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**A COGNITIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY  
INFLUENCED APPROACH TO DELIVER  
EMPLOYABILITY EFFECTIVELY TO  
UNDERGRADUATE INFORMATION  
SYSTEMS STUDENTS. AN IPA  
(INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL  
ANALYSIS) STUDY**

**J ADAMSON**

**PhD**

**2015**

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ANALYSIS) STUDY**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements of the University of  
Northumbria at Newcastle for the degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy

Research undertaken in the Faculty of  
Engineering and Environment

October 2015

## **Declaration**

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Faculty Ethics Committee / University Ethics Committee / external committee on 16 January 2012.

**I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 86,713 words**

Name:

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Date:

## Abstract

### **A Cognitive Behaviour Therapy influenced approach to deliver Employability effectively to Undergraduate Information Systems students. An IPA (Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis) study**

Research literature highlights a gap in the provision of degree programmes being offered to students in relation to the skill set that is needed by employers. To bridge this gap universities need to seek an alternative approach to teaching and learning that is educationally credible, yet addresses the needs of the employability agenda.

The aim of this research is to develop a capability model for HE teaching and learning, in the first instance, for Information Systems undergraduate students that embeds CBT tools and techniques into a modified constructivist curriculum studied by those students. The model successfully embeds PDP and employability as an integral part of the degree experience for those students at Northumbria University.

The teaching approach is influenced by Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) as part of this innovative teaching model, developed from existing and emerging educational psychology. The study explores the relationships, the dialogue and perceptions, between staff and students and investigates the student experience relating to their self-efficacy and self-actualisation during that period, with a particular emphasis on employability skills and attributes.

The research employs Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) with data collected from six purposively selected participants. The data is qualitative and adheres to IPA methodology protocols resulting in a holistic understanding of the students' perceptions and behavioural practices.

The results demonstrate the importance for academia to consider the individual differences and learning styles of their students in relation to the programme design and delivery methods. Analysis of the data reinforces the shift required in the curriculum framework in order to influence the employability skills and 'graduate attributes' of the students.

The findings provide institutions with a research rich approach to deliver high quality degree programmes that will ensure the future proofing and validity of the provision. Specific attention is focussed on a new approach to teaching – PEDaLL (Personal, Employability, Development and Lifelong Learning) - that Higher Education Institutions can use to influence policy and reshape organisational culture. Furthermore, this research contributes to meaningful staff development for educators, the embedding of employability within programmes and addressing the requirements of the student Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR).

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**Dedicated to the memory of my father – George Wilfred Todd**

## Acknowledgements

There are many people who have been supportive of my 'journey' in a number of ways - offering encouragement and support, being interested when I have attempted to talk about disjointed ideas that needed to be linked together, enabling me to believe in myself and that I had the capabilities to be in a world such as this where I potentially did not feel that I belonged. They allayed my fears of failure and self-doubt, ironically through being there for me to talk to whenever I needed to do so.

I am grateful to every student that I have ever worked with throughout my career, and who have always brought their own lives to me in various ways and in varying degrees of intimacy. The five students who kindly volunteered to talk to me about themselves, telling me their stories have helped me to be at this point in my life. Those 5 I will be eternally grateful to. I also hope that they enjoyed the process and got something from being a part of this research, particularly as they provided me with the opportunity to gain insight into some very personal thoughts and sometimes perceived weaknesses about themselves from within their own lives, and have allowed me to comment on their abilities and attitudes as they have progressed through higher education.

My colleagues, past and present, have worked alongside me and listened to many of my thoughts and views that I needed to air. I thank them very much for being there for me all of the time. In particular, colleagues from the past who are very much still part of my life include Sheila Knowles who has been a lifelong inspiration to me as has Helen Duffy who always knows the right things to say to me. Wendy Clark has been a wonderful friend to share ideas with and to try out 'interventions' with along the way, and her honest feedback and input has been invaluable. And Val Hill who recognised the input I could have at Northumbria University.

My family are part of this thesis as they have lived through it with me. I dedicate it to my father George Todd who has truly been my inspiration and motivation throughout the whole of my life. Even though he is no longer with us, he lived a life that was fulfilled from both his successful family unit and his engagement with the world around him. My life has also been supported by my mother who has been a constant throughout. My husband Roly, and my daughters – Mary and Hannah - have also encouraged me at times when I felt distracted, and kept me on track. In particular, thanks to Mary for help with transcriptions, and special thanks to my sister Gillian, who has always been by my side and who is a valuable source of information and debate and without her insight and experience this thesis would not have been possible. Also sincere thanks to my sister-in-law Jean for help with proof-reading.

My supervisors Becky Strachan and Ali Pickard have always provided me with their support and understanding throughout this process, and always made me feel as if my research was worthwhile and that I had something valuable to contribute. When I was unsure of direction, they offered insight and perspective. Through their expertise and guidance, and allowing me to share their intellect and understanding of the PhD

process, they have provided a tangible infrastructure and steered me back on course when I veered. I will always be grateful for this.

I am also indebted to the body of researchers around the human sciences for providing a structure and approach to research peoples' lives. In particular, Jonathan Smith whom I have never met, but who gave me a moment of 'insight' when I discovered IPA and subsequently found a framework that seemed to fit my research ideas better than anything else that I had read.

The work in this thesis is my own work entirely, and all areas attributed to other sources have been duly cited with honesty and integrity.

## Abbreviations

IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
PDP	Personal Development Planning
HE	Higher Education
CBT	Cognitive Behaviour/Behavior/Behavioural Therapy
CBC	Cognitive Behaviour Coaching
REBT	Rational Emotional Behaviour Therapy
PEDaLL	Personal, Employability, Development and Lifelong Learning
HEA	Higher Education Academy
SLC	Student Loans Company
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
JISC	Joint Information Systems Committee
HEAR	Higher Education Achievement Report
QAA	The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
CRA	Centre for Recording Achievement
UUK	Universities United Kingdom
BIS	Business, Innovation and Skills (Govt Department)
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development
UKPSF	United Kingdom Professional Standards Framework
USEM	Understanding, Skills, Efficacy beliefs, Metacognition
SOAR	Self, Opportunity, Aspirations, Results
CareerEDGE	Career, Experience (work and life), Degree subject knowledge, skills and understanding, Generic Skills, Emotional Intelligence

## Key Words

Self-actualisation  
Disaffected  
Constructionist/ism  
Constructivist/ism  
Constructive Alignment  
Behaviourist/ism  
Cognitive/ism  
Humanist  
Social and situation  
Gestaltism  
Mindfulness  
Emotional Intelligence  
Employability  
Pedagogy  
Educational psychology  
Personal Development Planning

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

This research seeks to contribute to the field of employability and educational psychology through a discussion and analysis of student engagement and personal development planning within higher education. It examines those concepts through a phenomenological lens. It will explore the variables associated with the perception of what engagement might mean to the individual students and their related programmes of study that are offered within a framework of what constitutes present day higher education. Some of the issues arising from this view centre on aspects of student 'real life' interactions that might give rise to their labelling of themselves as being 'disaffected students'. The use of this term within the context of this thesis is not intended to be derisory in any way, but aims to recognise and validate issues that exist and are common to most undergraduate degree students (Blunden, 2002, Denovan and Macaskill, 2013). It also seeks to address how these issues can be successfully accommodated as part of a reactive and responsive model for teaching and learning informed by a psychological lens of enquiry that attempts to find explanations (Robinson, 2004). The revised model proposed through this research seeks to raise awareness and recognise a number of radical styles and approaches, such as the explicit and implicit acknowledgement of dialogue, communication and relationships, utilising Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) techniques, as part of its constructs, together with other well established educational theories and schools of thought that underpin good teaching and learning. However, there are various representations and interpretations of those issues, all of which are factored into the very essence of being a 'real person' – ie a student, in this context. Subsequently, at the start of university, all students are expected to take responsibility for their own learning and become 'autonomous learners' by the end of their degree programme of study. They are encouraged to undertake a journey of self-discovery through Personal Development Planning (PDP) initiatives, (an idea about which they know very little) and they have expectations to graduate with a 2:1 degree or higher from within their chosen discipline in order to secure worthwhile graduate employment. In one respect, arguably, they enter into an institution of higher education, which is in itself a complex organisation, influenced by its own set of issues – governance, political, ethical and financial – and then they leave it with the security of their degree certificate, having been largely processed in a dystopian manner (Papastephanou 2008) from start to finish. Evidence shows that the reality of the student experience can be very different for each individual and the point at which they recognise and respond to their own needs and wants, and ultimately arrive at their perception of their own self-actualisation (Maslow 1954, Kremer and Hammond 2013) cannot always be constrained in a temporal frame, inside a rigid infrastructure that attempts to equate high entry barriers with high achieving 'exit' graduates.



The students who do arrive at university have clearly had to meet the criteria that have been publicised as a requirement for their undergraduate studies but no two students are the same, and neither are the subsequent interpretations of the criteria across all institutions (Felder, 1996, 2000, 2010, Felder and Brent, 2005). A typical entry criterion in the United Kingdom (UK) would be a university seeking to attract students with at least 300 UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) points (The Student Room, 2014), and this is the case for many of the degree programmes at Northumbria University (Northumbria University, 2014). Yet the application process, whilst renowned for its rigidity, also facilitates other computations that can be counted as part of meeting the entry criteria, which might not be the same for each university. For example some universities recognise only the required A level grades – AAB for instance, and do not take into account a cumulative equivalency from points attained. Other universities require specific ‘A’ levels to have been studied before allowing entry whilst some do not. Clearing provides an opportunity to find something that might be suitable if grades were disappointing (UCAS, 2013, The Complete University Guide, 2014) and some acknowledge the influence of the personal statement on UCAS applications (Jones, 2012). Students, on the other hand, may be looking for different things from their university experience, and may be seeking out measures such as employability and well-being, in addition to an interesting subject curriculum (Friedberg, 2013, Haywood and Madden 2000, Scutter, Palmer, Luzeckyj, Burke da Silva, and Brinkworth, 2011). They may also be ‘first generation’ entrants into a lower ranked institution with different expectations to a high achieving student entering a top ten ranked university (Rothwell, Herbert and Rothwell, 2008).

Entering a university therefore can bring with it a diverse student group who have met the stated entry criteria for their course in a variety of ways and who have to cope with a huge transition in their lives (Kantanis, 2000, Denovan and Macaskill, 2013). Increasingly, universities are offering entry to an extended degree programme (200 point entry) which advertises itself as a ‘full-time foundation year followed by a further 3 years full-time or 4 years sandwich’ (Northumbria University, 2014) which invariably attracts students who did not achieve high entry points, or perhaps just missed an offer. Universities are expected to accommodate such diversity but still maintain quality and standards, provide more flexible learning opportunities, guaranteed excellence, be responsive to the challenges, needs and demands, both internal and external, and explicitly state how they will promote student employability (Business, Innovation and Skills, 2009) whilst contributing to a culture of learning across the whole of society (Leitch, 2006).

## **1.2 Overview of thesis**

This thesis includes a number of key areas of research, each of which is discussed at length in the following chapters. The key research areas are Personal Development Planning (PDP) and Employability which provides a context for the literature review, Educational Psychology (Teaching and Learning), Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT). These are all synthesised through an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

research approach which offers a robust evidence base to add to the debate and to facilitate the recognition of a capability teaching model for HE – PEDaLL, (Personal, Employability, Development planning and Lifelong Learning) that is in itself founded on a constructivist ideology whilst being reactive and responsive to the needs of the student body. An overview of the chapters is given below.

**Chapter two** debates PDP and employability which form the background and context for the literature review. It attempts to inform the reader of the positioning of these ‘topics’ within the HE curriculum and agenda using illustrations – Presage, Process and Product - (Gibbs, 2012) , seeking to recognise the influences that are being imposed upon both educators and organisations alike, together with student expectations, employer demands, needs of society and the preferred learning styles in the present day.

**Chapter three** explicitly debates the contributions made to educational psychology from a number of schools of thinking – Behaviourist, Gestalt, Cognitive, Humanist, Social and Situational, and Constructivist – each one of which potentially could justify extensive research and exploration. Whilst the discussion offered here is considered to be in depth, there is clearly many more years of debate ahead.

**Chapter four** presents an educator’s analytical perspective of selected CBT techniques and ideas that potentially can and do situate themselves within teaching and learning ideology. The explicit mapping of these ideas into existing teaching materials provides the sector with an awareness of the incorporation of some selected techniques, their interface within the domain of teaching and learning, and the results that they might bring to students and educators alike.

**Chapter five** reviews and debates various research methodologies and sets out a framework indicating the research process undertaken as part of this thesis that primarily utilises IPA. The process is discussed extensively across a range of competing methodologies in order to comfortably secure the most suitable choice in relation to this research topic. Robust discussions are presented to inform the reader of the extensive awareness and impact of methodologies from both positivist paradigms, and humanistic sciences. Furthermore, as interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) involves both phenomenological analysis and double hermeneutics, it also gives credibility to the lived experiences of the participants involved in the research process, one of whom is the researcher, and their interactions within their organisations of choice.

**Chapter six** outlines six case studies, the first one of which is an in depth study of the researcher, undertaken by the researcher, based on evidence and ‘real life experiences’. The importance of this case study is apparent when seeking to confirm the legitimacy of the student cases presented and their subsequent credibility within the context of this research, and the incorporation of double hermeneutics as a research method. The researcher seeks to present such a testimonial to prove the

integrity of the relationships with the selected student body and with previous cohorts. The five student case studies are intended to be an indicative representative of the university undergraduate body across their 3 / 4 year time with Northumbria University, Levels 4 to 6, from the Information Sciences/Systems area. Subsequently, the students highlighted from the Level 6 cohort would have been known to the researcher as first year undergraduates at Level 4, and some of the Level 4 students were part of the institution as Level 3 students undertaking a foundation year of study.

**Chapter 7** sets out an analysis of the findings, bringing together the identified super-ordinate and sub-ordinate themes, from the IPA studies and the literature review. The findings illustrate the need for a reactive new teaching model for HE – PEDaLL (Personal, Employability, Development and Lifelong Learning), seeking to converge educational practices with employer and student needs in the twenty first century.

**Chapter 8** is devoted to the outcomes and contributions arising from the research, namely the PEDaLL Model for Teaching and Learning, attempting to establish its credentials and its usefulness. Anticipated criticisms will be defended in order to raise an awareness of a different approach to teaching and learning within HE for the student body. Additional gains from this research will also reach and extend into the explicit mapping of employability as an embedded part of degree programmes, CPD (Continuing Professional Development) support for HEA (Higher Education Academy) Fellowship applications, and HEAR (Higher Education Achievement Report) implementation guidance for institutions.

**Chapter 9** seeks to conclude this research and synthesises the findings in relation to the body of knowledge around teaching and learning, but acknowledges this as a dynamic area that invariably changes constantly as society and everybody in it evolves. The major findings will be reviewed and evaluated, and some suggestions for future research will be offered.

The remainder of this particular chapter presents an introductory insight into the key areas of this research in anticipation of the rest of this thesis, and offers a number of aims and objectives that will have been fulfilled from this research, together with the anticipated outcomes arising from it.

### **1.3 Research Question**

The goal of this research is to describe a lived experience from the perspective of the participants who are a part of the experience (Roberts, 2013). This research attempts to give a present day view of the current expectation on HE providers to deliver not only a robust and educationally sound degree programme, built upon a foundation of expertise, and delivered by a 'more knowledgeable other', but also one that fulfils the requirements of the employability agenda combined with personal development planning to satisfy employer needs and those of wider society. It explores the psychology of teaching and learning, analysing the views of early philosophers, and

attempts to look at their subsequent impact on today's agenda to enhance and inform teaching and learning.

The research question is defined as:

“How does educational psychology and specifically CBT, influence and inform the teaching and learning landscape for undergraduate students who need to acquire not only a good degree, but also desirable employability skills and a positive attitude?”

Following on from an extensive review of the literature, from chapters 2, 3 and 4, giving an exploration of the PDP and employability agenda, a discussion of educational psychology, an appraisal of some selected Cognitive Behaviour Therapy approaches, an empirical framework is established. Thereafter primary research through an IPA methodology realises rich data from information systems undergraduate students that is potentially scalable, and that validates the intent of this thesis, and identifies a possible need for a required shift in culture within institutions to satisfy all stakeholders.

#### **1.4 Aims and Objectives**

This research produces 6 individual IPA studies and utilises constructivist cross-case analysis techniques to determine effective educational teaching and learning interventions to assist the managing of diverse student groups and disaffected students that are an inevitable part of the undergraduate population.

The aim of this research is to develop a capability model for HE teaching and learning, in the first instance, for Information Systems undergraduate students that embeds CBT tools and techniques into a modified constructivist curriculum studied by those students in order to successfully embed PDP and employability as an integral part.

In addition, the research then aims to identify the contextual factors influencing the successful implementation of this teaching model in relation to PDP and employability strategies within the Higher Education (HE) sector that encompasses CPD and HEAR.

This thesis highlights the student voice arising from the research process from first year through to final year, looking at changes not only as a result of maturation, but also through the development of the students themselves as emotionally intelligent learners, and as part of a community of learning. From this, it is proposed that a greater recognition and understanding of the learning process is revealed, together with all of the composite stages of undergraduate student development towards individualised goals in relation to a perceived sense of self-actualisation or not, as the case may be.

The research approach describes the use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as the chosen research methodology to investigate the complex nature of human

beings, in this case students, all with different ideas, life experiences, thoughts, feelings and emotions.

Whilst the intent of this research is to explore the overall experience of teaching and learning in response to the needs of a number of stakeholders, and to suggest a suitable teaching model that assumes a degree of success for the sector, a number of objectives have been established, which are deemed to be quantifiable measures in relation to validating the success of this research endeavour.

- Establish the responses of students to known teaching approaches and interventions within the university, exploring their thoughts, feelings and beliefs about them in relation to their own learning.
- To introduce learning experiments that seek to integrate interpersonal and employer 'key skills' effectively and to quantify the success of those experiments through student and peer opinion and enhanced awareness
- To design and explore CBT interventions that foster self-awareness, reflection and personal insight in undergraduate students.
- To measure the 'graduateness' of students through the application of a suitable research methodology and the development of purposive assessment objects.
- To provide empirical evidence for curriculum developers who choose to recognise the importance of PDP, self-efficacy and awareness of self for increasing and enhancing employability skills as an integral component of a desirable graduate study experience.

### **1.5 Anticipated Outcomes and Contributions to Knowledge**

The author provides higher education practitioners with an evidence base of explicit and implicit strategic interventions in relation to teaching and learning. This will be postulated from a constructivist context and informed as a result of a thorough analysis and identification of credible empirical data seeking to develop, encourage and realise self-efficacy within students in order to exercise influence over events that affect their lives (Bandura, 1994). The design of a new model for teaching – PEDaLL – based on this research facilitates an opportunity for the achievement of self-efficacy on the part of the student, their increased confidence and potential success through self-actualisation for the selected student body from within the university and also for when they leave the HE sector and subsequently enter employment. To ensure the success of this model for both institutions and their practitioners, a framework is published to evaluate and determine the value enhancement for all parties. This includes improved CPD (Continuing Professional Development) and therefore better informed and responsive teaching staff, as well as a directional guide for increased effectiveness relating to the implementation of HEAR, together with the publication of the PEDaLL Model for teaching and learning, which will add to the body of knowledge and aid future educators and inform the wider debate.

A summary of these anticipated outcomes follows:

- PEDaLL – a capability model for Teaching in Higher Education
- CPD and Teacher Training – better informed/responsive staff
- HEAR – implementation steer and guidance
- Employability (curriculum implementation approach for universities)

An additional contribution to knowledge comes through the utilisation of IPA research methodology as a means of capturing the story of a student journey and adding to the body of evidence available to other educators and researchers.

## **1.6 Personal Development Planning (PDP) and Employability**

The first ten years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have seen continual changes affecting higher education gathering speed and momentum, resulting in the culmination of HEAR (Higher Education Achievement Record) (Burgess, 2007). This continuation echoes back to the words of the Burgess Group Final report (2007):

*“... the transformation of the higher education experience, changes to the labour market, student perceptions of what constitutes a ‘worthwhile’ degree.”*

The ‘compelling factors’ driving this particular research include the growing numbers and diversity of the student population; the findings of the Leitch Review of Skills (Leitch, 2006) which stresses the need for a highly skilled workforce to enable the UK to flourish in the information economy; and the shift of focus from teaching to learning (Meighan, 1999, Havnes and McDowell, 2008) with its subsequent requirement for students to be active learners taking responsibility for their own learning. Dearing’s (1997) recommendations for student progress files have led to the introduction of Personal Development Planning (PDP) in higher education institutions with the aim of enabling all students to become autonomous lifelong learners. Various strategies and approaches have been tried to engage students with this process, but the nature of curriculum constraints and personal extenuating circumstances make it a very complex one for universities to implement and subsequently evaluate.

The shift in the job market and the move towards a knowledge society (Riley, 2011) are requiring individuals who can readily assess and judge a situation, and contribute to a fast paced technological world. The price to be paid for not being able to fit into this new society may lead to outcomes that might not have been in keeping with the original aspirations of the individual.

The essence of this thesis is proposing a shift from the present day approaches to teaching and learning to one that will facilitate the opportunities for maximising the deliverables and outcomes arising from the experience, together with the development of the ‘self’ as an integral part of the undergraduate student journey.

Employment in manufacturing is at its lowest for years, and alternative job opportunities are highly competitive (Brinkley, Fauth, Mahdon and Theodoropoulou

2009). Whilst initial selection criteria may focus on 'baseline' qualifications (that may be a 2:1 at degree level), there has been a long standing emphasis on interpersonal skills, and competitiveness, rating one person's interpersonal skills against another's (Garavan and Morley, 1997, 1998, Garavan, 2007, Morley, 2007a, 2007b,) that is still evident today in graduate recruitment (Gradintel, 2015). Students who leave university with the same degree classification need to have the desirable (or appropriate) 'life skills' to acquire a job above similar candidates who all have an equivalent degree qualification. The introduction of the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) is one way that differentiates, but in many cases merely lists achievement and evidence based data (Burgess, 2007, HEAR, 2014, Gradintel, 2015).

The present HE infrastructure that nurtures today's graduates is primarily knowledge focused, offering a number of optional 'support services' catering to the employment and personal development needs of the students, should they so choose. Degree programmes are bound by the curriculum and are very much knowledge driven. The success gained is based on assessment of this knowledge and content pertaining to the particular degree programme. Interpersonal skills and employer 'key skills' are generally overlooked and rarely assessed. In fact, students, in many cases, may have no more knowledge of self, or self-awareness at the end of their degree programme than they did at the beginning (Curzon, 2003). Quite often, when leaving university, this is where the challenges begin when competing for suitable employment.

