 411-427.