### **1.7 Educational Psychology (Teaching and Learning)**

An extensive debate around learning theory underpins the direction of this research. From early behaviourist ideologies through to Bandura's view of 'self' are critiqued to inform the thinking, leading to an emerging model of teaching, presented as The PEDaLL Model for teaching and learning (Personal, Employability, Development and Lifelong Learning). This model is not intended to deride any previous thinking, but merely seeks to transform and/or supplement what is already there through informed evolutionary evidence arising from the student's real experiences. Subsequent findings will also attempt to strengthen teacher training within HE through insight and the fostering of self-awareness of the educators themselves. Equally, the landscape of HE will be debated as part of the needs awareness of how educators should be prepared for working with 'future fit' graduates in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (CBI, 2009) acknowledging the gains from education to the overall measures of 'well-being' (wheel of measures) for the individual and wider society (ONS, 2014).

### **1.8 Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT)**

A link is recognised between educational psychology and CBT influences during this chapter. CBT is widely accepted as an intervention that seeks to help people overcome difficult situations in life (Proudfoot, Guest, Carson, Dunn and Gray, 1997). Whilst existing empirical evidence is largely situated within a psychological, clinical field, a large part of this research attempts to identify the incorporation and subsequent shifting of CBT as an intrinsic part of a desirable teaching model for HE. This is

accomplished by embedding Personal Development Planning (PDP) as part of an outcome led curriculum in order to enhance the 'life skills' of undergraduate Information Systems students who are required to leave university fit for employment within the sector (Business Information Systems) and satisfy an employability agenda. Over a period of time, measured changes can be visible through the modified actions and interactions of those affected individuals. This research identifies a number of useful theoretical concepts of CBT, and produces assistive resources for use within the teaching and learning experiences of Information Systems (IS) undergraduate students who are actively pursuing success at university and subsequently in their career. It maps teaching methodologies and subject module objects directly to established CBT theory and looks at the impact of this on student behaviour, attitude, and career success. Further identification of the influence of CBT within the IS sector are discussed and reviewed in relation to the concept of Personal Development Planning within an educational context, job sector skills and business operational needs. This subsequently addresses the successful implementation of Personal Development Planning (PDP) strategies that allude to greater self-awareness and self-efficacy through the development of a new model for teaching and learning that embeds these highly desirable life skills, employing expertise and best practice from CBT research.

### **1.9 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)**

*"IPA allows for a detailed picture of the psychological processes and rich descriptions of how individuals think and feel about the challenges they face."*

(Smith, Brewer, Eatough, Stanley, Glendinning and Quarrel, 2006 pp487)

The choice of IPA as a research methodology recognises the world around us at this present time as our research arena, and gives symbolism and value to the things that happen therein. It also affords us the chance to evaluate and explore the interactions we experience as part of our lives, the meanings we attach to those interactions, and the individuals with whom we interact as well as the subsequent influences that those experiences and engagements have upon all of those people. The research questions present an opportunity to explore the opinions and feelings of a typical student group coming to university and covers a timespan of up to 4 years in order to gain a richer understanding of their lives and an insight into their experience (Bates, 2012) of learning within an HE institution. The circumstances of each student involved in this research are different, not deliberately selected, but clearly by the very essence of being a human being, and the experiences and feelings that each one of the students has are therefore unique. An IPA framework has been constructed and the student experiences, opinions and feelings have been documented from a number of different perspectives, and subsequently triangulated through cross-case analysis techniques. This research approach builds upon the work of Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) in developing rich narrative through an IPA study, comprising case study data relating to



each student and extensive data gleaned through participant observation techniques across a 4 year period and has elements of soft systems methodology implicitly embedded in elements of its execution from the IS subject context in which this is situated (Land, 1994, Checkland, 1981, Checkland and Holwell, 1998, Scholes and Checkland, 1990). The utilisation of IPA techniques and participant observation is a complimentary relationship that clearly validates a context that has the potential to be scalable across the sector. A substantial amount of qualitative data would be expected as part of this robust approach that could lead to the design of a sound model for teaching students within Higher Education (HE) institutions of a similar type.

### **1.10 Summary**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an introduction and context to the research question being investigated, together with a brief outline of each of the key areas to be discussed in greater detail at a later stage. The following chapters seek to debate and evidence a number of key reference points from the literature and situate them securely within the research model in order to answer the research questions being debated. The presentation of the chapters is based around a critical review of the literature that attempts to review a number of areas that are considered to be relevant to this research, the first one of which situates the concept of PDP within a complex HE landscape, aiming to produce employable graduates and/or lifelong learners.

## **2 The Literature Review - Background and Context**

### **2.1 Introduction to PDP and Employability**

This chapter discusses empirical opinion relating to the emergence and subsequent place of Personal Development Planning (PDP) and employability within a complex HE landscape (Jackson and Ward, 2004). It unpicks the early stage research that has attempted to guide HE institutions on how to meet the needs of employers, undergraduates and 'lifelong learners' (QAA, 2009a) of all ages and backgrounds pursuing education and training throughout their lives (Dearing, 1997, Leitch, 2006, Lester and Costley, 2010). It will iterate links between PDP, employability and ePortfolios, and how the thinking is converging under an employability framework, available to all undergraduates as an integral part of their degree programme, thus impacting upon their future employability (De Vos, De Hauw and Van der Heijden, 2011).

Early thinking in this area was seeking to explore alternative ways of representing the achievements of a successful honours degree student other than with a numerical classification system - that is a First, 2.1, 2.2 or third - that was essentially arrived at through a number of summative assessments (Dearing, 1997, Burgess 2007). It was deduced that there was a definite need to establish a different way to record and validate the qualifications of successful undergraduate students to showcase much more than their grades for assessments – assignments and/or examinations - but also to tell the wider story of their experience that would illustrate interpersonal skills and attributes. There was an expectation that these would be suitably evidenced, together with any other achievements that were deemed to be worthy of note. This would be in addition to their academic qualifications, and Dearing's idea of progress files (Dearing, 1997) was one intervention that was introduced into the wider education sector (Further Education and Higher Education) as a tool to assist young people to document all of their key skills (interpersonal and communication). It was deemed that these key skills might be just as attractive to employers, if not more so, than their degree/exam successes. Research suggested that whilst the degree classification was a useful shortlisting mechanism, once at interview it was the interpersonal and communication skills that were the most highly regarded (Morley, Erout and Aynsley, 2006). The dilemma was how to capture these skills that transgress subject disciplinary achievements and success. A portfolio was identified as an effective method for doing so that would enhance the overall experience of the students. (Baume, 2001b, Jackson and Ward, 2004, Barrett, 2006, Abrami, Wade, Pillay, Aslan, Bures, and Bentley, 2008)

### **2.2 A socio-political perspective of the landscape of HE**

The landscape of HE has a responsibility to society to support the development of graduates who are fit to contribute in a meaningful way to that society, the community and the wider economy (Dearing, 2003, Gibbs, 2010). Looking at the HE sector there is a mixed picture of interpretation when responding to what the perceived needs of society are and where the responsibilities lie, but there is a consensus that discipline-

specific knowledge is not sufficient for graduate employability which is in itself a major concern for higher education (Treleaven and Voola, 2014).

An awareness of organisational impact may also be useful in recognising and understanding the position of the stakeholders in relation to teaching and learning (Bishop, 2008) which may suggest a shift in the balance of power. An initial review of the many interested UK stakeholders define those needs from different perspectives and an illustration of the complexity of the landscape is discussed. UK Universities are constantly seeking to innovate and maintain their competitiveness whilst continuing to guarantee their quality of education, but not become so diluted from these multi-organisational demands and controls so as to be seen as unresponsive. A brief discussion of some of these organisations and stakeholders is summarised in Figure 2.1. This discussion does not seek to evaluate or measure the importance of each, but simply to emphasise the external influences that shape, modify and inform higher education and affect the subsequent student experience therein.

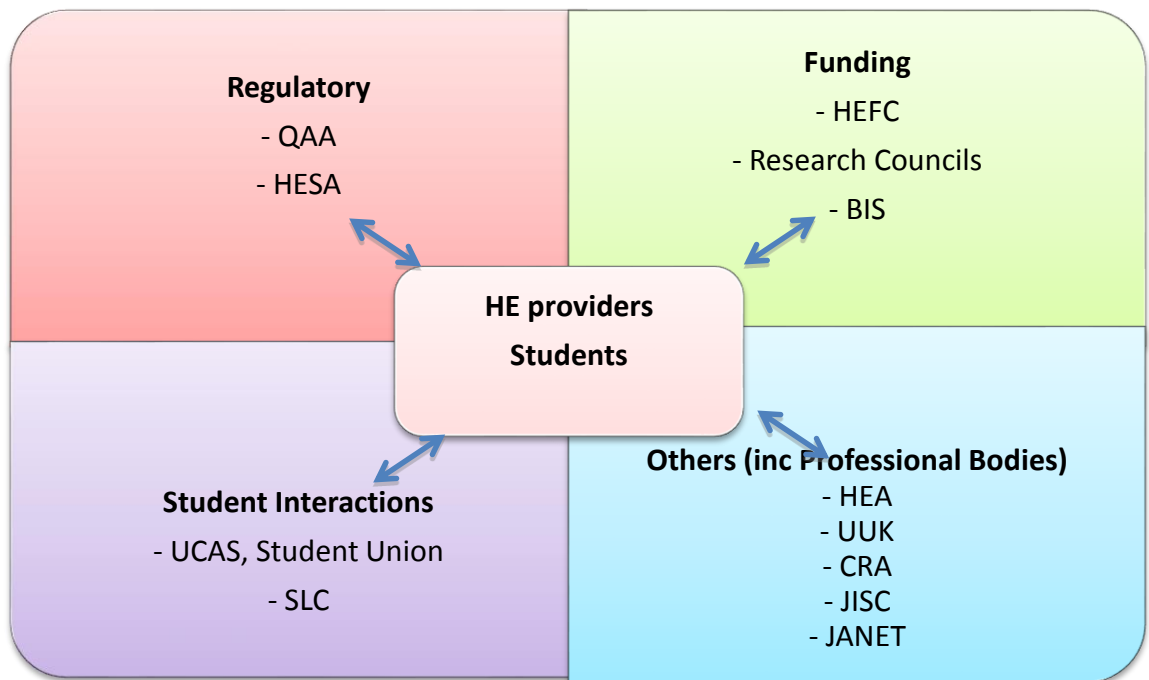


Figure 2.1 Representation of some of the 'Stakeholders'

### Regulatory: The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)

The QAA is an independent body entrusted with monitoring, and advising on, standards and quality in UK higher education (QAA, 2012). They are intent on safeguarding these standards and improving the quality of UK higher education wherever it is delivered. They act in the public interest for the benefit of the students and support higher education providers to help them to provide the best quality student learning experience. They have five values that underpin what they do – integrity,

professionalism, accountability, openness and independence. They publish and maintain the UK Quality Code for Higher Education with 19 expectations that all UK providers of higher education are required to meet (QAA, 2014).

Within the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, three of those 19 expectations are directly relevant to the value of sound educational ideology - B3 Learning and Teaching, B4 Enabling student development and achievement, and B5 Student Engagement (Appendix 4), all of which inform HE of issues that should be adhered to for the greater good of the student experience. In addition, as part of its review process, the QAA explores specific enhancement themes that are relevant for HE providers with a view to informing the student experience. The Higher Education Review Group (HERG), a fundamental part of the QAA, selects a number of themes to review that it believes warrant further analysis or enhancement across the sector. There are two themes selected as part of the review, process for 2013-2015:

- Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement
- Student Employability.

This high level debate strongly advises that student employability is part of the expectation of the university student experience.

**Regulatory: HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency)** – this is the official agency for the collection, analysis and dissemination of coherent quantitative information and statistics about higher education, offering easy access to its data, that is available to everyone and for the benefit of wider society. It was set up by relevant government departments, higher education funding councils and the university and colleges in 1993, following the White Paper “Higher Education: a new framework”. Relevant statistics to the sector are available, highlighting the provision and direction from all HE providers (HESA, 2014).

**Funding: HEFC (Higher Education Funding Council)** – distributes public money for higher education to higher education providers in England. Their values are openness, impartiality, fairness, objectivity and the safeguarding of the collective interest of students. It was set up by the government in 1992 as a non-departmental public body and works within a policy framework set by the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (HEFC, 2011).

**Funding: Research Councils** – there are 7 Research Councils (RCUK) Arts and Humanities, Biotechnology and Biological Sciences, Engineering and Physical Sciences, Economic and Social, Medical Research Council, Natural Environment and Science and Technologies. They work in partnership with other research funders to maximise the impact of research on economic growth and societal wellbeing. Some of the partners include Innovate UK, the UK Higher Education Funding Councils, business, government and charitable organisations. Their investment in research is around £3 billion each year, across a number of academic disciplines. Bids for such awards are peer reviewed

and judged to have impact on growth, prosperity and wellbeing of the UK (RCUK, 2014).

**Funding: BIS (Business, Innovation and Skills)** – is a ministerial department for the UK Government, working with FE and HE providers to give students the skills they need to compete in a global employment market. They seek to support innovation and develop the UK's science and research industry which is important to help economic growth. BIS has ultimate responsibility and accountability for higher education, science and innovation policy. BIS provides funding for learning, teaching, research and knowledge exchange and makes a contribution to capital costs for higher education. BIS also distributes funding for research activities via the Research Councils UK. BIS manages the process for institutional designation of higher education providers, the award of degree-awarding powers and university and university college title and decisions on eligibility for HEFC funding (Business, Innovation and Skills, 2009).

**Student Interaction: SLC (Student Loans Company)** - provides financial support to individuals following HE courses (SLC, 2014).

**Student Interaction: Student Union** - provides support and advice to students on a range of academic, welfare and social activities through elected representation (NUS, 2014).

**Student Interaction: UCAS (University and College Admissions Services)** – provides admissions services to facilitate choice of provider through the provision of accurate information in relation to the student courses, overall experience, facilities and availability of resources (UCAS, 2013).

**Others: GuildHE** is a membership organization of heads of higher educational institutions that works to improve the nation as a whole in relation to education, its competitiveness, and it also offers support to members, facilitating the sharing and dissemination of good practice to encourage leading-edge developments (GuildHE, 2014).

**Others: HEA (Higher Education Academy)** – The HEA is a professional body that provides a framework (UK Professional Standards Framework) for teaching and supporting learning in higher education. Its mission is to use its expertise and resources to support higher education providers and the wider education community to enhance the quality and impact of learning and teaching. The UK Professional Standards Framework presents a number of established aims that are intended to support and develop teaching staff, recognising and rewarding their competencies and achievements within teaching and learning. It is funded by HEFC and commissions research to provide the sector with a much-needed evidence base for learning and teaching. This is achieved through liaisons with UK Governments, partner organisations and national bodies to inform, influence and interpret policies that affect learning and

teaching in higher education. It also recognises professional status for its members, many of whom are from within the academic community (HEA, 2014).

**Others: Universities UK** – Its mission statement states that it is to be the definitive voice for universities in the UK. It provides high quality leadership and support to its members to promote a successful and diverse higher education sector (Universities UK, 2014)

**Others: CRA (Centre for Recording Achievement)** - is a network organisation, registered educational charity and Associate Partner of the Higher Education Academy (UK). Its intent is to lead and advise on key research areas for HE contemplation (Centre for Recording Achievement, 2014).

**Others: JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee)** – is a registered charity and champion of the use of digital technologies in UK education and research. It represents the UK's further and higher education sector on international educational technology standards and initiatives with the **JANET (Joint Academic Network (UK))** - which is the network dedicated to the needs of research and education in the UK and connects UK universities, FE Colleges, Research Councils, Specialist Colleges and Adult and Community Learning providers (JISC, 2014).

From the information given, it can be established that across the representative sample, the roles are variable – regulatory, finance related, student focused and advisory. The landscape in England and the UK is very much a shifting one, depending upon where the influences that feed into the stakeholders come from, and sometimes to the responses needed within a society, whether there be times of austerity or prosperity, caution or risk, innovation or sustainability. The responses from within the HE sector have to be able to change to suit the circumstances of a demand led environment.

Whilst the Dearing Report (Dearing, 1997) firmly situated employability within the HE agenda, the influences outlined above suggest their own particular direction and steer, some common to the others, and some not, and in addition, there have been numerous publications since then adding to the debate. A listing of some of those are shown in Appendix 13, emphasising the continuous flow of dialogue through from Dearing 1997 to 2005, and this research brings in more of the influences up to the present day, reiterating the place of employability as still being a key priority for HE.

However, the wider debate across the sector is open to individual interpretation of this potentially conflicting advice by each university, and it is not always easy to understand or to implement in a cohesive way by the 116 plus HEIs (Higher Education Institutions) who are attempting to appear better than their competitors in terms of ranking measures (The Guardian, 2014). The extensive discussion around measures of dimensions of quality, providing a way of comparing institutions, poses a number of key questions of the literature. Research published by the HEA (Gibbs 2010, 2012) for

the House of Commons (2009) posited a number of dimensions of quality. It utilises a variation of Biggs' (1993) 3P Model to illustrate the grouping of a number of variable issues, those being Presage, Process and Product, but those very groupings in themselves, whilst offering clarity in their subsequent listings, can still be subject to different interpretations. The idea of a university experience being a transformative one, producing graduates of benefit to the economy and society, is still regarded as being a given, yet within the individual organisations there exists ambiguity and uncertainty within the 3P groupings. A brief explanation of each of the groupings from the work of Gibbs (2012) follows together with a suggestion of the uncertainty that the clustering presents.

The first 'P' – "Presage" - was discussed as part of the introduction to this thesis when it referred to the different entry behaviour and individual differences of the student body. "Presage" variables relate to the pre-existing contexts that exist prior to a student beginning a university programme and relate to the different entry requirements of the student body, resources within the university of choice, and subsequently the reputation of the said university. Within the context of the quality dimensions across the sector, this first categorization suggests an inequality in the student abilities in relation to some universities that may not necessarily offer the best programmes, but are still successful in terms of the student achievements largely due to the entry level of their students.

"Process" variables are described as those that characterise what is going on in teaching and learning and include class size, student effort and engagement, the qualifications and skills of the 'teacher', and the quantity, quality and timeliness of the feedback to students. Again, the evidence across the sector is variable, and not independent of the presage grouping. Whilst class size alone cannot necessarily be seen as a measurable indicator of good teaching, it should be explored within the context of the particular organization to see if the SSRs (staff student ratios) are meaningful not just solely from a financial and resourcing perspective, but also in relation to teaching and learning. Equally, the way in which the student engages is an important factor, but ultimately not without correlation to the credentials of the tutor with regard to pedagogy as well as subject knowledge, which subsequently impact upon the timeliness and quality of feedback and results. The empirical evidence suggests that many Post 92 universities (new universities, or those which were former polytechnics), seeking to compete with Russell Group universities (composite group of 24 elite, leading universities in the UK) often chase the research agenda to the detriment of the quality of the teaching and learning, even if the individual needs of the student body are then largely ignored (Ecclestone, 2007). Weak administrative structures and procedures generally overburden academic staff, who, as a result, are less able to give their full attention to the needs of the students within their care. As the emphasis is on research, findings from the NSS (National Student Survey) that potentially criticise the teaching and learning provision within these organisations, sometimes leading to staffing problems and ultimately distress on the part of the

academic, even though critics of league tables (Hazelkorn, 2010) suggest that they are not valuable indicators of educational quality due to inconsistencies and comparability issues. Not looking at the bigger picture in relation to the culture that exists around teaching and learning can be an oversight on the part of the institution. Some of the findings can expose inadequately qualified staff with no teaching experience, over-reliance on part-time staff and research students, clumsy information repositories that provide inconsistent details about the programme, and over-burdened staff with too much pressure for non-teaching duties, thus giving them less time to work with their students. This can also apply to Russell group universities who might continue to be highly reputable for their research, but can still be criticised for the student teaching and learning experience. Furthermore, this extensive research (Gibbs, 2012) has also illustrated the lack of adequate management of the pedagogy relating to the teaching and learning provision across many universities, who place a greater emphasis on supporting the administration and management of programmes by staff offering attractive career pathways, again to the detriment of qualified teaching staff who are often alienated from career progression routes. This polarization exposes the lack of interaction between pedagogy and administrative management and is potentially a short sighted view for some institutions and a revealing one for further contemplation across the sector.

"Product" variables concern the outcomes of the educational process, such as student performance, retention and employability and the recognition of graduate attributes (Treleaven and Voola, 2008). The research is intent on looking at ways to publicise the student performance at university in ways other than traditional degree classifications. Attempts to embed employability explicitly within many degree programmes have not been extensively evidenced and cannot always be recognized from within the sector as a measurable quality dimension of distinctiveness between universities. Therefore when challenged, this aspect is not always sufficiently robust and the discourse between the research and rhetoric is still too visible due to the many variances (Gibbs, 2010, 2012). A student population who live closer to their university change the student experience as they may not be able to fully integrate socially and academically, and may have to work substantive part-time hours to fund their studies. They may make choices that still allow them to be successful in their endeavours, but this might impact upon the enrichment of the experience in ways that are different to those students who leave home and have access to more money through background and family circumstances.

The use of the 3P model provides a canvas for presenting the key issues. A summary diagram (Figure 2.2) suggests that whilst there might be some agreement on the constituents of the model, there still exist differences in interpretation, understanding, application and implementation across the sector, resulting in a different student experience, depending upon the university of choice.



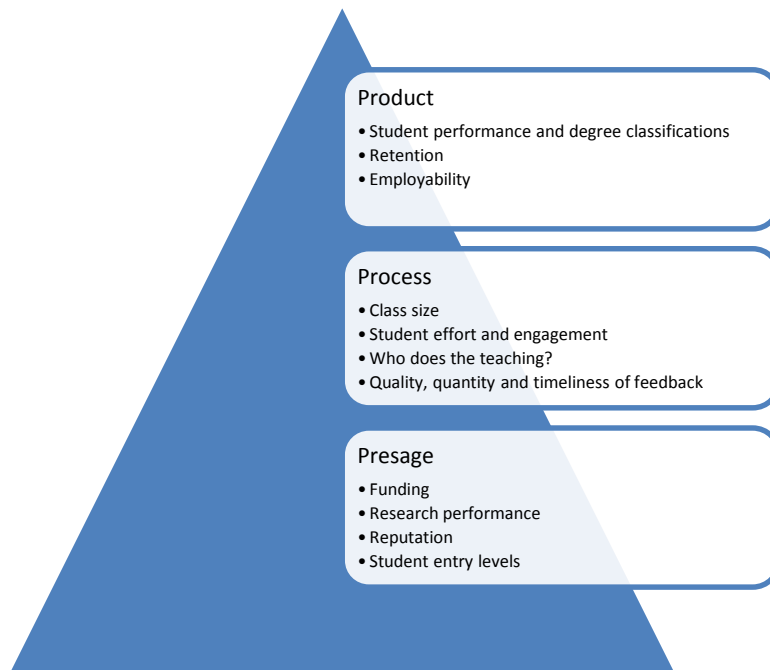


Figure 2.2 - 'Dimensions of Quality – 3P Model Summary Diagram' (Adapted from Biggs, 1993)

### 2.3 What is PDP?

Some early research that underpinned the understanding that we have today about PDP stemmed from Records of Achievement (Paczuska and Turner, 1997) and Progress Files (Dearing, 1997). At that time, technology was relatively under-developed and portfolios were paper based and labour intensive. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) were a part of the teaching and learning landscape and had already attempted to embrace many of the ideas being introduced as part of the Progress Files and PDP initiatives. The management steer was in its infancy and there was a perception of duplication of work for staff, and lack of direction in managing verification processes, validation, and moderation (Schon, 1991, East, 2005). What was evolving was an extensive debate surrounding PDP – what it was and how it could be mapped effectively, and that the portfolio was the tool of choice for doing so (Baume, 2001b) Definitions of PDP from this time period usefully described PDP as

*'a structured and supported process undertaken by an individual to reflect upon their own learning performance and/or achievement to plan for their personal, educational and career development'.*

(Jackson, 2001)

This was a direct response to the directives arising from the Dearing Report (Dearing, 1997) that instructed HE institutions to develop 'the means by which students can monitor, build and reflect upon their personal development' which was subsequently

based around earlier activities centred on 'Recording Achievement'. Later Burgess (2007) offered a widely accepted definition of PDP:

*Personal development planning (PDP) is a means of engaging students in reviewing, reflecting upon and representing their own learning. Students are able to draw upon such reviews and related records to create customised information about their learning and achievement, including, where appropriate, the softer skills they have acquired. They can then communicate this information to different audiences with different needs and interests. (Burgess, 2007, p 16)*

From this earlier work many institutions, both Further Education, (FE) and HE found themselves in possession of 'Progress Files' that first resembled 'wine lists', (red leather type folders) and were designed to reflect all of the achievements of individual students within this folder in accordance with institutional regulations and requirements. Other terms were also already in existence at the time, for example Learning Logs, Personal Profiling, Diaries and Portfolios, and in these earlier days, the availability of suitable technology to manage these activities was still not yet available. References to portfolios inherited the National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) practices and approaches and subsequently resulted in very large, unmanageable files, that needed to be mapped and cross referenced in order to demonstrate competencies across a range of criteria. In addition, educators in situ had been party to the work of Donald Schon (1987, 1991). He successfully published key works on reflective practice and reflexivity in relation to the acquisition and certification of competencies through complex matrices and mapping exercises that filtered into vocational courses in FE particularly, but the subsequent interpretation of this by many institutions brought with it quite burdensome administration procedures, evidence mapping and subsequent changes in the roles of educators from teachers to facilitators (Schon, 1987, 1991).

For HE practitioners, attempting to situate PDP across pre-existing courses inevitably carried a little baggage in relation to a successful implementation approach and an idealistic 'one size fits all'. However, the wording of PDP itself emphasises an active learning process that has the intention of enabling individuals to improve themselves, (Jackson, 2001, Gough, Kiwan, Sutcliffe, Simpson and Houghton, 2003, Burgess, 2007) and supports the principles of lifelong learning (Dearing, 1997, Kumar, 2005).

The intent therefore of PDP is very much centred on the development of students and improving their cognitive capacity to become autonomous and lifelong learners who are able to recognise their own needs and take responsibility for their own choices (Higgins, 2002). The process attempts to focus on the whole student, exploring their relationship with learning in a holistic way, through support and guidance, which over a period of time becomes less significant as they (the students) become less reliant upon that guidance and are subsequently able to sustain themselves and meet their own learning needs independently. Learning, in this context, is not just relating to

academic achievements , but is also about relationships, positive attitude , personal success and being able to articulate and communicate their personal goals and aspirations with their peers and their mentors, employers and academics, in the wider world through a process of self-reflection and evidence (Jackson, 2001, CBI 2007, 2009, 2011). Critics, however, suggest that this process is far from ideal as arguably the benchmarks are intangible and expose vulnerabilities through assuming it to be appropriate for all students. (Draper, 2009) However, in order to underpin successful PDP, Jackson (2001) suggests that the process for integrating PDP should be structured, involve holistic learning, and be transferable. From a learning perspective, the essence of PDP is humanistic as it encourages individuals to engage in a suitable environment collaborating with and learning from peers and mentors, to reflect upon themselves and what they are doing, to look for ways to improve, and to value, measure and articulate their successes (Schunk, 2009). A number of useful prompts have emerged as part of initiatives attempting to situate the process among adult learners as part of the University for Industry's work based learning initiatives that inform the debate, and a consensus suggests that such initiatives contribute to the higher education experience. (Lester and Costley, 2010). Their findings allude to the changes that result from this type of engagement, as the teacher becomes both facilitator and expert, seeking to help learners to become much more active in identifying their needs and aspirations (Graham, Rhodes and Shiel, 2006), as well as developing critical reflection skills, inspiration and encouragement. (Moore, 2007) These experiences prompt the notion of reflective enquiry in response to 'Where have I been?, Where am I now? And Where do I want to get to?' However the processes are not easily addressed by every student as the context is shifting and ambiguous depending upon the shape of the curriculum. Subsequently the needs of the individual student should be met within the classroom as opposed to more traditional whole class teaching and learning approaches that do not always meet individual needs or recognise student differences (Schon, 1991).

It could be argued that PDP is, in fact, one approach to an implementation of that vision for students who are studying less discipline specific degree programmes at university that could eventually lead to autonomous learning and fulfilment of self (Greenan, Humphreys and McIlveen, 1997). Although the measurement indicators of actually achieving such an aspirational state are not static, they can be levelled through the stages of certification, success, assessment and achievement of awards, even though the finishing points for each person may be different.

An important aspect of this discussion is the part played by PDP on the employability of the students leaving university and how it helps to improve their future job prospects. The terminology from within the area of PDP is variable and subject to interpretation by professionals and non-professionals alike, in numerous ways across many disciplines. PDP can be utilised as a helpful way to develop life skills (WHO, 2012) key skills, interpersonal skills, self-awareness, personal profiling, self-efficacy, employability and other such words that can be used to articulate PDP. These are

sometimes qualified through concepts and activities relating to skills in time management, business organisation, critical thinking, leadership, decision making, to name a few, none of which can directly be certificated in a universally recognisable way, but are often evidenced through experience and reflective statements. Equally complex is the adoption and integration of PDP across subject disciplines across the HE sector that are non-vocational and not all universities are comfortable with their interpretations, or even aware of how to achieve this. Universities in Scotland, under the auspices of an enhancement theme (HEA, 2014) have generally recognised the significance of the issue of employability for their graduates and arguably have a higher degree of understanding in their adoption and integration of this across their HE programmes (Gunn and Kafmann (2011). Their key research findings that are emphasised and repeatedly restated can be summarised as follows:

- the advantages of providing work-based learning activities,
- that employability should be embedded in the course design process
- that it is helpful to work with academic/careers adviser partnerships (CBI 2007).

The evidence linking PDP and employability is unequivocal, yet the interpretations across a number of institutions seek to compartmentalise them in some way as if PDP is somehow a separate activity from that of employability. The interpretations are variable, although the underpinning ideology is comparable. Three examples from HE providers are presented to illustrate the different interpretations of employability and PDP for their students – Durham University, University of St Andrews, and University of Bath.

**Example 1:** Durham University provides a PDP toolkit called Duo which is designed to be an e-space for every one of their students in which they can build up a portfolio of their activities and accumulate evidence for future use (Durham University, 2012). Their interpretation and definitions of the ‘key transferable skills’ that employers value are explicitly given as:

- **Commercial awareness** and understanding of how organisations work, the issues which they face and the role of people within them.
- **Communication** the ability to impart or interchange thoughts, opinions, or information by speech, writing, or signs.
- **Customer care** making the customer or client feel valued: the most visible aspect of an organisation’s performance.
- **Integrity** honesty and the display of moral and ethical principles
- **Initiative** the ability to begin or to follow through energetically with a plan or task.
- **Leadership** the ability to organise, inspire and motivate a group of people towards the achievement of a goal.
- **Problem solving** the ability to work through the details of a problem to reach a solution.

- **Project management** the process of planning, monitoring and controlling in relation to a particular project.
- **Teamwork** working collaboratively with a group of people in order to achieve a common goal.
- **Time management** the ability to manage time and prioritise to be more productive and efficient in completing tasks.

This is subsequently delivered from their Careers, Employability and Enterprise Centre, which provides each student with a Skills Audit Booklet and articulates its function through its Mission Statement:

*“To support the University in the delivery of the Education strategy 2010-2015 as it relates to employability and skills thereby making a significant contribution towards improving the institution’s performance in league tables as they relate to employability.*

*We will sustain excellence in service provision and delivery for the benefit of the University and our stakeholders.”*

(Durham University, 2012)

**Example 2:** The University of St Andrews, Scotland (University of St Andrews, 2012) utilises elements of strategic language that incorporate the following:

*“The contemporary knowledge economy demands a highly skilled, flexible, knowledgeable and self-aware graduate workforce. The university is committed to providing students with the opportunity to develop, via the academic curriculum, such employability attributes as: analytical thinking, capacity for teamwork, ability to conduct independent research and communication skills. The careers centre offers the fullest range of career and employability enhancing resources to enable students to move on from St Andrews with confidence and success; and the university enhances all aspects of employability of its graduates through the wider university experience in general and the implementation of this Employability Strategy in particular.....*

- *Academic Schools communicate, and foster in their students, the graduate attributes which their courses enable and develop.”*

(University of St Andrews, 2012)

The stakeholder responsibility, one of which is **Academic Schools** – is to articulate and facilitate graduate attributes gained from courses of study. Each Academic School includes employability activities within their annual School plan and to have a named Careers Centre Link to help address the employability agenda. Representatives from each School meet annually with staff from the Careers Centre to review destination outcomes and career activities in Schools from the previous year and to plan for the year following.

This strong alliance between Academic Schools and the Careers service has resulted in substantial accolades across the sector for this dynamic approach to the implementation of employability (University of St Andrews, 2012).

**Example 3:** Bath Spa University (Bath Spa University, 2012) has an employability statement that explicitly states that employability features in every single degree programme.

*“Your employability and what you do with your degree after university is one important aspect, and one we take seriously. Very seriously. So seriously in fact that, not only do we have a whole team dedicated to it, but it’s everywhere around the University. It features in every single degree programme; it’s there through the many extra-curricular opportunities available to you and it’s there again in the placements, projects and partnerships we have with employers and industry professionals right here, right now.”*

(Bath Spa University, 2012).

The Prospects website - the UK’s official graduate careers website advises graduates to have a Career Plan and aligns perfectly with PDP and defines its intent under a number of headings, one of which is **‘Know yourself’**. This subsequently talks about increasing self-awareness, identifying strengths and weaknesses, knowing the kinds of jobs that you might enjoy and be motivated to attain. The sector advice offered from within the booklet states that teaching and learning modules should embrace elements of this and that more needs to be done. (Prospects, 2011)

The subsequent mapping of PDP and employability into the degree programmes of these universities – Durham, St Andrews, and Bath – identify the importance of the sector perception of the issue, and their subsequent intent to embed it within learning opportunities offered therein, and subsequently offer a more enriched experience to their potential undergraduate students. The links between PDP and Employability are undeniable from the evidence base and as such should be accessible to all HE students and staff in one form or another if the needs of employers, society and the wider world economy are to be met (QAA, 2009a, 2009b). All of the evidence also places portfolios as the means by which to showcase this work (Baume, 2001a) not only for students, but also in the wider sense. The successful delivery of PDP requires the building of new relationships and alternative attitudes to teaching that recognise the concept of the lecturer as a resource and/or facilitator (Monks, Conway and Dhuigneain, 2006, Morrison, 2013) and the metaphor of being the ‘guide on the side’ rather than the ‘sage on the stage’ is useful to illustrate attempts to shift from a teacher-centred approach to a student-centred approach (King, 1993).

## 2.4 The Employability Agenda

The recognition of the importance of employability to the future development of students has been part of the HE agenda for a number of years and continues to be so (Dearing, 1997, Harvey 2003, Lees 2002, Knight and Yorke, 2004, CBI 2007, 2009, 2011,

CBI and Universities UK, 2009, High Fliers, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014). There are numerous political and economic drivers that have situated employability firmly within the university agenda and pressures from employers are intensifying to produce graduates who have a useful set of skills fit for the demands of the workplace (CBI 2007, 2009, 2011, Bill and Bowen-Jones, 2006). Whilst defining the concept of employability cannot be wholly precise, Yorke (2006) provides a useful working definition:

*“a set of achievements – skills, understanding and personal attributes – that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy.”*

This gives a broad perspective in which employability skills can be discussed, and the work of the CBI affirms this view, with some variation in wording, but ultimately conveying the same understanding – a degree on its own is not enough (CBI 2007, 2009, 2011, High Fliers, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014).

Employability is not just about learning how to write a CV or about getting a job, or solely about acquiring skills. Embedding employability into the curriculum does not make the content less educationally challenging but neither should it be delegated to careers departments and measured via survey data to ensure compliance (Buckinghamshire New University, 2012, Harvey, 2003, Sadri and Bowen, 2011).

It is much more than that and is about learning and how student abilities can be considerably enhanced through the acquisition of critical and reflective skills within the context of the individual's view of self and their subsequent empowerment. In a world where costs are escalating, fees and loans relating to HE are higher, intense competition exists for graduate jobs, the focus on graduate employability is an important agenda item for all concerned (Pegg, Waldock, Hendy-Isaac and Lawton, 2012). Pressure is on institutions to provide graduates that are able to meet society's needs, and whilst students often enter university to be better equipped for employment, they still expect the subject to be an interesting one (Scutter et al, 2011).

The complexity of delivery, however is widely recognised and whilst teaching interpersonal skills is deemed to be difficult and not always seen as the function of HE (Burack, Irby, Carline, Root and Larson, 1999, Ecclestone, 2004, 2007, Ecclestone, Hayes and Furedi, 2005, Ecclestone and Hayes 2009a, 2009b) impossible by many (WHO, 2012) they can be practised and facilitated within a nurturing learning environment, and subsequently could develop as personal qualities and attributes. These traits are desirable to cope with the demands of modern life and to cope with rapid sociocultural change in order to achieve a state of wellbeing. (ONS, 2012, WHO, 2012)

There are a number of influential models for employability - USEM, (Understanding, Skills, Efficacy beliefs, Metacognition) (Knight and Yorke, 2003), CareerEdge (Dacre Pool and Sewell, 2007) and SOAR (Self, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results) (Kumar,

2007). Underpinning all of this research is a body of knowledge that postulates a number of broad, but interrelated components:

1. Subject knowledge and understanding – ie the degree programme
2. Key skills (generic and transferable, life and employability)
3. A view of 'self' - Efficacy Beliefs (students' self-theories and personal qualities and belief that they can make a difference)
4. Metacognition (self-awareness and ability to reflect on, in and for action)
5. Employability
6. Self-actualisation (Opportunities, success, results, a career of choice)

These subsequent components are representative of the sector responsibilities in relation to employability. Each one iterates a break down of various considerations that suggest and subsume an understanding of employability, (CBI 2007). However, the implementation of these components within a curriculum framework needs further development if it is to be of use to educators and academics. For example, the first component addresses subject specific knowledge and understanding but there is no agreed approach as to the most effective way to relate this to employability. 'Understanding', state Knight and Yorke (2003), 'is a key outcome of Higher Education and needs no further justification here.' If a subject is taught by a specialist from that subject area, there is an assumption that they could effectively meet the employability agenda as part of their remit, but does their specialist knowledge include employability? This dilemma is often unresolved and open to interpretation.

The previous discussions suggested the clear links between PDP and employability, and the literature reinforces the importance placed on frameworks for university education within the UK as being able to "unlock British talent and support economic growth through innovation as never before" (House of Commons, 2009) with further explicit evidence offered from the employer voice who were not disturbed by the quality of degree courses, but gave a voice to their views relating to their attempts when seeking to employ suitable graduates, who were ready for employment.

*"...see employability as a mixture of basic skills, personal qualities, good attitude, genuine employment skills, meeting deadlines, being reliable and personal qualities. That really means, aside from the technical skills and the academic knowledge [...] it is getting on with people, it is being flexible and it is being reliable. That is what we have found to be valued above all other things when our members are recruiting graduates. It is that emphasis on employability and fitting into the workplace. The technical skills and the technical knowledge acquired through a degree have a much lower profile when they are recruiting. In terms of the message for what to do, I would focus on work experience, getting greater exposure to the workplace, even bringing your professional skills to bear in a work setting. That is what employers are using to distinguish between some very able candidates."*

(House of Commons, 2009)



This continues to reinforce a long-standing agenda item for universities to consider from more than 10 years ago - the Roberts Review - (2002) which questioned the suitability of graduates, reporting on shortages in general and transferable skills – in relation to employability skills. This review suggested not that there would be a shortage of graduates, but that there would be shortage of high level graduates with the right skills that were needed for the future.

These future graduates would need to be prepared for employment in the wider world, and be able to see themselves as lifelong learners in a dynamic and changing environment (House of Commons, 2009). Addressing an issue such as this situates employability within a framework for higher education but questions the ability of the sector to address it properly. Graduate research that shows increased employment opportunities are available for those individuals that have the desirable skills and this is increased for post graduate students (HECSU and AGCAS, 2013).

## 2.5 Pedagogy for Employability

Whilst the imposition of PDP is something that has had to be addressed across the whole of the Higher Education (HE) sector, the interpretation and implementation lack consistency and there is clear evidence of uncertainty in the way that this topic is understood and has subsequently been operationalised (Clegg, 2004). It is arguably easier to include PDP into strategies that underpin vision and goals within each university, that subsequently meet the needs of students wanting fulfilment from their 'journey' through Higher Education, but it is much more difficult for the HE providers to be confident about the success of their approach (Cole and Tibby, 2013). Is that success measured by degree classifications? - ie an upper second class degree or above- by module grades, or employment success? If so, are these effective measures of how an individual student is successfully able to self-actualise – ie reach their full potential – at this particular point in their life? How do individuals know that they have achieved this if they do not get the grades they want, but ultimately, end up fulfilled in their career/life path? If there is no correlation, then how do we attribute this success to HE curriculum interventions such as PDP?

Clearly, the acknowledgement of PDP and employability across the sector is one that cannot be ignored, but it is something that is conceptually fraught with problems through interpretations for teaching purposes. Employability increases the chances for securing employment but understanding what it means in practice is complex. Three dimensions that are suggested to define employability are – encapsulating career identity, personal adaptability and social and human capital (Fugate, Kinicki and Ashforth, 2004).

This then needs to be translated into an approach for the delivery of teaching and learning, one that is customised learning to suit a diversity of learners (Sfard, 1998, Sellars, 2006). Two approaches (Pegg et al, 2012) of what essentially pedagogy for employability might suggest give different perspectives from the literature – one of a

skillset for graduates seeking career success (Yorke, 2006) and the other that puts learners at the centre of their higher education learning experience that can be described as enabling and creative (Harvey, 2003).

In order to qualify those approaches within a pedagogical context, a constructivist view of the teaching and learning attempts to situate it securely from an educational psychology perspective, giving credibility to interpretations and ideas for curriculum delivery.

Linking employability and PDP to established learning theory is a possibility, and applications of learning theory to employer based scenarios are well documented (Lester and Costley, 2010). The value of reflective and vocational learning were explored by Schon (1987, 1991), with particular references to the 'swamp'. Interpretations on how to get out of that metaphoric swamp were reliant upon being reflective and reflexive, and learning by doing things repeatedly until competency became identifiable and subsequently verifiable by a moderator, thereby realigning curriculum development to the needs of the students (Biggs and Tang, 2011). Information systems methodologies such as Soft systems methodology (Checkland, 1981), identify a schematic for problem solving 'soft, fuzzy edged' problems, and the Kolb (1984) learning model provides a way for adult learners to engage with their practical experience in a reflective way in order to improve themselves and acquire skills and knowledge. Being able to write a reflective account is reliant upon support from the theory as to how to accomplish this to a satisfactory standard (Moon, 2001, 2004). Yet there is a complexity in the different bodies of theory, however, which is often overlooked by many who have a set of beliefs suggesting that there is a degree of autonomy on the part of the individual when experiencing employment through active participation (Tennant, 2006). Their ability to be able to cope with these phenomena cannot easily be taught (Lester and Cotley, 2010) but the extensive research literature from the employer perspective is insistent upon this becoming part of a university degree programme. This subsequent conflict of opinion gives universities a difficult challenge when attempting to embed employability within a taught curriculum. One approach is to broadcast inspirational lectures to students, delivered by industry specialists using innovative technological platforms, but it could be argued that students who experience disruption in their lives (Lifewide 2014) whilst attempting to get a degree will feel even more removed from their ultimate goals when the person delivering their lecture is not physically present in the room with them.

*“Embedding employability into the core of higher education will continue to be a key priority of Government, universities and colleges, and employers. This will bring both significant private and public benefit, demonstrating higher education’s broader role in contributing to economic growth as well as its vital role in social and cultural development.”*

(HEFCE, 2011)

In order for universities to respond to these challenges, research suggests that the utilisation of PDP related tools such as ePortfolios, is a way forward (Pegg et al, 2012). An approach to learning should subsequently be adopted in order to articulate this, whilst at the same time enabling the individual student attributes that are situated within the context of employability to be realised, for example self-esteem, confidence, motivation etc (Pegg et al, 2012, Cole and Tibby, 2013, Clegg, 2004, Treleaven and Voola, 2008). The interpretations of these ideas are subject to local variations, implementation approaches, and differing measures of success, some of which can be transparent – numeracy skills, IT skills – and others which are more difficult to measure – positive attitude, enthusiasm. Yet it is these more difficult attributes that employers regard as ‘gaps’ in the skillset of new graduates. Attempts to define what is meant by the correct approach to learning to fill these gaps and meet an employability agenda continues to be an unknown (Gibbs, 2010). Subsequently, there is no suitable model for teaching within the HE sector, and the practice is still being debated, variable, and inconsistent. Of equal significance is a view from the student perspective that reports their inability to make the commitments to employability themselves (Tomlinson, 2007, 2012) due to transitional adjustments to university (Denovan and Macaskill, 2013) which can be problematic to their future success.

PDP, is an approach that is widely acknowledged as a way of ‘pulling together the threads of employability’ to meet the needs of a diverse group of student learners (Pegg et al, 2012) . In order to achieve this, universities need to be able to articulate their approach to learning and employability. Whilst evidence exists in the embedding of all of the appropriate attributes that sit within the concepts of PDP and employability within their degree programmes, the consistency of a suitable approach to teaching and learning that subsumes this agenda is not readily available in an accessible format.

*“Effective pedagogy demands consistent policy frameworks with support for learning for diverse students as their main focus. Policies at government, system, institutional and organisation level need to recognise the fundamental importance of learning for individual, team, organisational, institutional, national and system success. Policies should be designed to create effective and equitable learning environments for all students to benefit socially and economically.”*

(TLRP, 2010 p14)

The employer view of their required skillset is widely publicised, and additional debate around those skills often include the following: business and customer awareness, problem solving, communication and literacy, application of numeracy, application of IT, a positive ‘can do’ attitude, and entrepreneurship/innovation/creativity, not to exclude body language, oral presentation skills, team working and so the debate goes on (CBI 2011, Hind and Moss, 2005). Qualifiers for all of these skills vary from one interpretation to the other but are largely understood across the sector. When adding

this skillset to a model for career management that potentially maximises opportunities for employability, Bridgstock (2009) has created a model that articulates an

*“ongoing process of engaging in reflective, evaluative and decision-making processes using skills for self-management and career building, based on certain underlying traits and dispositional factors, to effectively acquire, exhibit and use generic and discipline-specific skills in the world of work”.*

This idea suggests the importance of engaging in reflection, making evaluations that are dependent upon the ability to self-assess your skillset in relation to successful career building (Pitts, Coles and Thomas, 2001). Subsequent recognition of the acquisition of these skills is therefore essential to the re-packaging of ‘self’ for specific job/career targeting. This reinforces the role of PDP within the context of employability, and shows how they continue to converge as one.

However, evidence suggests that students need direction and guidance to help them acquire the required study skills within a university. They need structure and guidance models to follow but by the time their reach final year, they have a better understanding and appreciation of why these were necessary (Haywood and Madden, 2000).

Critics of this approach can sometimes label organisations as attempting to offer things that they should not be doing when addressing the attributes relating to PDP and employability (Ecclestone et al, 2005). Some of the empirical evidence (Ecclestone, 2007) suggests that students feel less empowered when being challenged and should not be encouraged to look at themselves in order to find ways in which they can become more self-aware (Ecclestone, 2004, Ecclestone and Hayes, 2009a). Yet the very essence of being human and interacting with other humans when experiencing education can encourage learning, self-development and the strive for self-actualisation. The essence of collaboration inside a Vygotskyan ‘zone of proximal development’ with people who might be ‘more knowledgeable others’ and community is about much more than acquiring traditional subject knowledge and understanding (Maslow, 1954, Vygotsky, 1978, Curzon, 2003, Peters 2012). Furthermore, there are indicators of a greater level of understanding of improved pedagogical practices (Ansari and Coch, 2006) to foster an improvement to employability (Pegg et al, 2012).

*“Measure success in life by effort and doing your best, then it is always in your hands to succeed and be proud of yourself.”*

*(Peters, 2012 p238)*

## **2.6 The ePortfolio**

There has been extensive research regarding the portfolio and the ePortfolio, both as a mode of assessment for learning (Havnes and Wittek, 2006, Broadfoot, 1998) and as a useful tool for Personal Development Planning, not just for students, but also for their educators in relation to staff development and CPD (Barrett, 2006). There are

numerous interpretations, each having their own supporters and critics, with views from both sides advocating the value gains they bring to showcasing the student achievements in a manner that is capable of communicating considerably more in depth information than a degree awarding certificate (Abrami et al, 2008). However, the experience of managing and maintaining an ePortfolio for PDP may be the showcase platform for the student from which they can recognise their own skillset in relation to PDP in a way that the degree certificate on its own does not do. Subsequently, the ePortfolio may be a guiding steer to the student for articulating their own PDP (Davis and Hummert, 2004), its value being its evolution as a part of the degree experience, but the process of crediting its contents as part of the degree award may be the point where HEAR (Higher Education Achievement Report) has taken the sector up to the present, though the role of the confirmation and validation of the appropriate assessment evidence for HEAR may still be dependent upon a functional need for a portfolio being in situ (Baume, 2001a, 2001b)

One all-encompassing representation of an ePortfolio is PebblePad, with a strap line of “not just an ePortfolio” and descriptors relating to its function as a personal learning space and a place where learning tools can be accessed with which the author can address multiple needs and deliverables, as appropriate to the given context at the time (Sutherland, Brotchie and Chesney, 2011). A whole new language has evolved within PebblePad, and words such as webfolios, gateways, workspaces, form part of the vocabulary that learners have to get used to, in order to acquire competences with this type of technology.

Learners often need to have different types of portfolios – work based/career focused areas (Gomez, 2004), learning and teaching, and personal filing space – and are able to share the contents of these portfolios with peers, employers, family and friends. There is also a guaranteed reassurance that the ownership belongs to the author, and thus the control of access to the contents is self-managed (Abrami et al, 2008). These portfolios can contain evidence, reflection, support professional development and employability whilst also being utilised for assessment purposes (Irons, 2003, Baume, 2001a, 2001b). As a component of teaching and learning they encourage reflective practice, lifelong learning and allow for individual development and assessment (Rees and Sheard, 2004). Students also need to have confidence in the contents of their portfolio to give the tasks the higher levels of attention and deeper understanding that they require (Rees, Shepherd and Chamberlain, 2005). If it is perceived that the intent and purpose is ill-defined and the quality of the feedback is superficial, then the engagement and students’ subsequent development will be considerably lessened (Fernsten and Fernsten, 2005). This is a strength of technologies such as PebblePad when compared to virtual learning environments such as Blackboard, where the ownership clearly resides within the institution, the functionality and capabilities of the tool may be more restricted, and customisation may be limited.

The initial premise behind the establishment of portfolios for learners, from Dearing's Progress files (Dearing, 1997) and beyond, suggests that learners engaging with the development of their own portfolios will do so throughout their lives. Within the HE sector there have been extensive debates on interoperability of the technologies between universities, and this has been seen as a barrier to implementation, yet the literature suggests that this notion of one portfolio for life is not always either desirable or achievable for learners due to interoperability issues with the technology (ePortfolios, 2015). In many circumstances individual learners are more than happy to start again as the needs arise in accordance with the requirements of the task in hand, and the constant reflection does not always need to be recorded either as a written, audio or visual reminder of what was done previously that needs to inform the present. In many ways, the essence of being human, and having cognitive capacity, records this for us without needing to always have a physical computer as we actually already have a computer and hard drive (metaphorically) as a component (parietal lobe) of our brain (Peters, 2012). Yet the usefulness of a physical space in which to organise our thoughts and experiences cannot be ignored, as there are impacts upon the accessibility we might have to our brain held computer, such as memory, recall ability, and the constructivist makeup and life experiences that contributes to our humanness. Therefore, having easy access to things of note via an electronic portfolio can facilitate university students to develop focused strategies for maximising their potential in circumstances relating to employment, for example, when they need to re-frame and present past achievements, experiences and qualifications to fit the criteria of a desirable job opportunity (Pegg et al, 2012).

Many universities facilitate access to an ePortfolio, in a variety of forms – PebblePad, Blackboard, Sharepoint, Moodle, WordPress, in house developed tools, Duo – to name a few, and there is not a consistency across the sector for one that suits every university student (Havnes and Wittek, 2006). From a macro perspective, this is potentially problematic, but from the individual view point, this can be seen as less important. From the literature, access to a tool is not an issue per se, but how this is embedded as part of the university experience is of greater concern. Whilst PebblePad is clearly much more than an 'ePortfolio', the infrastructure within universities already exists, and if a financial commitment has been made to Blackboard, for example, as a virtual learning environment, then in some cases further investment into a technology without a strategic steer may be withheld or scaled down economically in order to see if it is truly needed. Subsequently, technical support may be non-specific, and wider take up of the functionality may be up to early adopters (Rogers, 1995) and 'super champions' who are intent upon providing students with opportunities that this technology presents, regardless of the culture and landscape of their institution. Without a commitment from managers and leaders, there is a reduced acknowledgement of the visible and tangible gains that this enhancement can provide, even when political pressures are placed upon the sector in relation to the HEAR. As previously stated, the HEAR has the potential to be utilised as a vehicle for the overall

articulation of a university student's journey, representing up to 4 years of teaching and learning, development of self, employability, and so on. Tangible and strategic objects can be evidenced for HEAR 6.1 via an ePortfolio, and furthermore, students may be able to develop the ability to articulate their skills and experience to their audience (future employers, financiers, associations, etc), having had the opportunity to develop their own ePortfolio of evidence and artifacts.

The debate around the suitability of the tool that is the most appropriate one for ePortfolios continues within the sector, and over time the tool itself has become an embedded part of PDP and the employability area. There is, however, a degree of consensus that university students should be provided with the opportunity to situate the outcomes from PDP and employability engagement into something similar or comparable to what the construct of a portfolio/ePortfolio represents. In addition, as previously mentioned, the debate further suggests that not only are portfolios a useful tool for student use but they can also be recognised as a tool for educators and professional practitioners to think about their own practice and engagement in a practical way (Barrett, 2006). Some interpretations of this can be as an enabler for accreditation of prior learning (APEL) (mirror), a chronological store of evidence (map), a journal, an HE portfolio for cognitive development and HE theory (map), or a professional portfolio (sonnet) to showcase exemplars and good practice (Diez, 1994, Baume, 2003). This will inform their future experiences and has the potential to influence a culture shift in institutional thinking (Riley, 2011).

## 2.7 Looking forward – The HEAR

To inform this discussion an understanding of what is represented by a Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) is given. A generalised view of the intent of HEAR is to provide verified information about students' academic and significant non-degree related achievements. It incorporates the traditional transcript that indicates the details of the modules studied, the marks awarded, but it also recognises other achievements a student has made (HEAR, 2014). Its audience comprises any third party stakeholder needing to engage with the exiting student through an informed individual transcript detailing qualifications, skills, abilities and attributes relating to the recipient.

*“The purpose of the supplement [HEAR] is to provide sufficient recognition of qualifications (diplomas, degrees, certificates etc). It is designed to provide a description of the nature, level, context and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed by the individual named on the original qualifications to which this supplement is appended. It should be free from any value judgements, equivalence statements or suggestions about recognition. Information in all eight sections should be provided. Where information is not provided, an explanation should give the reason why.”*

(HEAR, 2014 p2)

This understanding has arisen through extensive yet transformative debates informing these ideas leading up to the HEAR today over a period of almost 20 years – Dearing (1997) Jackson (2001), Knight and Yorke (2003), QAA (2001), HEA, (2003), Burgess (2004) Leitch, (2006) – founded on a rich body of research relating back over many more years – Vygotsky, (1978), Bandura (1993) Maslow (1954) Schon (1987, 1991), Kolb (1984), Biggs (1996) - to name but a few. This growing sophistication in the development of the understanding of what is required to equip graduates with outgoing certified evidence, as a result of their degree experience has progressed considerably from ill-conceived portfolios of evidence, open to a different interpretation and flawed implementation, to an opportunity to articulate the said and newly acquired skills, knowledge and attributes through a Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) supplement, that is recognised across the whole sector and beyond. Subsequently there is a duty of care placed upon institutions to undertake this with due diligence, informed by the rich, underpinning body of knowledge that has progressed and informed things thus far (Andrews, 2013).

There still exists, however, a recognition from the literature that the HEAR, is attempting in part to measure what is largely unmeasurable, in having to articulate employability skills. Whilst data capture is within the realms of operationalising HEAR within institutions, the degree of having to differentiate between students, is unclear, and not strictly the function of it at this point in time. Being able to capture evidence and articulate experiences can be operationalised, but seeking engagement and ownership on the part of the individual student requires a level of commitment from within the institution, incumbent upon the prevailing infrastructure and a curriculum approach that fosters the integration of employability skills for all students.

Employers want to be able to see some distinguishing evidence indicators (Burgess, 2007) in order to inform their selection processes when seeking to recruit graduates with a positive attitude (Gibbs, 2010, 2012) and other desirable attributes and skill sets much sought after in society and the wider global context. There is a burden of expectation placed upon institutions to best represent the certification and certifiable achievements of their outgoing graduates that will communicate with the employers and other stakeholders quantitative and qualitative data, compiled with accuracy and integrity, to best reflect the skills and capabilities of the HEAR recipient.



The provision of HEAR is a national requirement, with some parallels that are evident in the European diploma supplement. A summary of what HEAR represents follows:

SECTION 1 – Information identifying the holder of the qualification

SECTION 2 – Information identifying the qualification

SECTION 3 – Information on the level of the qualification

SECTION 4 – Information on the contents and results gained

SECTION 5 – Information on the function of the qualification

SECTION 6 – Additional information

SECTION 7 – Certification of the HEAR

SECTION 8 – Information on the National Higher Education System

Every exiting student should receive their HEAR, detailing all of their achievements whilst studying at their chosen university. Seven of the eight sections above can largely be populated by the information that is already held on university systems, together with gradual progress through grades and achievements throughout the timespan of the degree programme. The purpose of section 6, however, is to provide additional information that gives a richer verified picture of the student achievements from a wider perspective than the programme of study. This is potentially an area of debate for institutions who need a strategic steer to facilitate student ownership of section 6.1 across the institution for greater impact in relation to future employability and opportunities.

There are three defined categories comprising additional information, within Section 6.1. Those categories are:

- Additional awards – (accredited performance in **non academic** contexts) – *for individual units/ modules studied, in addition to the main degree programme, if they do not appear in section 4.3*
- Additional recognized activities undertaken by students which demonstrate achievement but for which no recognition is given in relation to academic credit, - *ie volunteering, representative roles, training courses, significant verifiable roles eg national level representation in sport activities or other*
- University, Professional and Departmental prizes – *both academic and non-academic.*

The guidance for institutions also suggests that if 6.1 is not included, then the document should not be termed a HEAR. In addition, students should be provided with the opportunity to indicate any elements they would not wish to be included, and that a link may also be made to an electronic portfolio, (if it exists) that may be included as part of the HEAR when the portfolio is related to personal development (HEAR, 2015).

Within institutions there will be inevitable variations in processes in relation to section 6.1, which is the point of convergence between academic degree programmes and recognition of other achievements that might enhance employability opportunities. The perception of 6.1 as an opportunity for institutional innovation in relation to the alignment of curriculum, PDP and employability, will inevitably result in early adopters and laggards (Rogers, 1995) and exemplars showing positive and negative experiences will inform the sector. The steer in relation to the success of institutional commitment and engagement to HEAR, is clearly underpinned by a recognition of PDP and employability concepts as a component of the university degree experience, as without an understanding of this, section 6.1 becomes potentially lacking in substance and impact for the outgoing recipient of the HEAR.

## 2.8 Summarising thoughts

The complexity of the debate relating to PDP and Employability, the suitability of portfolios and the ability of the practitioners to transform their teaching practice (Brown, Chen, and Gordon, 2012), the transgression through from progress files and portfolios to HEAR, is ongoing. A high profile endorsement – ie HEAR – is significant for institutions to embrace. The recognition of student achievements needs to be far more than a numerical degree classification (Burgess, 2007, Andrews, 2013), and the integration of HEAR is transformative across the sector. The raised profile of employability within HE is an indicator of how existing programmes need to change in order to reflect interpersonal skills that employers are expecting from future graduates (Bill and Bowen-Jones, 2006) and to acquire graduate jobs (High Fliers, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014).

*“Skills development should be embedded in academic programmes, rather than an add-on to give students the best chance of shaping their future.”*

(Andrews, 2013)

The emphasis on teaching and learning practices should be a part of the debate so that recognition and shift from discipline specific content influences to one that addresses the research in teaching and learning and effective pedagogy (Hausfather, 2001, Healy, 2001), especially relating to employability. Furthermore, developing lifelong learning needs to be part of a learning culture, recognised by the key participants – learners, government and education providers – that can take place throughout peoples’ lives, in many different forms (Burgess, 2007) and the skills to develop this culture shift should be part of a degree experience (Riley, 2011).

There are numerous approaches suggested for linking PDP and the curriculum (Atlay, 2006, QAA, 2009b)

– a discrete approach where students choose to opt in (or out as the case may be)

- a linked approach with PDP running in parallel to the standard curriculum,

and both of these may result in low levels of engagement, but there are equally limitations with other ideas for doing this -

- an embedded PDP in specific modules with links to other subjects being studied, but the risks may be that it becomes fragmented.

- an integrated approach where it appears in every module but may lose its visibility

- extended PDP where it attempts to integrate within the real world and work experiences, which may be unpredictable.

Whilst the intention is to enhance and improve a student curriculum through the integration of PDP and employability elements, the recognition and engagement from the student may not be achieved (Yorke, 2006). This could be affected through the students' own belief systems in themselves and in particular the value they see in their own self-efficacy.

*“The less individuals believe in themselves, the more they need explicit, proximal and frequent feedback of progress that provides repeated affirmations of their growing capabilities.”*

(Banduras, 1997)

It may be some years later before students are able to see and value this aspect of their experience (Yorke, 2006).

This chapter posited the agendas of the various stakeholders involved in HE and added into the discussion the significance of PDP and employability, particularly when having to make a response to the HEAR, suggesting a need to revisit an HE curriculum that is able to prepare graduates who can meet the needs of society and employers alike. Success indicators from early adopters seek to integrate aspects of employability within a pre-existing curriculum, but still seek to give it visibility and value, but there are some clearly identified issues that need to be responded to as illustrated by the 3P model (variant). The next chapter will look at the theory related to teaching and learning and, more specifically, how it can inform the debates taking place in the present day. It will also identify the related psychology and established understanding in order to suggest 'best practice' that can be applied to the HE context discussed in this chapter.

### **3 Unpicking Educational Psychology: A 21<sup>st</sup> century discussion of theoretical philosophy in relation to an HE curriculum.**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter discussed a variant of Biggs' 3P Model - Presage, Process and Product - (Gibbs, 2010, 2012) that postulated the dimensions of quality that should be applied to teaching and learning within universities. The components that can be found within the 3P Model have been debated across numerous schools of education and psychology for many years, supplying a rich body of knowledge related to best approaches for teaching and learning. This chapter provides a discussion across a number of educational paradigms and attempts to situate the composite thinking in today's university degree programmes, in order to recognise the key factors that should be considered.

A number of schools of learning are very well established and constantly debated amongst educators, philosophers and psychologists. Early thinkers from behaviourist ideologies evidenced successful teaching and learning through the changed behaviour that was subsequently exhibited. They dismissed perceptions and thoughts that emerged from the cognitivist schools as being untrustworthy, due to the lack of tangible and visible measures validating proof of existence and integrity. However, neo behaviourists did concede to the presence of those intangibles together with the potential impact that they might have on the overall teaching and learning experience (Curzon, 2003). Humanist thinkers recognised the importance of the individuals' own ability to fulfil their potential, whilst communities of learning were advocated as essential for building relationships and communities of learning within a social and/or situationalised view of learning (Smith, 2003). Other dynamics include aspects of human behaviour that relate to maturation, self-regulation, collaboration and procrastination that impact on performance and results (Janssen and O'Brien, 2014).

In order to understand the relevance of the context, an analytical discussion of learning theory is offered to facilitate the development of a reliable teaching model that has the potential to be useful for today's educators and strategists. An interpretation of the research from several schools of learning is presented and the degree of influence from each one is discussed in relation to present day thinking, despite the historical nature of much of the published literature.

The further nature of this thesis, whilst seeking to provide an iterative account of how PDP can be addressed within the context of an HE (Higher Education) curriculum, inevitably emphasises a humanist theoretical perspective, yet acknowledgment of other schools of learning provides a useful insight across a number of perspectives. However, this research seeks further contemplative thinking in developing a different approach to teaching and learning based on a solid foundation of education psychology, and subsequently of use to both students, employers and wider society.

*“Conditions for effective learning are considered to be the responsibility of the teacher”.*

(Curzon, 2003)

Therefore the psychology of how we learn needs to be considered in order to answer the question effectively. Psychology was defined in 1890 as the science of mental life, both of its phenomena and of their conditions (James, 1890 in Curzon 2003); and he refers to feelings, desires, cognitions, and so on. The subsequent study of this has resulted in a number of well-established schools of thought relating to educational psychology, a number of which are discussed within this chapter.

Figure 3.1 presents a pictorial overview of some of the key influences across a number of schools of learning that inform this discussion. This listing is not exclusive, but merely illustrative of the complexity of the differing bodies of knowledge and opinion that has an influence on this discussion. The initial debate situates the literature under a number of key groupings to capture a view of the main findings and guide the discussion. Further aggregation is presented as a ‘Table of Theorists’ (Appendix 7) though recognition of crossover between the ideologies is sought. The groupings and classifications attempt to give some clarity to the explanations and facilitate greater understanding and recognition. A summary follows to synthesise the theory as part of a present day view implicitly incorporating blended learning and other approaches that utilise technologies (Garrison and Kanuka, 2004). The identified literature is intended to be representative of the theories and to summarise the ideologies therein. To establish the premise for this debate, a definition of learning is given to underpin the synthesis of the wider body of literature, with an implicit acknowledgement of it being regarded as a transformative process (Bates, 2012).

*“Learning can broadly be defined as any process that in living organisms leads to permanent capacity change and which is not solely due to biological maturation or ageing.”*

(Illeris, 2009 p3)



Figure 3.1 - A view of some of the highly influential philosophers of education

### 3.2 The Behaviourist School of Learning: A 'world view'

*"This involves a mechanistic, materialistic view of psychology, involving a close study of observable, objectively measurable behaviour. It teaches that the explanation, prediction and control of behaviour are possible without reference to concepts involving 'consciousness'."*

(Curzon, 2003 p35)

It is widely recognised that John Watson (1878-1958) was a key pioneer to whom behaviourist thinking could be attributed (Tennant, 2006), and his publication in 1913 'Psychology as the behaviourist views it' was instrumental in elevating the validity of this school of thought. As a true behaviourist he [Watson] claimed that in order to establish and validate the theory within a scientific domain, behaviourism should seek to be objective, drawing on evidence from measurable behaviour that has been 'learned' and most of the empirical evidence supporting this thinking had a basis in experiments involving animals (Tennant, 2006). This approach was described as habit forming, mechanistic and was reliant upon a close study of observable behaviour (Jarvis, 2005, Tennant, 2006) and made no reference to any concepts that involved intangibles such as consciousness, thoughts and feelings, but merely attempted to explain, predict and control behaviour (Curzon, 2003, Tennant, 2006). The belief that all learning was attributed to the environment and the activities therein was reinforced through recognised and well-regarded scientific work undertaken by the Russian physiologist Pavlov (1849-1936) whose experiments with salivating dogs responding to a bell stimulus is widely known. This eminent scientist regarded any subsequent 'mental events' as being 'reflex units of behaviour', attributed to environmental stimuli only and the process of conditioning.

Pavlov's work with dogs in Figure 3.2 can be described as classical conditioning from within a controlled, behaviourist environment (school).

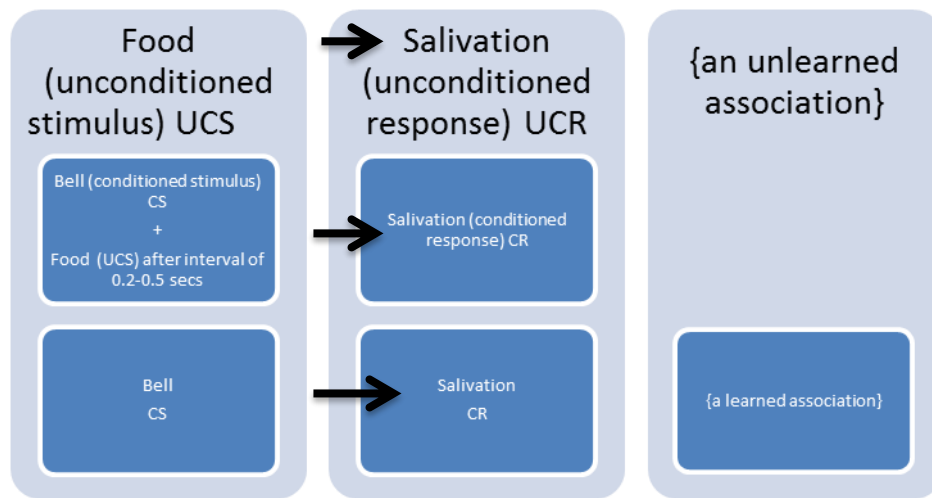


Figure 3.2 - The process of Pavlov's classical conditioning (Curzon, 2003)

A brief explanation of this shows the effect over time on this experiment when dogs were given food and subsequently salivated presenting this unconditional response (UR). The inclusion of the sound of a bell, and over a time period, resulted in the dogs salivating on hearing the bell even when the food was not being given. This then became a learned association. The debate about these reflexes is argued, by behaviourists, to be as a result of the learning environment, not any mental process, and there is a source of rich data that inevitably exists within any learning environment that suggests that this mechanisation of the required behaviours of students can be as a result of conditioning within the appropriate environment (Vygotsky, 1978).

Critics of Pavlov such as Arthur Koestler in his book 'The Act of Creation' in 1964 argued that Pavlov's reductionist view of learning was not something that should be widely interpreted for education purposes as being a threat to creativity and mankind in general (Curzon, 2003) and in no way should inform any classroom situation. Modern day critics of behaviourism suggest that the limitations in this way of thinking have now been informed more holistically through greater understanding of how human beings learn throughout their life experiences and whilst cumulative learning and repetition have a place, they can no longer be regarded as an exclusive approach to effective learning in the wider sense (Jarvis, 2005, Tennant, 2006, Illeris, 2009).

However, advocates of Pavlov's work recognise the significance of environmental stimuli and its subsequent influence shaping human intellect and behaviour through the use of a controlled situation. Ironically, Pavlov in his later years, acknowledged the part played in the development of the human personality through immersion in a controlled environment with similar peers and higher level associations, even though initially such intangible benefits could not have been measured scientifically by any of

the widely publicised experiments with animals (Curzon, 2003). The validation of this approach has significant influence on this research, illustrated in the later discussion around the work of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978).

Whilst the experiments of Pavlov were embodied through the work and experiments of Watson, some of the key findings from these scientific philosophers are epitomised through the role played within the learning environment by the 'teacher' who controlled the activities therein, and subsequently modified or re-shaped them as required, as well as playing a significant part in the growth and development of the learner's personality (Vygotsky, 1978, Curzon, 2003, Tennant, 2006, Illeris, 2009).

Similar work by Edward Thorndike (1874-1949), including further animal experiments, which, resulting in his theory of learning, developed behaviourist ideas further, and cited the notion of incremental reward and goal setting, together with behavioural preferences for activities, repetition, reinforcement and familiarity, resulting in success and shape shifting for the learners. The importance of reward and recognition of success were important factors as was the impact of failure on overall dissatisfaction with the learning process and/or experience. One of the key issues identified from external stakeholders (Gibbs, 2010, 2012) reinforces the importance of timely feedback and acknowledgement which gives a degree of credence to the ideology of these very early behaviourists when applied to the present day.

Another eminent professor from the behaviourist school was Edwin Guthrie (1886-1959) whose contiguity theory emphasised how behaviour could be altered by the experience and did not recognise the need for reinforcement and repetition in the same way that Thorndike had, but advocated that the positive immersion in the experience itself would bring about the desirable behaviour. He also advised that if undesirable behaviour was punished, then the only way to avoid the situation was to recognise the cues that indicated that the undesirable behaviour was going to occur and subsequently make changes to eliminate the presence of those cues. A subsequent impact of these ideas is evident in a model of understanding (Illeris, 2009) that indicate the individual differences in human beings, their different types of learning, and the barriers that each one brings with them into their learning environment. The converse suggests that this is perhaps expected and learners bring with them their own styles and approaches that should be encouraged (Biggs and Tang, 2011).

Hull (1885-1952) agreed with Thorndike and others about the significance of the S-R theory behind behaviourism, but added another variable to it – S-O-R (stimulus, organism, response). This 'O' encapsulated other notions such as motivation and incentives, but also recognised inhibitory factors such as tiredness, drive and stimulus intensity, which were associated with the success of the learning experience. The work of Hull, however, was often criticised under wider scrutiny as not having a sound empirical base, though his work (Curzon, 2003) on the concept of the presence of



internal forces had a considerable impact, again, on a reshaping of the learning environment and the facilitation of distributed practice. A later view of this work would potentially be quite different due to developmental research into effective teaching and learning, sensory registers and neurological processes, which acknowledge the essence of individual differences and the essence of being human (Vygotsky, 1978, Curzon, 2003, Smith et al, 2009, Biggs and Tang, 2011, Illeris, 2009) and the naughty chimp metaphor (Peters, 2012) adds further curiosity as to the receptiveness of the learners and what is actually known about the conscious and unconscious mind leading to an awareness of neuro-science that is beyond the scope of this thesis.

**Table 3-1 Behaviourism – Summary of Main Concepts (Curzon, 2003)**

Conscious	Rejected mind and mental states as they could not be verified
Reductionist	All human activities could be explained through the behavioural responses of lower animals
Stimulus-Response (SR)	All behaviour could be understood in the context of responses to stimuli (S-R)
Conditioning	Relationships between stimuli and response can be modified in order to change the behaviour
Environment	Behaviour might be explained as a function of environmental influences
Formal, quantitative measures	If scientific method were to characterise psychology, there would be a need to search for actual physical measures/measured responses
Early stage objective	Prediction and control of human behaviour

Koestler in Curzon (2003), a major critic of Pavlov’s work, together with other critics reject the claims that experiments on mutilated animals in laboratories have a place in classroom instruction and therefore are firmly rejected by many teachers. Koestler sees reductionism (that is the attempt to explain higher processes by reference to more basic processes) as a threat to humankind maintaining that Pavlov merely provided insights into human processes that are ‘shared’ with animals and are basic and elementary, and left out those that are exclusive to the species and define our uniqueness. Furthermore it is felt by many that the entire concept of conditioning, with its all-too-familiar connection with ‘brain-washing’ (that is deliberate influencing of behaviour patterns in persons so as to make them conform to the demands of a political ideology) must have no place in educational activity. The freedoms which must characterise the classroom are incompatible with the philosophy and technology associated with conditioning.

Others see in Pavlov’s work the possibility of evolving techniques which, when refined, can be used consciously and conscientiously to shape human intellectual development – an important objective of a teaching activity. For Pavlov, learning was inseparable

from association, hence *what* teachers do, *how* they do it, in what *surrounding circumstances* and to what *ends* become significant for the study of instruction.

Environmental stimuli provided intentionally and unintentionally by the teacher's performance in the process of instruction may become associated with undesired responses – ie a dislike of a teacher may affect student performance, liking of the subject etc.

Human personality is determined, according to Pavlov, by the environment, biological inheritance and conditions of upbringing, and a person's general behaviour depends largely on his or her 'acquisitions', that is the habits he or she has formed. The part played by a teacher will be obvious. Planned teaching events strengthened by other experiences can exert a decisive influence on that process.

### 3.2 The neo-behaviourist "world view"

There is an educational school of thought in which the view held is that behaviour is directed towards a goal and is usually purposive. These psychologists are generally known as 'neo-behaviourists' who explore the interactions between humans, behaviour, consequences and experiences of the behaviour within that particular group of people, and their relationships, both as a group and as individuals, with goals, and the attainment of those goals.

*"All human behaviour, including the behaviour of machines which man builds to behave in his place, is ultimately to be accounted for in terms of the phylogenic contingencies of survival which have produced man as a species and the ontogenetic contingencies of reinforcement which have produced him as an individual."*

(Skinner, 1969, in Curzon 2003, p70)

Such ideologies of the early behaviourists were extended and modified by educational psychologists and researchers alike and neo-behaviourist thinking emerged. Its fundamental premise was that the environment in which the behaviour was taking place was a controlling factor, and led to Tolman's purposive behaviour thinking (Curzon, 2003). This theory suggested that whilst goal-seeking in any situation was recognised, the response by the subject to the environment it was in was both selective and purposeful and that whilst a response to a stimuli was an inevitability, we were, as a species, guided towards goals in life that related to our beliefs and attitudes (Curzon, 2003). Therefore the placement of simplistic scientific based explanations by early behaviourists were changing in favour of this new way of thinking.

The neo-behaviourist school also acknowledged the importance of the learning environment (operant conditioning) and the actual activities that were intended to take place and the significance of a cognitive doctrine. The views of Skinner suggested that the importance of all behaviour was shaped by the environment in which the individual was situated, the other people with whom they associated within that

environment, and the in-built genetic makeup of them as an individual. Subsequently within such an environment, and being amongst a particular group of individuals, learning could take place, and was characterised as 'contingencies of reinforcement' (units of learning) through which a response is followed by a reinforcing stimulus. This second definition of learning utilises the dialogue from the behaviourist and neo-behaviourist schools, and helps to qualify further a greater understanding of learning styles and interpretations.

*"Learning is, in essence, the result of the creation of conditioned connections between the learner's operant behaviour and its reinforcement; it involves a change in the form or probability of the learner's response."*

(Curzon, 2003)

This definition was based on strict goal setting, with directed aims and observable outcomes, informed by robust and sometimes mechanistic theories of instruction and contiguity. The design of any learning processes needs to strive for a balance between the teacher and the learner, taking full cognisance of ambiguity, participation and structure (Liseywski and Jayce, 2011).

The work of Gagne (Gagne, 1985, Flynn, 1992, Driscoll 2004) resulted in a theory of instructional design that was largely informed (according to Gagne) by eight characteristics which comprise the intellectual skills already learned, the cognitive strategies for learning that are internal to the individual, verbal dialogue and interactions, attitude, motor skills, schemas to facilitate memory, abilities and individual responsive traits.

The following 8 phases of learning underpin this theory:

- 1 Motivation phase – identification of objectives
- 2 Apprehending phase – attention and selective perception
- 3 Acquisition – coding and storage, transform into patterns
- 4 Retention – practice, tests, feedback to facilitate memory storage
- 5 Recall – retrieval to internalise the process for the individual, provide reassurance
- 6 Generalisation – transfer of learning both laterally and vertically
- 7 Performance – learner is able to demonstrate that the objectives have been achieved.
- 8 Feedback – learner given an assessment view of their performance and an indicator of the level achieved.

The above interpretations have been generalised and paraphrased to give an indication of intent.

In addition, Gagne’s 9 steps of instruction (Table 3.2) is very well regarded and together with Skinner’s views largely underpins many of the foundations of teacher training and instruction design that are used today in schools and colleges, and are highly valued by practitioners therein. Critics of Skinner suggested that Skinner’s claims were based on his extrapolation of the data beyond its evidence base, and other criticisms suggested that the creativity and individuality of humans do not conform to fit the constraints set by neo-behaviourist thinking and fit into these prescriptive models (Curzon, 2003, Tennant, 2006, Schunk, 2009).

**Table 3-2 A composite summary of neo-behaviourism (Innovative learning, 2015)**

Purposive behaviour	<p>Tolman (1886-1959) (goals, motivation, cognitive)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Learning is always purposive and goal directed.</li> <li>2 Learning often involves the use of environmental factors to achieve a goal (means-ends analysis)</li> <li>3 Organisms will select the shortest and easiest path to achieve a goal.</li> </ol>
Operant conditioning	<p>Skinner (1904-1990) (planned learning activities/contingencies, directed aims, visible outcomes) The following interpretation and paraphrasing of Skinner’s assumptions on behaviour analysis that inform neo-behaviourist educational psychology is useful as an explanatory thinking frame.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 People exist as part of cultures and sub-cultures, and all possess genetic properties and physiological characteristics.</li> <li>2 Experiences as part of those cultures shape characteristics within the individuals and the groups of individuals.</li> <li>3 Interacting as part of a culture/sub-culture results in changes to individuals through the experiences that occur.</li> <li>4 The behaviour of an individual is controlled (and/or influenced) by the current context or culture to which they belong.</li> <li>5 The evolvement of the culture or sub-culture will shape and produce a repertoire as a result of the genetic endowment of the whole culture/sub-culture.</li> </ol>
Theories of Instruction	<p>Gagne (1916-2002) (developed sequential theories of instruction, including stimulus – response behaviour)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Gain attention</li> <li>2 Inform learner of objectives</li> <li>3 Stimulate recall of prior knowledge</li> <li>4 Present stimulus</li> <li>5 Provide guidance</li> <li>6 Elicit performance</li> <li>7 Provide feedback</li> <li>8 Assess performance</li> <li>9 Enhance retention and transfer</li> </ol>

Contiguity Theory	<p>Guthrie (1886-1959) (Relationships between stimuli and response can be modified in order to change the behaviour, the conditioning of movement)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Learning occurs when the subject responds as a result of 'doing'</li> <li>2 Specific instruction and set tasks</li> <li>3 Lots of variants in stimulus patterns in order to arrive at a desirable generalised response.</li> <li>4 The final response is the correct one, associated positively with the activity</li> </ol>
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This further extension of the understanding from the now neo-behaviourist school, and the subsequent development of approaches to instructional learning, gave structure to educators who were seeking to find ways to implement good practice and achieve success with teaching and learning innovations. The tangible stages give credibility to progressive and structured approaches that can be utilised as part of teacher training activities for new student teachers, giving recognition to curriculum analysis and lesson planning ideas. These defined stages can provide a firm foundation that can underpin most teaching and learning experiences, and inform successful curriculum planning (schemes of work, lesson plans, and so on) and there has always been a belief that learners need to know what it is they are doing, and how they are going to achieve their goals (Lea, 2004, Fry, Ketteridge, and Marshall, 2015).

### 3.4 The Gestalt School of educational theory – ‘a view from their world’

(def: ‘an organized whole that is perceived as more than the sum of its parts’) ([www.oxforddictionaries.com](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com))

A body of thinking from the Gestalt School focuses on ‘insight’ which is achieved when the learner fully understands the whole experience they are facing, and are thus enabled to build metaphorical bridges towards that end (Curzon, 2003, Tennant, 2006, Schunk, 2009). They [Gestaltists] state that the intrinsic laws of humans require the vision of the ‘whole’ in order to reorganise thoughts, develop facilitating structures, and align themselves towards the goal (situation). This then might be described as productive thinking, when the learner becomes aware of the relevance of their behaviour towards the achievement of a goal, and it is as a result of this reorganised thinking that insight has awakened. There are six basic laws that comprise a view of Gestalt psychology, as follows: figure-ground relationship, contiguity, similarity, Pragnanz (significance), closure and transposition, all of which inform the learning experience. Enabling learners to see and recognise what it is that they are supposed to be doing, can, according to Gestaltists, facilitate productive thinking (Wertheimer, in Curzon 2003) allowing individuals to reorganise and regroup the components of the situations with which they are involved, appreciating the whole thing rather than focusing on separate parts that are not always indicative of the whole, and thus

subsequent attainment is aligned to the overall objectives. The influence of contiguity theory thinking from Guthrie (Curzon 2003) adds to the debate in clarifying the active role of the learner who is taking part in the learning, having been given specific instructions and tasks to achieve, but being able to recognise a number of different ways to achieve the desired response which when achieved, is correct and gives a positive experience from the activity, thereby motivating and encouraging learning (Tennant, 2006, Schunk, 2009).

The significance of organised forms and patterns in human perception and learning constitutes the main influence of the Gestaltists. The very essence of learning is to be found in an understanding of relationships within organised entities of thought. This dimension, when contemplated within a framework of planned learning and teaching activities, is potentially one that could be achieved through the relationship with the lecturer and their area of expertise from both the subject perspective and from being able to communicate effectively with the student body.

### **3.5 The Cognitivist school of educational psychology**

Cognitive educational psychology recognises the ways in which humans process information, develop mental models that facilitate sense making (Klein and Baxter, 2006) and a popular analogy is that of the discipline of information processing whereby the human brain is likened to an information processor (Figure 3.3). Information is entered into the computer system and there is a subsequent output that occurs as a result of the information processor itself. Although the metaphor is not complete, as humans are influenced by a number of other variables, not least of which are their innate categories of thought. Many philosophical publications debate the influence of innate categories of thought on how humans process their world, and the philosopher Kant (1724-1804) was one of forefathers of this type of philosophy. The ways in which humans gain knowledge – cognize - about the world in which they live is a fundamental premise of cognitive psychology, as is the utilisation of that knowledge to make subsequent life choices and key decisions that may impact upon future pathways. (Bower and Hilgard, 1981, in Curzon 2003).

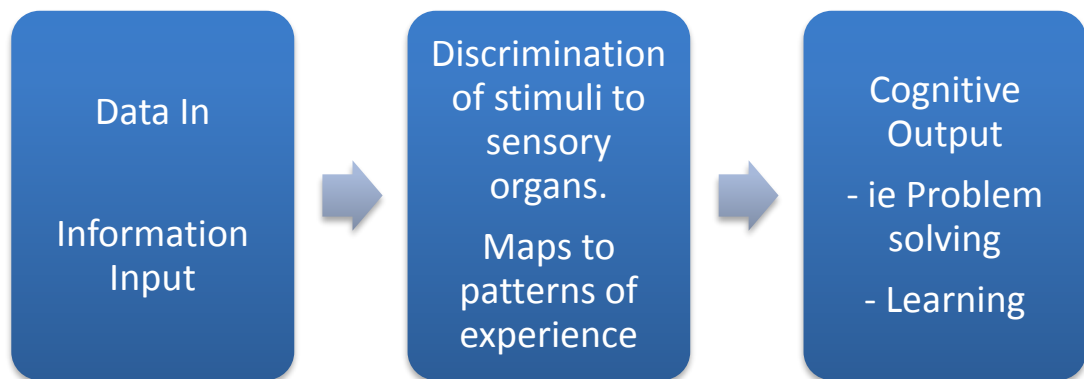


Figure 3.3 Information Systems metaphor

Some of the key influences from the school of cognitive educational psychology give a further insight into the ideologies and ways of thinking that inform this philosophy, and arguably influence teaching and learning development. A number of these ideologies are discussed to progress this research towards the achievement of its objectives, and whilst the publicised theory has been in existence for a considerable number of years, it still underpins much of the present day literature. Whilst behaviourists such as Skinner viewed some of these ideologies sceptically, largely due to a lack of scientific evidence, he did acknowledge that the findings therein would be useful from a non-scientific perspective in providing a useful vocabulary (Curzon, 2003).

A number of key influences inform cognitive models of educational psychology. Attempting to present an extensive body of thinking, produced by one author, in a relatively small frame of writing cannot be said to be fully representative, but some of the major influences from the work of John Dewey and Piaget add significantly to this research. Dewey was potentially one of the greatest known philosophers of our time (Curzon, 2003, PBS, 2015) and was concerned with how humans think (Dewey, 1897) and believed that the only real tests of human cognitions were results based, ie – practical results. By participating in education students were making conscious decisions about themselves and their choices, and would then potentially continuously reflect and evaluate to further refine their cognition. His views on the importance of participation in established educationalist institutions that had a body of both intellectual and social capital were an integral part of this process, and he documented two dimensions that were essential as part of the process of education – psychological and sociological, believing the former to have the greater impact.

*“Without the educator’s insight into the psychological structure and activities of the student, the education process can be only haphazard and arbitrary”.*

*(Dewey, 1897 in Curzon, 2003).*

The structures Dewey alludes to are the ways in which educational institutions are organised to provide teaching and learning. The purpose of the participation is essential as a starting point, as is the environment in which the 'learning' takes place, included in this is the 'teacher' who should be part of this conducive learning environment. Motivation and stimulation should arouse student interests and desire, and the pursuit of the curriculum aims should be suitably constructed and stimulating. Dewey believed that the learners should acquire the new knowledge, improve their level of intelligence and be able to move forward to new situations equipped with this new package. He believed that adolescents needed this type of shaping towards their individual growth potential, and that it was the responsibility of education per se to achieve this. Dewey spoke of 'plasticity' – a word that is not used quite so much today, but suggests the power to learn from experience and the development of good habits, which enables humans to have a degree of control over their own environment. The extent to which this intellectual development continues is fuelled by the innate desires of the humans experiencing the education. Critics of Dewey (O'Hear, 1991) labelled some of the interpretations of Dewey's ideas as disastrous, resulting in a lack of authoritarian practices, shifting the emphasis over to the individuals to find themselves rather than being challenged through a tried and tested route. During this time, however, literal interpretations of what was potentially recognised as progressive education, left institutions in a quandary about boundaries and control in the classroom, whilst seeking to implement contemporary thinking (Curzon, 2003, Jarvis, 2005, Illeris, 2009). It is Dewey's belief that the teacher, in order to engage with the act of thought with their students, should be able to arouse the interest of those students, which should lead to their 'explorations' within the field, and then select and verify a course of action to achieve the curriculum aims. Clearly this approach, whilst based on underpinning structures, is dependent upon the phases through which students travel, but in many cases, not all at the same time. These phases, again from Dewey's work, comprise the purpose of the teacher, and are described in terms as being the 'phases of capacity', they are as follows:

- Discipline
- Culture and social efficiency
- Personal refinement
- Improvement of character

Achievement of each of these phases is dependent upon the student's ability to experience participation and exploration as part of their learning, and ultimately being able to achieve and aspire towards changes in themselves as a result. From this early thinking it was about much more than the subject, and making interpretations and links about what Dewey believed in, across to the employer needs from today's graduate population, there are clearly parallels that can be drawn.

Piaget's research on human agency and the cognitive development of children provided insight and understanding into the way children's thinking develops and how



the environment has to respond and adapt as they change (Jarvis, 2005). He similarly did not advocate boundary less classrooms and literal adopters also found this to be problematic.

Other significant cognitivist philosophers emphasised the importance of learning structure, (Ausubel, 1968) and how that was received by the learners themselves, and a fragile infrastructure would impact upon the learning process in a detrimental way. The importance of prior experience, and the placement of new learning within the context of what is already known by the learner is key as this would enable the anchoring of new learning, leading to the building of intellectual capital within the learner, and would aid the acquisition of new learning and meaning making. Ausubel (Curzon, 2003) spoke of the pre-requisites for meaningful learning as being that of the disposition of the learner to receive this 'new learning', and the second being the sequential organisation of the units of learning into a logical order, each of which should be considered an achievement in its own right, determined by the teacher, to facilitate successful anchoring of new concepts into prior experience and known receptors of the students. Each unit of learning should comprise of the following stages:

- Confirmation
- Correction
- Clarification
- Differential practice
- Review.

In his opinion, only when these stages are followed is the learning considered to be fully consolidated and having been successful. Ausubel criticised the Gestaltist views in relation to insight as being flawed and largely unreliable. (Curzon, 2003)

“The richest learning experience comes from the narrative.” Jerome Bruner speaking to The Guardian, March 2007)

Bruner's views on learning extend beyond curriculum thinking and look at the creation of the developed human being and 'The Culture of the Mind' (Bruner, 1996, Curzon, 2003, Illeris 2009). This body of thinking believes that learning institutions are responsible for the intellectual development of their learners, and cognitive-development theory is concerned with the nature of what is being taught in relation to how best it can be learned, with the aid of mental models, building mental bridges, and the role of perception. Bruner's theory of instruction comprises five essential features, that have been significantly abbreviated for illustrative purposes, but do suggest the thinking behind the theory.

Table 3-3 - Overview of Bruner's Theory of Instruction

Stage	Feature
ONE	Predisposition of students to learn.
TWO	Structuring of knowledge to optimise comprehension
THREE	Optimised sequences of presentation
FOUR	Pacing and reinforcement
FIVE	Reflective curriculum

This theory encompasses lower-order skills mastery before higher-order learning can take place, and the role of the teacher should ensure this mastery. This higher-order learning would best deliver a curriculum most suited to the learner, and allow for 'discovery-learning' to dominate, which he believed, would maximise the learning opportunities for the learners therein. As part of this approach, a number of other methods can occur which can be from a totally puzzled stage at the outset, leading to an exploratory problem-solving activity, and also taking risks, and potentially encouraging educated guesses, which may be regarded as 'intuitive leaps'. These activities are generally built upon that lower-order skill base that is deemed necessary for underpinning these more radical approaches to learning. Teachers should arrange their learning to thus be challenging and stimulating, and where possible, enable the students to take such responsibilities for their own intellectual capacity building, but in order to do this, the teacher should understand more about the growth and development of those individuals for whom they have a responsibility.

The cognitive school of thinking brings some radical ideas into education from the more traditional instructional approaches with their behaviourist influences. The progressive ideas of modernising education for students enabling them to have more participative rights in what they experience, encouraged exploration, and strategic phases of capacity that signpost their learning, clearly recognising the individual differences of the learners and the different types of and rates of learning. In addition, the idea of building mental bridges and models to move between levels of learning from lower to higher, and the ability to organise learning components, anchoring new knowledge to old knowledge within a defined structure were useful ideas to build effective curricula. These understandings of the baseline philosophy and psychology that inform education that still prevails today are assistive in their nature to teachers and lecturers who have to plan degree programmes and national curriculum provision as they form the basis of an understanding of what constitutes learning (Figure 3.4).



Figure 3.4 - The main areas of understanding of learning (Illeris, 2009)

The need to learn about learning, and how to learn was an important aspect of the work of Donald Schon (Schon, 1987, 1991) in response to a recognition of the loss of stability in institutions that were experiencing change and transformation of the time, and the responsiveness of the people therein needed to be reactive. Schon's views on learning organisations represented a shift in thinking, putting the emphasis into situational contexts for all concerned. The opportunities to experience vocational education in situ, be assessed in the workplace, build portfolios of evidence, working through problems until the solutions were found and the competencies had been achieved led to a radical change across the sector, leading to redefined programmes of learning and different opportunities for students from more diverse backgrounds. Schon's work (1987, 1991) on reflection, and becoming reflective, and even reflexive, brought to the forefront a communication opportunity through feedback loops that would inform the sector, and potentially pioneer a lot of the curriculum shifts relating to the explicit acknowledgement and integration of employability as well as the gains to learners in acquiring a deeper understanding leading to heightened achievements and results in relation to their studies (Day, 2006, Day, 2009).

### 3.6 The Humanist School of Educational Psychology

The humanist school of educational psychology emerged in America, the main proponents of it being Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers. This ideology was focused on the 'self' and the characteristics associated with being a human person, and the role of the teacher was to enable all of the learners within their care to achieve their potential in life, or 'self-actualise' and thus be enabled to 'learn to let learn' in true Heideggerian philosophy (Riley, 2011). This freedom to learn would enable the learner to make their own conscious choices in relation to their own needs, abilities and creativities, resulting in a balance between mental stability and self-fulfilment of goals. Maslow's views

aimed to allow individuals to grow and develop to a level of self-fulfilment (self-actualisation) and Rogers spoke of 'experiential learning' which gave a humanistic side to education. Subsequently, the pressure on educators was for them to acknowledge what it is to be human from the perspective of the learners and to establish relationships with learners that optimised their needs.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is well documented (Figure 3.5). His publicised works including *Motivation and Personality* (1954) and *Toward a Psychology of Being* (1962) and *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (1971) underpin a significant body of psychological knowledge stressing human potential and aspirations that is still valid today.

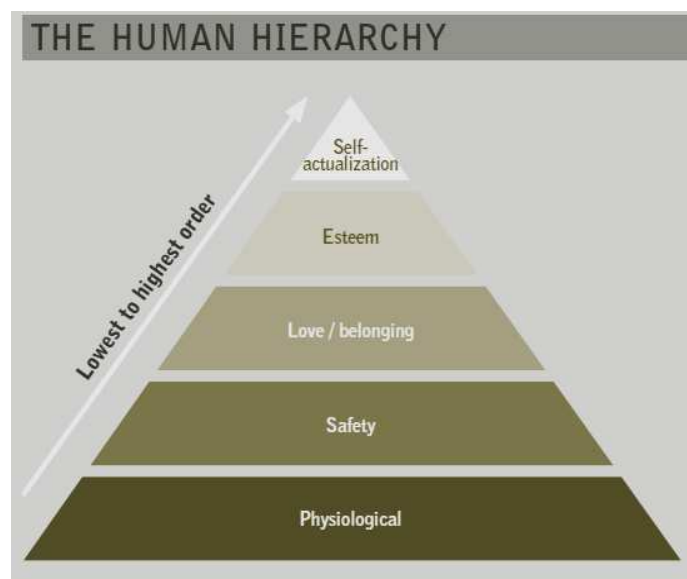


Figure 3.5 - Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, symbolising striving for 'self-actualisation' (Sadri and Clarke Bowen, 2011)

Maslow's beliefs suggested that education was an enabler of the development of self, and the five representative stages of his hierarchy of needs had to be taken into account in order to develop the whole person. The term self-actualisation was first used by a psychiatrist Goldstein, (1878-1965) who was seeking to transform human potential into a 'whole personality', and recognising that an intrinsic part played in this process was that of education. Education was thus viewed as an enabler, tasked in 'helping each person become the best that he is able to become' which is also implicit in the next section looking at social and constructivist psychology. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Figure 3.5) represents five accomplishments towards self-actualisation, an aspirational ideal, individual to each person, or a motivational pathway to growth and self-fulfilment. The five stages that comprise this motivational pathway consist of the base of the pyramid which indicates the fundamental physiological needs of a human being and their needs for food and water to survive. The next level is indicative of a human being living a safe life, protected from harm both physical and physiological. The third level speaks of belonging and reflects the social needs that human beings have. The fourth level is representative of self-esteem which gives humans belief in

themselves, their abilities, their skills and their contributions. At the apex of the pyramid is the aspirational ideal of self-actualisation, which is a fairly transient concept that can be interchangeable, depending upon the impact of time, and the changing nature of the other four variables depicted as part of the pyramid. Maslow's learning rhetoric speaks of extrinsic learning, largely conditioned through the process of education, but leading to intrinsic learning – ie the continued development of the human being and the acquisition of wisdom and life skills. Deficiencies in the lower levels of the pyramid could lead to a lack of motivation for learning, (Curzon, 2003) and whilst family and domestic issues might be outside of any control mechanisms under the auspices of an educational institution, those that are situated within, should be in place. The teaching facilities, curriculum models, the teachers themselves, should all be suited to meeting the needs of all of the students with whom they interact. However, most educational institutions do provide services for students where they can seek assistance with their personal lives, which acknowledges the potential impact that personal situations might have on the learning taking place therein, but their ability to provide the most appropriate support can be debated.

Implementing Maslow's theory is complex for educators, and is often met with a great deal of scepticism. Criticisms describe it as being selective, inconclusive, and reflective of middle-class values, therefore not representative and suggest numerous additional factors that need to be considered in the debates around motivation (Wahba and Bridwell, 1976). Yet its mere existence questions mechanised, robotic approaches to teaching, and offers the value gains from motivational teaching methods, as well as in the work place (Sadri and Clarke Bowen, 2011).

*“Those who are assisting the educational growth of students should understand the basis of maximising and maintaining student motivation if classroom instructional practice is to be successful.”*

(Curzon, 2003)

Further influences arising from the work of Rogers emphasised the importance of 'thinking' and 'feeling' in relation to how students learn. His views, very similar to those of Maslow, looked at learning as being student-centred, based on discovery and the development of self-concepts. His publications 'Freedom to Learn' (1969 and 1983) underpinned future education theory thinking, and opposed the view of education being conformist and restrictive, totally pre-determined by the institutions and the practitioners therein, setting it within a contrived context that had little value for the student. His psychology, based on three concepts – organism, self and congruence – stressed the importance of the needs of the individual student, the acceptance of the individual within the environment within which the learning was taking place, and their peers therein. In order to follow through Rogerian theory, educators would need to be genuine in their manner and intent, and have empathy for the human self in order to increase their feelings of self-worth. Facilitating experiential learning whereby the student has the capacity to learn from within through experiencing a context arouses

those feelings and concepts that would develop the whole person. Denying this freedom to learn, would, in the opinion of Rogers, be detrimental to the self.

This view of the learning process describes the teacher as a facilitator who is able to develop the ability of the student to learn independently, to foster creativity, and as one who is not judged on lectures and presentations. The emphasis is more on the building of the relationships with the students rather than pre-judging student work (Riley, 2011). Responding to the needs of individuals within the groups is important, and having the flexibility to enact that responsiveness is critical to the success of the learning activities. The idea of a 'free classroom' (Skinner, 1969 in Curzon, 2003) seeks to remind present day thinkers of the role played by formal education settings. In America, the decline of their standards of education has been attributed, by some critics, to the adoption of a Rogerian approach to education, whilst supporters suggest that the emphasis on the humanisation of education is the only way to aspire towards becoming a lifelong learner, which is a theme constantly being pushed in this country by government papers (QAA, 2009). This widely publicised American decline (Silberman, 1971, Patterson, 1987) highlights the dangers of literal approaches to implementations that are not sufficiently informed by deeper thinking approaches.

A recognition of the 'self' as a part of the humanist dialogue acknowledges to a greater extent the individual differences of students, and the essence of what being a person is. The effects of different experiences, different family and friendship groups, lifestyles, values, education, expectations are some of the many considerations from this school of thinking. Being a human organism is a key factor that cannot be ignored by any education provider that attempts to give students a learning experience, yet the majority of providers offer one programme of study to many students, all anticipating the same pathway and subsequent outcome. Points of self-actualisation will vary considerably, as will the influences and experiences that arise as part of that education journey. Interactions with peers and mentors will vary, depending upon the building of relationships and the receptiveness of all concerned. The ideology of becoming a lifelong learner will potentially be different for every individual.

The view of self, and how individuals cope with their different pathways in life, is an intrinsic component in understanding constructivism within an educational context. Recognition of the body of knowledge relating to humanist thinking can facilitate a greater understanding of constructivism rather than a large-scale adoption of what could be described as trivial constructivism (Cousin, 2012) which can potentially be detrimental to the very essence of the philosophy behind this essential ideology. Sceptics suggest that quite often institutions may be guilty of trivialising philosophical theory in order to be in accord with fashionable frameworks and current ideas (Warrick, 2010) rather than having a full understanding of the true intent. The following discussion attempts to clarify a deeper constructivist view, founded on a humanist perspective, of the true impact this philosophy has on higher education and the student experience.

### 3.7 Social and Constructivist Educational Psychology

One of the most significant influences on education practice has come from constructivism (Jones and Brader-Araje, 2002). The essence of being human, the influence of the environment in which people live, and the experiences that they face underpin this school of thought in relation to social and constructivist psychology. The paradigm shift from accepted behaviourist principles and ideologies whereby the metaphor of the human brain, functioning in a similar way to that of a computer in a linear fashion, was replaced by scientific evidence citing the impact of human cognition on the neuronal and functioning structure of the brain (Diamond, Kolb and Wishaw, 1998 in Bandura 1995, 2001). This important shift is useful to contemplate further understanding of the many different facets that, in this context, recognise the differences in individual students across the sector.

The ideas relating to social cognitive theory and human agency that are well documented in the work of Bandura (1993, 1994, 1997, 2001) highlight the ways that humans have to face challenges, hazards, complex experiences, all of which have to be overcome through individual capabilities, reflection, self-efficacy, and social interventions. The influence of neural networks on consciousness and cognition, (Bandura, 2001) affect the decisions people make that may have an impact on their lives. An understanding of human agency (Bandura) elevate behaviourist views about how humans learn, taking learning and education to another level altogether. The ways that people live their lives may influence their conscious decision-making and the way that they function. Subsequently, the learning-centric (Clarke 2003) environment in which they reside is a factor that potentially shapes their goals, aspirations, self-esteem and self-efficacy. The setting of goals, the achievement of aspirations and Maslow's vision of 'self-actualisation' are all underpinned by human agency (Bandura, 2001) and the conscious choices that people make, albeit influenced by the contexts in which they live their lives and the people and organisations with whom they interact. Reflective approaches build upon well respected processes such as Kolb's Reflective Cycle (Henke, 2001) encourage engagement and realisation of goals.

A number of dimensions of constructivism exist within an educational context from the personal (Piaget, 1967 in Jones and Brader-Araje, 2002), social (Vygotsky, 1978) and radical constructivism (Von Glaserfield, 1995). Recognition of social constructionism, leading to constructivism facilitates a greater understanding of what can be regarded as the nature of learning as a social process (Vygotsky, 1978) founded on the principle that by reflecting on experience we construct our own understanding of the world we choose to live in (Jackson and Ward, 2004). It was recognised that cognitive functions were influenced by the beliefs, values and cultural environment in which the individual developed intellectually (Vygotsky, 1978, Doolittle, 1997, McLeod, 2007). This ideology recognised the importance of language, and in particular that of self-talk and inner speech and the parts played by that in the acquisition of learning, within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Figure 3.6). The ZPD was a concept model that acknowledges the various states of learning and the significance of scaffolding, (a term

never used by Vygotsky himself, but introduced by Wood et al in 1976 (Wood, Bruner and Ross, 1976)) guided participation, peer interaction and the notion of apprenticeships (Chaiklin, 2003, Peters, 2012).

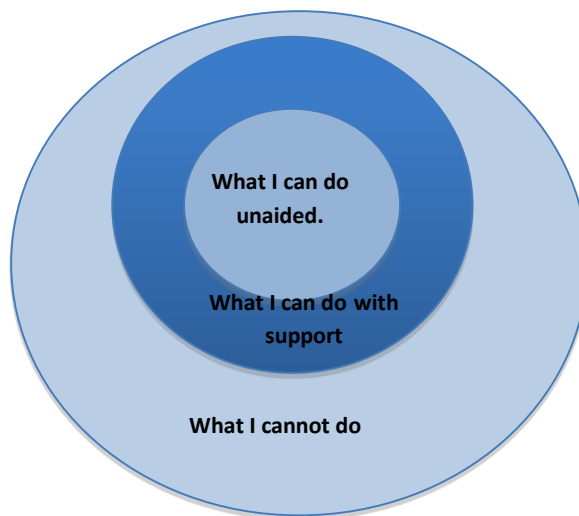


Figure 3.6 - Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978)

A component of these views was that of the more knowledgeable other (MKO) (Vygotsky, 1978) which is a person who has a better understanding or higher level of ability in relation to the task in hand than the individual seeking to be developed through learning. The implication of the MKO is clearly representative of a teacher or parent, or other person of influence, but there are, in effect, no boundaries or parameters and an interpretation of this could be applied to any other relevant higher level experience or association – ie peer group activities, digital events, and so on.

The definition of the word scaffolding is contemplative in relation to the social and situational experiences of students experiencing education within a prescriptive HE institution, and is implicit as a part of the understanding of any outcomes based curriculum that is suggested within many degree programmes (Biggs and Tang, 2011).

*“Those elements of the task that are initially beyond the learner’s capacity, thus permitting him to concentrate upon and complete only those elements that are within his range of competence.”*

(Wood et al, 1976)

Quite significantly, this definition looks at tasks, and more specifically task elements in relation to learner capacity and range of competencies. A bold interpretation of scaffolding could be applied to tasks, elements and competencies, and if learning is to be scaffolded there is an inevitable alliance with curriculum and instructional design. A wider informed view such as this situates the importance of learner understanding and meaning-making (Mezirow, 1990) as part of this process, and subsequent activity based tasks are part of this, yet this implementation needs to be far more superior than planning a surface-based approach rather than a more meaningful series of activities.



Students still need to recognise the actual physical place in which the learning occurs. It is important for them to feel like students (Bates, 2012) even though they may find lectures boring at times, and the tasks may feel pointless or frustrating, but the symbolic effect of having to endure higher education, in this 'zone of proximal development' is an integral component of the learning process (Cousin, 2012) until its significance becomes realised at a later point in the student life (Haywood and Madden, 2000). Responding to early stage student criticisms and removing the very infrastructure that gives status and affirmation to being an undergraduate student could result in a deterioration of the overall degree experience as the student may not engage with a destructured environment.

The developers of a constructively aligned curriculum within a typical HE institution (Cousin, 2012) are often able to individualise their ideas, structure learning outcomes that suit all levels of students, and thus may meet the needs of their individual students as lifelong learners (Cooper, 2007). Tasks and activities can be designed in accordance with the action research spiral – reflect, plan, apply, evaluate – (Biggs and Tang, 2011) that foster a greater level of engagement, encourage success within the learner's capacity and set realistic and new goals for the next steps, based on reflection of the previous activities and planned future actions and experiential learning (Kolb 1984, Lewis, 2012). Some of these views may be opposed to Vygotsky's significance in relation to the ZPD, particularly when applied to lectures, for instance, yet their symbolic importance informs the debate. Key questions, however, that have been around for some time (Webb, 1997) are in accord with where the alignment of this development resides within the infrastructure and therefore the success of this is thus dependent on all concerned, either from the philosophical views at the top of hierarchy within the institution, or the qualifications and credentials of the teaching team who are bringing with them their own beliefs and interpretations. Criticisms from management in relation to poor teaching, negative opinions, and so on, that fail to recognise the overall nature of learning within this context, and subsequently change the infrastructure to alleviate such opinion, may alter the likelihood of any successful transformation and implementation of a constructively aligned curriculum. Part of it is concerned with the individual's personalised needs (Wortham and Jackson, 2012) and therefore any accolades may not be mapped quite so easily if crude indicators of success are imposed through unsupportive quantitative and qualitative measures (Biggs and Tang, 2011, Gibbs, 2010, 2012).

The constructivist philosophy is based on theory from cognitive psychology (Hausfather, 2001) and is a view that is widely shared across the HE sector but the individualistic premise of this, based on reflection and desired transformative states (Schon 1991) pose a number of difficulties. Not all developers are academics and there can be resistance and reluctance to change (Cousin, 2012, Gibbs, 2010, 2012) as the existing practices and processes can be barriers to accepting change, ironically perhaps due to inability to become that reflexive and reflective practitioner (Schon, 1991). Adding more complexity is the situational context of that reflection, and who is being

reflective, and what experience has that reflection been informed by? These points complicate the philosophical debate and limit the ability to reconcile opinion. The acknowledgement of what gives academic status in an HE institution and therefore affirms the subsequent pedagogy should be informed by a deeper level of understanding of constructivism which may not always be evident from a 'portfolio of evidence' and an application form. The links between content knowledge and the process of teaching should be realized in institutions that seek to develop constructivist approaches and they should acknowledge the mental processes, physical processes and knowledge gains of their students if they want to be successful (Hausfather, 2001).

### 3.8 Summarising thoughts

The primary goal of education should be to enable students to develop their intellect and efficacy so that they can become effective lifelong learners. The curriculum developers should not ignore the emotional needs of their students when planning a curriculum that delivers much more than knowledge and understanding (Dacre Pool and Qualter, 2012).

*“The goal of our teaching must always be building an understanding of the current, accepted knowledge within a particular discipline in ways that impact student understanding.”*

(Hausfather, 2001)

Students need to be provided with an education that gives opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills to heighten intellect. It should include an awareness of useful tools and employ suitable scaffolding to deliver the required skills. Of equal importance is an education that facilitates and encourages a recognition of their own set of beliefs and self-efficacy, all of which should last them throughout their lives beyond the boundaries of a university (Bandura, 1993).

Subsequently the needs of today's students transcend the rich body of knowledge across all educational schools of psychology, a representation of which is given in the 'Table of Theorists' (Appendix 7). The disentanglement of these schools of thought provide a richness of reputable understanding of the nature of learning from a number of diverse world views. In order to develop a successful model for students, components from each one need to be interwoven to provide a constructivist provision. There is still a need for cumulative knowledge, that may come from memory and repetitions, encouraged through goals and motivation, increasingly using developed technologies such as tablets (Geist, 2011). The concept of mental models and bridges between linked elements and components that comprise a desired body of knowledge can be evidenced, as well as an underlying cognitive understanding through clear explanations, shared thinking (Bowskill, 2010) and good teaching, whatever that may be, but certainly may be the responsibility of more than just the teacher. The acknowledgement of being a human being cannot be ignored, neither can the

complexities that that brings with it to an educational experience that is as a student on a university degree programme.

A number of key points that transcend the different educational schools and beyond provides a research informed steer (Gibbs 2010, 2012) that offers seven principles of good practice that can be applied to undergraduate education (Chickering and Gamson, 1987). It gives an insight into the informed needs of learning understanding, an articulation of which is given as part of this conclusion.

#### Good Practice Encourages Student Faculty Contact

Principle one advises that students should be encouraged to seek assistance, and for that assistance to be available and helpful from within their school/faculty, which addresses that there should exist robust and reliable infrastructures within educational establishments that give good service, and that should not be the responsibility of the educator/lecturer. (Gibbs, 2010, 2012)

#### Good Practice Encourages Cooperation among Students

Principle two stresses the importance of the establishment of a cohesiveness for peer support and collaboration as part of the undergraduate experience. The achievement of this would be underpinned by the university infrastructure and subsequent support structures that exist for the students, as well as the learning environment facilitated by the educator/lecturer. The symbolic influence of the infrastructure needs to be acknowledged as an essential part of the overall experience, as do the measures of student engagement (HEFC, 2009).

#### Good Practice Encourages Active Learning

Principle three, recognising the advice that has existed in the literature, suggests that passive students who are merely receivers of dialogue and who are not being actively encouraged to demonstrate their cognitive abilities through perhaps interactions and creative task execution may not be experiencing the best kind of teaching and learning. This principle is attempting to look at how teaching and learning is communicated to students through the planned activities – lectures, workshops, seminars, fieldwork, etc., acknowledging the significance played by each component as part of the expectations of a university student. It is not favouring one above another, but simply suggesting that all activities should consider good practice in relation to content communication and delivery, and that institutions should know what that is, so that the interpretation of good practice can be shared across all areas, and thus encourages intrinsic motivation on the part of the student to engage and participate in the learning to their full potential (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

### Good Practice Gives Prompt Feedback

The fourth principle reinforces the view that student assessments – whether examinations, assignments, coursework, portfolios – should receive good quality feedback (Forehand, 2010, King, 2014). Three weeks is considered to be too long a period for students to wait (Gibbs, 2010, 2012) but equally the burdens placed upon the lecturers, again linking to poor, over-burdensome bureaucratic administration procedures should be considered in relation to the importance of how feedback is viewed. Additionally, it is important for institutions to meet the wider needs of their students in relation to lifelong learning through a re-alignment of assessment objects (Appendix 1) to foster and encourage the development of interpersonal skills (Boud and Falchikov, 2006). Furthermore, the abilities of the post-holder delivering the teaching and learning is inevitably a factor as to how successfully this activity is undertaken and needs to be analysed. If the lecturer does not have an understanding of the importance of feedback as a tool to evaluate an individual student's performance (Jones, 2009) in relation to how students learn, there is a potential problem for institutions to contemplate.

### Good Practice Emphasises Time on Task

Principle five emphasises the importance of successful planning of teaching and learning activities. Being able to analyse a subject in order to develop a curriculum through a staged identification of the desirable competencies (Johnson, Healey, Evans, Murphy, Crawshaw and Gould, 2006), a sequence of activities (Scheme of Work) and then deliver planned sessions (learning plans) in order to achieve prescribed aims, goals and objectives is a critical skill for any professional educator, in whatever sector. Even sessions that are seemingly without any boundaries that might have been erected as a result of planning the activity, should still be contemplated in a structured way. Sufficient time should be given over to all activities, in accordance with an intellectual understanding of their temporal needs. These needs are governed by relating time on task to the achievement of the learning outcomes and competencies.

### Good Practice Communicates High Expectations

Principle six promotes the value, or perceived value of the learning experience for the learner who is taking part in it. The learning goals that have been identified should be appropriate to the expectations of the participants, and within the capabilities of the education provider and attention should address the evidence relating to all students, but particularly to under achieving first year students (Cope and Staehr, 2005) which could then foster greater change in their following years. The delivery of a well-defined curriculum, that suits the needs of the learners and meets the aspirations of the stakeholders and the wider community and/or society, is fundamental to the achievement of this principle.

### Good Practice Respects Diverse Talents and Ways of Learning.

The seventh principle suggests that there needs to be an understanding of the individual differences of the learner and the different ways in which individuals learn, taking account of their preferred learning styles in relation to both teaching and pedagogy (Coffield, Moseley, Hall and Ecclestone, 2004). In order to achieve this, there must be a recognition of when learning has taken place which might occur through learning checks, rich dialogue, visible evidence, thus changed states of the learner as they continue to develop and progress through the experience. Equally, the differences between each individual learner need to be understood within the context of the essence of being human (Thwaites and Bennett-Levy, 2007), an organism that reacts and responds to stimuli, both internal and external, and subsequently experiences numerous changed states. Professional educators need to be able to identify the needs of all of their students and be suitably responsive and reactive as the situation arises, making the best decisions for the given situation. Seeking to recognise how the professional educator is able to develop a different attitude to teaching that shifts towards the view from the learner's perspective is fundamental for the enrichment of the experience (Biggs, 1996, Riley, 2011) whilst also acknowledging pedagogical theory, the significance of instructional approaches, ie social and structured, collaborative, all of which are expected to be supported by technological enhancements (Laurillard, 2008).

Finally, from within the seven principles for good practice in teaching in higher education, there is a body of thinking that recognises the inclusion of the ideologies and advice that transcends all of the schools of educational psychology that have been presented here that will inform the fulfilment of the deliverables from this research. The recognition of the role of self-efficacy and the control mechanisms that an individual brings to their course of life through their choices, collaborations, experiences – before, during and after education, sensory, motor and cerebral – have an impact on outcomes and the likely achievement of goals (Bandura, 2001, Ryan, 2000). Attention to the social context is a critical determinant of the success of the learners in applying themselves to the opportunities presented within the environment. The next chapter brings Cognitive Behaviour Therapy into this research, seeking to make links and identify influences that could be used effectively to enhance the undergraduate experience of Information Systems students at Northumbria University.

## 4 Cognitive Behaviour Therapy

### 4.1 Introduction

*“Reflection is a generic term for those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciations.”*

(Boud, Keogh and Walker 1985)

Opinion relating to adult education highlights the role of reflection in learning (Boud, Keogh and Walker, 1985, Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000, Kolb, 1984, Schon, 1987, 1991, Moon, 2001, 2004) and there is a common understanding that when basic skills are acquired the learners are then able to reflect on their uses in various situations and scenarios (Bennett-Levy, 2006). A view of educational psychology from the previous chapter emphasises the significance of the humanist theories in relation to effective teaching and learning. This reinforces the need for constructively aligned curricula with individualised learning outcomes, achieved through engagement with reflection on the part of the learner, facilitated by a reflexive professional, who is a practitioner in their field (Schon, 1987, 1991). The emphasis supports the nature of constructivist education that recognises the essence of being a human being and living a unique life with similar and different experiences to fellow humans.

This chapter discusses the impact on educational practices (teaching and learning) from the literature relating to Cognitive Behaviour Therapy theory and practices. The difficulty of the word therapy situates this approach within a clinical psychological context, yet the discussion is putting it into an educational context. Therefore the word therapy is potentially disregarded for the purposes of this research. This chapter seeks to explore a number of complex, interlinked areas. In particular, the role of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) and Cognitive Behaviour Coaching (CBC) (Neenan, 2008a, 2008b) with particular relevance to educational practice and meaning making (Eatough, and Smith, 2010). This exploration will be linked to the impact of the humanistic psychology of Rational Emotional Behaviour Therapy (REBT) (Ellis, 1962) which is an aspect of CBT, which seeks happiness and self-actualisation for its followers. It looks at how elements of this can be absorbed into an enhanced curriculum that effectively delivers Personal Development Planning (PDP) to undergraduates within an Information Systems (IS) discipline. An understanding and interpretation of PDP and employability is given, and a number of teaching models are examined in relation to student learning and understanding. Some of those examples are based around reflection and build upon the work of Donald Schon (1987, 1991) but also a number of selected models from within the mental health area are unpicked and repackaged for the purposes of undergraduate curriculum enhancement. An established definition of CBT starts the discussion.

## 4.2 What is CBT?

*“When people learn to evaluate their thinking in a more realistic and adaptive way, they experience improvement in their emotional state and in their behaviour.”*

(Beck, 2011 p3)

The key elements of a therapist can be framed under four characteristics – theory or conceptual framework to guide intentions, memory of the patient issues, skilful use of intervention techniques to promote the observed change in behaviour or the conditions necessary for the change to occur (Bennett-levy, 2006) and a full range of these competencies is needed to fulfil the role (Knapp and Beck, 2008).

Assisting humans to think about their idiosyncrasies relating to problem thoughts can help them to make better choices and modify their thinking (Neenan, 2008b). The utilisation of CBT techniques can be seen as an attempt ‘to change overt behaviour by altering thoughts, interpretations, assumptions and strategies of responding’ (Kazdin, 1978 in Dobson and Dozois, 2010) and can assist in the modification of a person’s attributes to effect change (Proudfoot et al, 1997). It is representative of a convergence of behavioural strategies and cognitive processes with the goal of achieving behavioural change (Dobson and Dozois, 2010). The early onset of CBT happened in the 1960s as a therapy to aid depression, through the work of Ellis, (1962) and Beck (1967) but it was not until the 1970s when there was an increased interest in the area and a move away from behaviourist thinking that some of the significant literature emerged, led by a number of leading experts in that area - Beck 1967, 1970, Cautela 1967, 1969, Ellis 1962, 1970, Mahoney 1974, Mahoney and Thoresen 1974, Meichenbaum, 1973, 1977 (Dobson and Dozois, 2010).

Emerging from this literature were a number of models for cognitive and behaviour change, all of which were founded on three fundamental propositions.

- 1 Cognitive activity affects behaviour.
- 2 Cognitive activity may be monitored and altered.
- 3 Desired behaviour change may be effected through cognitive change.

The literature also suggests that thinking impacts on behaviour change, and in a clinical context can be identified as comprising 3 major classes.

- coping skills therapies
- problem solving therapies
- cognitive restructuring methods. (Mahoney and Arnkoff, 1978 in Dobson and Dozois 2010)

Cognitive behaviour therapies can be classified under two domains – behavioural therapies (dominant) and personality. “Behaviour therapy was an innovation from the radical approach to human problems” (Bandura, 1986) which do not solely exist within

a medical (either mental or physical) context. Behaviour therapy built upon the classical and operant conditioning principles of behaviourism and developed its own set of interventions that sought to focus on changing behaviour (Tennant, 2006). In order to unpick the components of CBTs that influence teaching and learning, a discussion of a number of well accepted techniques is offered, but their essence is to be synergised within an education domain that might influence the outcomes of this research.

A suggested number of core principles underpin CBT, their source taken from a highly credible resource, and situated from within a clinical perspective (Beck, 2011). Their interpretation herewith is to situate their essence within an educational context – educative cognitive behaviour therapy (ECBT) - to facilitate the synthesis of the related literature across more than one discipline, and thus a second interpretation of each is offered.

**Table 4-1 - CBT Core Principles (Beck, 2011)**

	Detail
1	CBT is based on an ever evolving formulation of patients’ problems and an individual conceptualisation of each patient in cognitive terms (Beck, 2011). <b>Education</b> is based around problem solving and in developing an understanding of all students. (Appendix 7)
2	CBT requires a sound therapeutic alliance. (Beck, 2011) <b>Education</b> requires a sound basis of trust between the teacher and the students. (Appendix 7)
3	CBT emphasizes collaboration and active participation. (Beck, 2011) <b>Education</b> can emphasize collaboration and active participation. (Appendix 7)
4	CBT is goal oriented and problem focused. (Beck, 2011) <b>Education</b> is goal oriented and problem focused. (Appendix 7)
5	CBT initially emphasizes the present. (Beck, 2011)
6	CBT is educative, aims to teach the patient to be her own therapist and emphasize relapse prevention. (Beck, 2011) <b>Education</b> aims to develop autonomy in the student. (Appendix 7)
7	CBT aims to be time limited. (Beck, 2011) <b>Education</b> can work better within constrained time frames. (Appendix 7)
8	CBT sessions are structured. (Beck, 2011) <b>Education</b> sessions can be structured. (Appendix 7)
9	CBT teaches patients to identify, evaluate, and respond to their dysfunctional thoughts and beliefs. (Beck, 2011) <b>Education</b> teaches students how to identify, evaluate and respond to their thoughts and beliefs about themselves. (Appendix 7)
10	CBT uses a variety of techniques to change thinking, mood and behaviour. (Beck, 2011) <b>Education</b> uses a variety of techniques to change thinking, attitude and behaviour. (Appendix 7)

A sample of some of the different interpretations and applications of CBT is given within the remainder of this chapter to widen the evidence base that informs this



research. The first section explores the parallels between a model of therapist (CBT) skill development (Bennett-Levy, 2006) and the requirements for teaching and learning in the wider sense.

### **4.3 The DPR Model (Declarative, Procedural, Reflective)**

The delivery of training for CBT professionals is inevitably informed through a body of expertise and good practice that exists in order to prepare future practitioners and qualified therapists. The DPR model (Bennett-Levy, 2006, 2009, Bennett-Levy, Thwaites, Chaddock and Davis, 2009) is described below in an attempt to explore the potential parallels that exist within teaching and learning for pedagogical practice. The defining concepts relating to DPR are:

- 1 a theoretical or conceptual framework to guide interaction
- 2 a memory of the patient's issues
- 3 the skilful use of intervention techniques to promote the desired changes in behaviour or the conditions necessary for change
- 4 the knowledge of when to apply (and when not to apply) these interventions.

The model itself has three specific components – Declarative, Procedural and Reflective.

The declarative system consists of three elements – conceptual knowledge, interpersonal knowledge and technical knowledge which are considered to be the building blocks of training for therapists. The conceptual knowledge refers to basic theory and understanding of the professional state. Interpersonal knowledge looks at the possible behaviours and thought processes of the patients and the technical knowledge is potentially a higher order of knowledge relating to the actual therapy.

The procedural system is putting into practice everything that has been known from the declarative stage – the application of those skills in a real scenario. The skills, in this context, are the interpersonal ones that need to present for the sessions to be effective. The notion of perception, empathy, mindfulness and reflection-in-action all rely on the ability of the professional therapist to be attuned to the environment being presented, the thoughts, behaviours and feelings of the person presenting, and a sufficient level of knowledge and skill about the theory in order to apply the one that is most appropriate to the immediate situation.

The reflective system is content free and enables an exploration of the past, current or future experiences, with an intent to discover new knowledge and learning derived through complex cognitive processes that could influence the presenting scenario.

Within each domain are a number of learning strategies. The declarative stage comprises specific learning opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills – reading, case studies, lectures, etc. The procedural stage enables application of the theory through practice, role-play, experiential training, etc and the reflective stage is

informed through reflective reading and writing, reflective attitude and practice, and self-supervision.

Each of the components of the DPR model can be iterated in relation to teaching and learning literature where at the declarative stage the theory and skills relating to the profession are acquired, and these are put into practice through teaching observations in the same way as was the procedural stage, and then subsequent reflections take place as a result of the observations and accumulation and application of knowledge in order to improve future practice.

#### 4.4 Rational, Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT)

This therapy was developed over 50 years ago by Albert Ellis and is still regarded as the premier example of the cognitive behavioural approach (Dobson and Doizin, 2010), although the influence and success of each element, being delivered by a REBT professional, under scrutiny, may not always be equitable (Robb, Backx and Thomas, 1999). Its intent is to interrelate human thinking and emotion, and a sub model of this therapy is Ellis's ABC model that equates the symptoms of the current dilemma as being the consequences (C), that are as a result of a personal belief system that is irrational (B), in relation to a particular activity or experience or event (A). The ultimate is to change those irrational beliefs that are creating the turmoil and emotional discomfort for the individual. REBT accepts that humans have the capacity and even tendency to think about their personal experiences and/or situation in an irrational way, and in order to establish an equilibrium relating to their mental health and stability (Figure 4.1), those innate belief systems must be challenged through interventions some of which include role-play, modelling, operant conditioning, skills training, self-monitoring of thoughts. (Dobson and Doizin, 2010)

The major goals of REBT include self-direction, acceptance of self, flexibility and a realistic perspective of life. Its essence is humanistic from a psychological perspective and its intent is to help individuals be happier people through self-actualisation and creativity. This can also be said of education in general (Nucci, 2002).

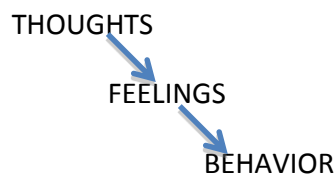


Figure 4.1- REBT Principle that holds one's thoughts or beliefs determine one's feelings, and one's feelings, in turn, determine one's behavior (Nucci, 2002)

Some initial experiments attempting to apply REBT to professional development within a teacher training environment distributed 'me dolls' which is a paper cut out of a doll representative of the participant, who then seeks to label the doll with positive, negative and neutral attributes (Nucci, 2002). Subsequent discussions then ensue through REBT questioning to introduce different ways of thinking about the ways in

which the individuals see themselves, with input and ideas for making changes. Clearly, some of the techniques and ideals relating to this therapy are already present in many teaching and learning classrooms in ways that do not directly see themselves as CBT techniques, but under further scrutiny there are many parallels. Appendix 1 provides a task based example in which the students attempt to be reflective of themselves, the way they think, feel and have behaved, and discuss this with a comfortable peer in order to become mindful of their experience within the university to date. Role-play and modelling are often used to illustrate examples that need to be experienced by the students without being able to immerse them in a real scenario, and skills training together with behavioural conditioning is a part of most education curricula that exist in today's education system (Appendix 2). There is, however, a lack of direct empirical literature that extends this technique outside of a clinical environment and into the teaching environment at this stage.

#### **4.5 Cognitive Therapy**

Cognitive therapy was developed by Aaron Beck, initially to look at depression in a clinical context, but has become extended to look at other areas, and unlike REBT there is a plethora of empirical literature to support this. Other areas where this therapy has been researched include anxiety (Beck and Emery, 1985), bipolar disorders (Basco and Rush, 2005), marital problems (Beck, 1988), personality disorders (Beck and Rector, 2003), substance problems (Beck, Wright, Newman and Liese, 1993), crisis management (Beck, 2008), anger (Beck, 2002) and psychosis (Beck and Rector, 2003, Fowler, Garety and Kuipers, 1995, and Morrison, 2002). This therapy is based on developing "schemas" that are defined as cognitive structures that organise and process incoming information (Dobson and Dozois, 2010) with the principle goal of changing those thought patterns of the individual to be replaced with more and more realistic understanding of the current event or circumstance.

The mechanics of most teaching situations are built upon some plan or 'Scheme of Work' which seeks to set out an achievable route that could lead to an increased knowledge base and a greater understanding of the subject. Aspects of this are achieved through dialogue and working through these "schemas" in order to be successful. In addition, these would facilitate problem solving skills for the individuals – ie the students. Table 4.1 attempts to align the core principles of CBT and education.

#### **4.6 Self-instructional training**

A therapy developed by Donald Meichenbaum in 1969 (Dobson and Dozois, 2010) that was heavily influenced by the work of two psychologists Luria (1961) and Vygotsky (1962) who studied the developmental relationship among language, thought and behaviour and who perceived this development to stem from external influences such as parents, teachers, etc which then becomes internalised as a result of verbal commands and thus results in a change in behaviour. This was a major focus of the work of Meichenbaum who developed a number of projects seeking to realise a change in behaviour – ie a self-instructional training programme (SIT) to treat the meditational

deficiencies of impulsive children. Part of the overall research undertaken by Meichenbaum can foster a broader sense of self-efficacy (Dobson and Dozois, 2010).

The notion of this therapy links to the ideas of self-actualisation and belief in oneself from the social constructionist perspective and Vygotsky’s ZPD.

#### 4.7 Self-control treatments

There are a number of interventions that can focus on the self that might arise from CBT. These approaches suggest terms such as “self-efficacy”, “self-control”, and “self-regulation” which can then be used across multiple contexts (Kanfer, 1970, 1971, in Dobson and Doizin, 2010). These interventions recognised the contribution of the cognitive processes in environments more used to traditional behaviourist type learning theory contexts, and a number of approaches to facilitate the desensitising of an individual’s reaction to a situation were developed. These techniques were arguably designed to enable the individual to acquire coping skills through relaxation and meditation, with the intent of being able to then **Systematically and Rationally Restructure thoughts – SRR** (Goldfried, Decenteceo and Weinberg, 1974). Goldfried et al (1974, in Dobson and Dozois, 2010) looked at how individuals responded emotionally to situations that they had previously labelled in accordance with their perceptions, feelings, understanding and beliefs about that particular situation. These emotions were inhibiting different behaviours, and were affecting subsequent behaviour changes. Their goal, relating to SRR, was to retrain individuals to perceive those situations in a better way through following a five stage process as illustrated. (Table 4.2)

**Table 4-2 - SRR 5 Stage Process (Goldfried, Decenteceo and Weinberg, 1974 in Dobson and Dozois, 2010)**

Stage	Process
Stage 1	Exposure to the anxiety-provoking situation, using imagination or role play,
Stage 2	Self-evaluation of subjective anxiety level
Stage 3	Monitoring of anxiety-provoking cognitions
Stage 4	Rational re-evaluation of those maladaptive cognitions
Stage 5	Observing one’s subjective anxiety level following the rational re-evaluation

The techniques utilised, such as role-play and rehearsal, research activities, repeated practice, all gave individuals the coping skills they needed from their personal resources that they were previously unable to call upon due to their perceived inadequacies as a result of this idea of situational labelling. Whilst this technique clearly seeks to overcome behavioural difficulties, it has benefit and gain for numerous stressful situations that can occur in life. Other techniques such as Anxiety Management Training (AMT) (Suinn and Richardson, 1971 in Dobson and Dozois, 2010) attempts to teach clients how to achieve self-control through relaxation and recognition of competency without factoring in the stressful experience itself. The

literature relating to AMT success is limited, and it is thus considered to be a lesser adopted cognitive behavioural approach (Dobson and Dozois, 2010).

Any individual undergoing a stressful situation will inevitably be faced with the 5 process stages of SRR at some point and these stages need to be supported in different scenarios ie at university. Subsequently, professionals need to have some knowledge of being able to make appropriate responses and interventions, as and when needed.

#### 4.8 Stress inoculation training

This intervention (Meichenbaum and Cameron, 1973 in Dobson and Dozois 2010) consisted of three stages, the first of which is educational, whereby the recipients receive didactic training about stressful reactions. The second stage presents a number of behavioural and coping mechanisms that ultimately lead to exposure to a stressful environment in the final stage. Whilst this intervention is widely accepted within the clinical context, its interpretation has been significantly varied and a revised procedural model was prompted (Jaremko, 1979, in Dobson and Dozois, 2010).

Whilst at university, individuals experience problem solving scenarios and role-play activities that help to facilitate coping strategies. Extensive group work activities are often used as a vehicle for this, and assist student development and readiness for life after university.

#### 4.9 Problem-solving therapy

Training in problem-solving therapy was conceptualised by D’Zurilla and Goldfried (1971) in Dobson and Dozois (2010) into five overlapping stages as indicated below, (Table 4.2) the goal of which would involve teaching basic skills to participants and assisting with the application of these basic skills in the actual problem situation itself.

Table 4-3 - Problem solving stages (D’Zurilla and Goldfried, 1971 in Dobson and Dozois, 2010)

Stage	Process
Stage 1	General orientation or “set”
Stage 2	Problem definition and formulation
Stage 3	Generation of alternatives
Stage 4	Decision making
Stage 5	Verification

Further work from Spivack and Shure (1974) in Dobson and Dozois (2010) led to interpersonal cognitive problem-solving (ICPS) which involved much of the above, but posited a range of five abilities that they considered to be essential in order for this approach to be successful (Table 4.4).

Table 4-4 - Five abilities for interpersonal cognitive problem-solving (Spivack and Shure, 1974, in Dobson and Dozois, 2010)

Five Abilities	Ability

1	To recognise the range of possible problem situations in the social environment
2	To generate multiple, alternative solutions to interpersonal problems
3	To plan a series of steps necessary to achieve a given goal
4	To foresee the short-term and long-term consequences of a given alternative
5	To identify the motivational elements related to one's actions and those of others.

The work of Spivack and Shure is widely accepted within the clinical field and has led to a growing number of problem solving methodologies yet within other fields many similar approaches already exist ie soft systems methodology (Checkland, 1981, Checkland and Holwell, 1998). Evidence of this methodology is well used for problem solving within both an educational context for research and skills development and also in industry.

#### **4.10 Structured and constructivist psychotherapy**

Whilst the application of structured and constructivist psychotherapy (Guidano and Liotti, 1983 in Dobson and Dozois, 2010) is used as a CBT approach for clinical patients with varying forms of emotional disorders, there is less value in attempting to apply it more generically with hints at how it can be utilised within an educational context. However, the literature affirms the links between the emotional well-being of individuals and the lives that they live and the people with whom they interact, and the subsequent impact this has on the image of self. "Only a consideration of the structure within which the elements of an individual's knowledge are placed allows us to understand how these elements rule and coordinate that individual's emotions and actions" (Guidano and Liotti, 1983, in Dobson and Dozois, 2010).

In addition, this approach emphasises meaning, and comes through the philosophical paradigm of constructivism in which this research is situated, emphasising the importance of hermeneutics, narrative and discourse, all of which are discussed within the research methodology chapter. And whilst there are critics within the clinical world of psychotherapy as the essence of the mind therein is uncertain, these links between this CBT therapy and constructivism per se are relevant and informed unequivocally by the literature that has emerged from this area (Dobson and Dozois, 2010).

This aspect of CBT informs the overall research approach that has been applied and is useful to reinforce the significance of emotional well being and the relevance of constructivism.

#### **4.11 Cognitive Behavioural Coaching**

Adapting CBT as a technique that has long since been regarded as a therapy treatment for a disorder, and to rebrand in a way for individuals who are seeking improvements in their personal and professional development is known as cognitive behavioural

coaching (CBC). There is a significant amount of empirical data supporting this transition from the traditional intent of CBT into other forms such as this, whereby its goal is to help individuals to cope with life's challenges (Neenan, 2008a, 2008b). CBC was derived from the work of Beck (1976) – Cognitive Therapy and Ellis (1962) – REBT. A general format of CBC is two dimensional – goal setting, and removing barriers (which are likely to be psychological). In order to approach the psychological blocks CBC utilises Dryden and Neenan's (2004) and Ellis's and MacLaren's (1998) ABCDE model (Figure 4.2) that breaks down the scenario as follows:

- A – what is the objective, as described by the client
- B – self-limiting/defeating beliefs
- C – consequences
- D – disputing of beliefs
- E – new and effective outlook

Figure 4.2 - General overview of ABCDE model taken from Neenan, 2008b

#### 4.12 “Third-wave” cognitive behavioural therapy

Some newer approaches to CBT, classified as being “third wave” (Dobson and Dozois, 2010) focus on acceptance and commitment therapies (ACT) (Hayes and Strosah, 2004), and are not focused primarily on changing thoughts and behaviours, with a conscious commitment on “mindfulness” which suggests a greater level of awareness of being able to rationalise things that happen and events that occur in a way which restructures the acceptance of that particular happening as a result of how this is how things are and they are potentially not as bad as they might be. This approach also seeks to problem solve but through elimination of the problem by acceptance of the relationships that exist between the experiences, language and behaviour (neuro, linguistic programming) (Kong, 2012).

As this research investigation attempts to develop a teaching model that seeks to invoke a greater level of engagement and self-awareness on the part of the undergraduate student whilst undertaking their university experience, and in addition to the body of knowledge relating to CBT that was discussed earlier, the emergence of some of these newer issues is a useful addition to this debate (Ansari and Coch, 2006). Significant literature is emerging relating to Mindfulness (Mindfulness based Cognitive Behaviour Therapy) and Emotional Intelligence – two terms that offer some helpful insight to the ideas associated with lifelong learning, self-actualisation and becoming an autonomous learner.

The growing body of research relating to Mindfulness reveals more of its importance and impact on the behaviours of human beings through the use of enhanced meditative techniques, and has been shown to increase the beneficial effects on improving the lives of people, particularly those with depression and mental health issues. However, coping with the stress of life in general, and achieving a state of well-

being is something that is beneficial across all members and aspects of society and living in a fast paced world. Subsequently, maintaining your own health and well-being is an important component in achieving success, both personally and professionally. The employability agenda and the concept of PDP have both produced numerous terms that all link to the notion of the 'thinking self' and the consequences of invoking a greater self-awareness and other similar traits and attributes that are seen as desirable. Mindfulness is one approach that can be helpful to achieve such results and to inform the debate. A general overview, with context specific definitions is presented below to clarify.

### **Mindfulness**

There are a number of definitions relating to Mindfulness that attempt to give clarity to a complex area of discussion, emerging primarily from a clinical and psychological area, but not exclusively, and it is becoming increasingly relevant within performance-related areas in the workplace that include management, to name one. Within the context of this research the relevance is within the university experience, and as the programme of study has strong links to work related practices, the literature is worthy of note, particularly as the student body, whilst in pursuance of their chosen degree, are located within an organisation in which this literature is equally applicable. Brown, Ryan and Creswell (2007, p212) define Mindfulness as "A receptive attention to and awareness of present moment events and experiences." Adams (2014), provides a useful ABC mnemonic to describe its intent

"A is for awareness – becoming more aware of what you are thinking and doing

B is for just being with your experience - avoiding the tendency to respond on auto pilot and feed problems by creating your own story.

C is for seeing things and responding more wisely. By creating a gap between the experience and our reaction we can make wiser choices".

Thinking about Mindfulness in this three dimensional way is useful to recognise the interactions of the three mindful states that need to be present in order for a human being to be able to say that they are mindful.

Dane (2011) talks of a growing body of knowledge based around Mindfulness that has an impact across numerous organisations, largely affecting the ways that individuals therein function and are able to focus their attention and make strategic decisions, and how they respond to risks. Such factors are important to both the employers and the employees and can bring about potential improvements in the workplace. Subsequently this literature suggests that an awareness of mindfulness and the ABC mnemonic can improve people's lives and assist with their education, therefore it is important to factor this into any developed teaching models/approaches.



The origins of Mindfulness stem from Buddhist thoughts, and whilst this ideology was once ignored from a scientific perspective, it is now increasingly being viewed with heightened levels of interest as is indicated by the surge in literature, the content of which suggests that it is within the capacity of every individual human being to achieve a state of mindfulness (Dane, 2011). It is regarded as a state of consciousness, concerned with the here and now, able to recognise both internal and external phenomena and subsequently respond appropriately, in the moment. Dane (2011) brings together these components in a useful statement which suggests that “mindfulness is the clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens to us and in us at the successive moments of perception”.

With regard to improved performance in the workplace, research suggests that individuals who are mindful are more responsive within the workplace and are able to channel their skills and expertise more effectively. Mindfulness gives individuals the time and space to solve problems which can be an asset in any situation – ie workplace or personal (Williams and Penman, 2011). In addition, benefits to employees who are mindful are evident in their physical and mental health and well-being. Whilst potential costs to employers attempting to promote a state of mindfulness in their employees need to be thought through (Dane, 2011), and also that its origins suggest that it requires a series of meditation based techniques (training) in order to induce the state, the essence of being mindful cannot exclusively be attributed to focused meditation as there may be other conditions that enable individuals to become mindful, which have the potential to evolve from future research (Williams and Penman, 2011).

The essence of trying to attain a state of mindfulness is dependent upon having awareness of one's emotions and the diagram below (Figure 4.3) gives a perspective on the construct of an emotion from the view of Williams and Penman (2011) that partly links the concept of mindfulness to the following discussion on emotional intelligence.

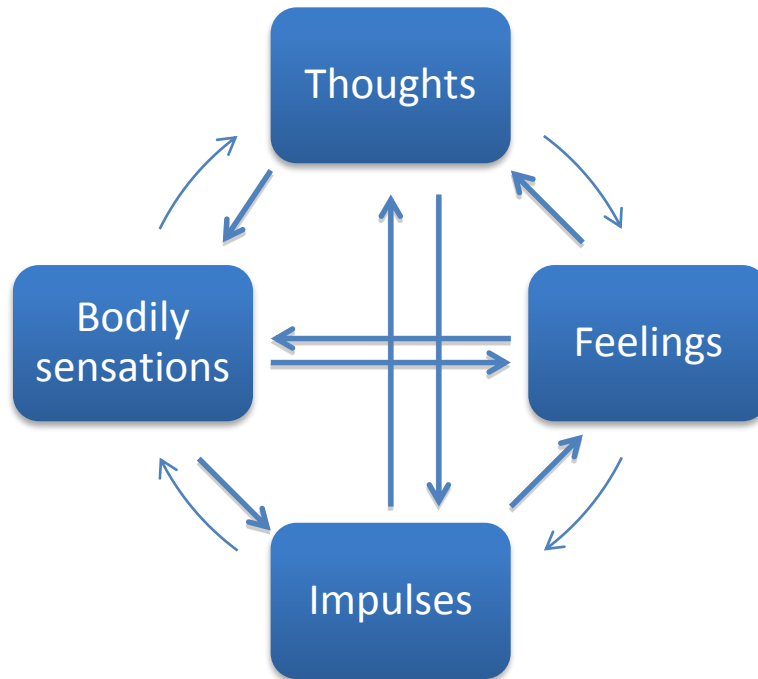


Figure 4.3 - 'What makes an emotion?' (Williams and Penman, 2011)

"Emotions are 'bundles' of thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations and impulses to act."

### **Emotional Intelligence (EI)**

The literature around emotional intelligence attempts to provide a scientific framework for the study of emotional competence (Dacre Pool and Qualter, 2013) offering a robust understanding of the concept and its variants.

"Emotional Intelligence: a mental ability (or set of mental abilities) that permit the recognition, learning, memory for, and capacity to reason about a particular form of information, such as verbal information."

(Mayer, Roberts and Barsade, 2008)

Further explanations look at the abilities that are represented by EI that "join intelligence and emotion to enhance thought" (Mayer, Roberts and Barsade, 2008). Within the literature there are specific discussions that outline the scope of EI, and an attempt is made to define boundaries. However, one popular misconception of EI is the way that the term is misused within a debate around psychology which often needs to give an overview of mental processing (Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, 2008) when discussing thoughts, emotions and feelings, and making links to behaviour.

The importance of emotional intelligence is for a human being to be able to use emotions “to inform your thinking and using your thinking to understand and manage emotions” (Hasson, 2014), and to facilitate meaning-making through their undertakings (Eatough and Smith, 2010). The discussion within this thesis does not provide any scientific evidence or justification to inform the EI of undergraduate students, but it does offer a broad discussion that alludes to the emotional development of the students.

All humans are unique, and even though many students have the same grades at ‘A’ level, and might enrol on the same degree, they are all individuals. They experience different emotions and development at different stages throughout their lives, and are influenced by the people and the events that they go through. The complexity of emotions is evident throughout all aspects of human development, and making sense of emotions is not easy, nor is it the same for every single person, whether they are in the same situation or not. In order to understand emotions there are three elements involved.

Table 4-5 – Understanding emotions (Hasson, 2014)

Recognising and understanding the three aspects of emotions – physical feelings thoughts and behaviour – and the connections between them.
Being aware of the differences, transition, variations and degrees of intensity between emotions.
Understanding what, how and why you and other people experience certain emotions in certain situations.

The implicit understanding of emotional development, from a psychological perspective, suggests various ways of achieving some kind of balance in life – whether that is in relation to attempting to have a degree of control over the overall fulfilment of life itself and the way that you are living your life, or being able to intervene in such a way as to manage and shape the course that your life takes.

Being in control of the way that you live your life cannot be attributed to scientific interventions alone, or genetics, and even factoring in emotions is far from adding a quantifiable dimension to the understanding of how different people live their lives, yet it illustrates further the complexities of attempting to manage something that cannot wholly be ‘managed’. The results from studies relating to Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) interactions, which has been defined as a model of human communication and behaviour (Bandler and Grinder, 1975, Harman and O’Neil 1981) have provided some cautionary, but interesting findings about the linguistic re-

programming of the brain in order to improve the emotional status and wellbeing of an individual, and whilst this is very positive there is discourse around the type of training that would be suitable for differing situations which is still being contemplated (Craft, 2001, Goswami, 2004, Coch and Ansari, 2009).

In the context of young students at university it is easy to speak of their maturity or immaturity, their experiences and their family backgrounds, all of which might be considered to be instrumental as part of the shaping of their lives, but being in higher education is reliant, to some extent, on how those students choose to behave and interact at this point – that is to say their physical thoughts about themselves or in relation to what is happening around them and the people with whom they interact, the way that they feel, and their subsequent behaviours. However, this is not a linear explanation as any of those triggers can impact upon the other in any given situation, at any time, thus making the variables even more complex to predict, gauge or understand.

From a generic perspective, undergraduate students are living through a time of great change in their lives, and being able to influence their emotional development – a way of grouping the interactions between these physical thoughts, feelings and behaviours – is a potentially powerful intervention that can lead to a degree of success for those students.

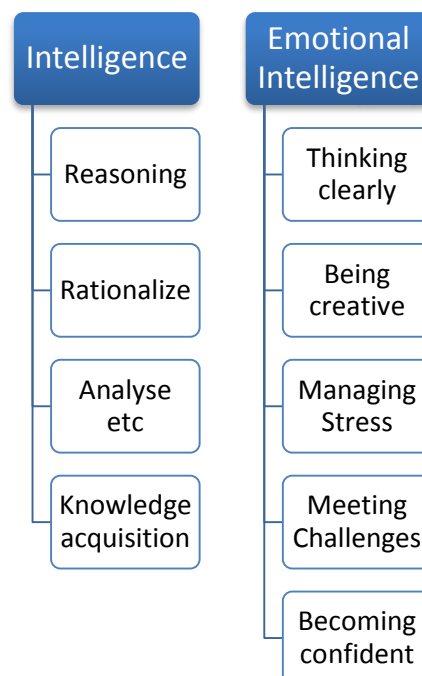


Figure 4.4 - Contemplations on Intelligence and Emotional Intelligence (adapted from Hasson, 2014)

A simplistic illustration is presented in Figure 4.4 that illustrates a number of attributes relating to intelligence and emotional intelligence and whereas aspects of intelligence

alone can be taught, learned, imitated, and researched, the less tangible attributes relating to emotional intelligence are more complex to contain. Models exist that attempt to facilitate the acquisition of some of those attributes, both in the workplace and in educational settings, but the measurement of the success of those initiatives is difficult to affirm as the individuals who are part of the process all react and respond to the experiences in very different ways, as their internal processing is largely affected by their intelligence level and their emotional development (Mayer, Roberts and Barsade, 2008). Some aspects of that success may be visible through a number of new mechanised processes and tests that, potentially, can be of benefit to both the individual and the provider (or organisation), but the full extent of the success or even failure of an initiative cannot be quantified exactly. It may not even be an immediate 'success' as it may be much later on in the life of the individual that the benefits are realised.

The ability to manage one's emotions is essential in order to realise well-being (Hasson, 2014) and thus be able to communicate and interact with others. Knowing how to behave, how to respond to people and situations, having strategic awareness and understanding of simple and complex situations are desirable attributes from any employers.

“Experience or qualifications might get you the job, but it's your ability to manage other people and your interactions with them that will keep you there and enable you to enjoy and progress in your work.” (Hasson, 2014)

The extensive research into PDP (Jackson, 2001, Burgess, 2007) and employability (USEM framework, Yorke and Knight, 2006), cites 'Emotional Intelligence – sensitivity to others' emotions and the effects that they can have' as one of ten 'Personal Qualities' that would need to be considered when institutions are claiming to embed employability into the curriculum. Also, the development of the CareerEDGE model of Graduate Employability (Dacre Pool and Sewell, 2007) portrays emotional intelligence as a fundamental requirement in pursuance of employability (Figure 4.5).

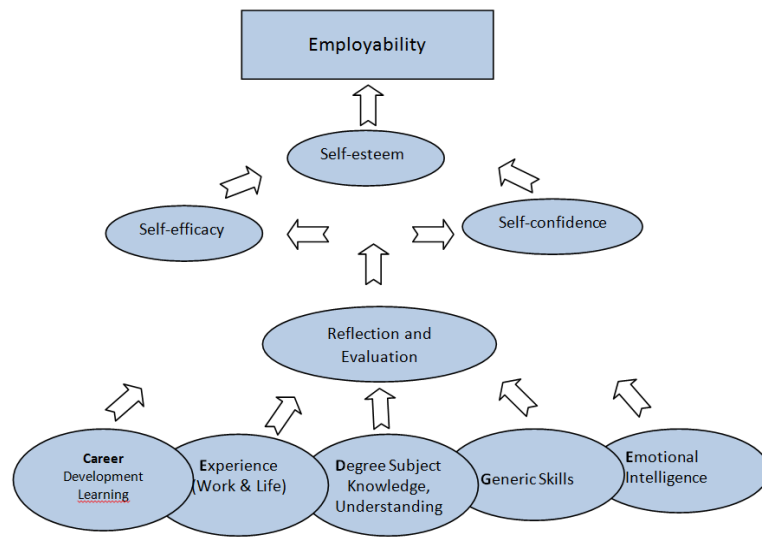


Figure 4.5 - Diagrammatic representation of the CareerEDGE model (Dacre Pool and Sewell, 2007)

However, whilst listings of desirable attributes and considerations for a wholesome curriculum that seeks to offer degree programmes that accommodate employability and whatever that entails, the subsequent implementation of such an aspirational endeavour is not always satisfactory for all persons involved. This is largely due to the conceptual nature of some of the desirables, and their subsequent interpretations within institutions by all stakeholders involved – career specialists, educators, researchers, managers, students, parents, and so forth. Part of this ideal struggling to be realised can be attributed to the emotional development of the student who might not be thinking longer term, or who might have more pressing situations to deal with in the moment. Frameworks for employability can be useful indicators for benchmarking and measuring integrative initiatives, and can capture evidence of good practice. They can attempt to direct and focus curriculum ventures, mapping across degree programmes the essential measures that indicate an integrated curriculum that successfully embeds employability as part of its offering, capturing measures of success that suggest heightened emotional development and self-awareness. Realistically, though, this could not be generalised for every student experiencing the same educational experience.

The CBT therapies that have been identified within the literature may, if acknowledged, influence the development of the intelligence and emotional development of the students and subsequently lead to improved chances of employability and well-being in their lives. If not acknowledged, those students may have a less supported experience of their undergraduate degree and be less able to meet the needs of both society and the workplace outside the institution.

### 4.13 Summarising thoughts

Beck (2011) outlines a view of experienced Cognitive Behavioural Therapists as individuals who are able to recognise what needs to be done in relation to the individuals involved. They are able to develop effective relationships through good rapport, working through any problems, collecting relevant data and finding solutions. This affirms the idea that a cognitive approach recognises that thoughts influence behaviour and emotions and such an approach is present within the teaching and learning ideologies. An interesting capstone for the application of CBT is through a body of theory defined as collaborative case conceptualisation, which offers a conceptual framework of CBT skills in relation to making the most informed decisions that suit the client or patient in this case (Kuyken, Padesky and Dudley, 2009). This representation (Table 4.6) of the recognised competencies and influences that are subsumed within the CBT area could potentially have a representation for the competencies that might be representative within the teaching and learning domain, and possibly add some clarity for CPD purposes.

The introduction to this section outlined the key elements that were expected from a therapist, and the subsequent pages attempted to make connection from therapy to education. A summary diagram delivers this mapping to show the extent of the similarities in approach.

**Table 4-6 - Therapy and Education**

Key Elements of a Therapist/Educator	CBT influences from within Educational Psychology
Theory or conceptual framework to guide intentions	Learning outcomes, schemes of work, teaching schedules, aims and objectives, lesson plans
Memory of the patient issues	Identification of students' needs, recognition of individual differences
Skilful use of intervention techniques to promote the observed change in behaviour	Ability to deliver good teaching and learning materials that achieve the learning outcomes through appropriate assessment measures.
Conditions necessary for change.	Provide the appropriate conditions for learning.

However, one of the significant differences in HE is associated with the applied recognition of the skillset of the practitioner who is delivering the teaching and learning. Furthermore, good teaching is intuitive and quite unique, and should not simply apply predetermined resources to teaching and learning situations (Lisewski and Joyce, 2011). The model suggested for CBT (Roth and Pilling, 2007) in Figure 4.6 clearly defines a framework that presents a range of competencies that are needed in order for any form of psychological intervention to be carried out. Within higher education, the HEA UK Professional Standards Framework provides a very useful benchmark, but potentially this could be developed further into practical guidance to assist the teaching and learning process, as is evident for CBT practitioners (Cully and Teten, 2008). The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Appendix 4) gives three specific expectations that inform teaching and learning – B3, B4 and B5, this research asks how can institutional adherence to these expectations be managed if there is not a common steer?



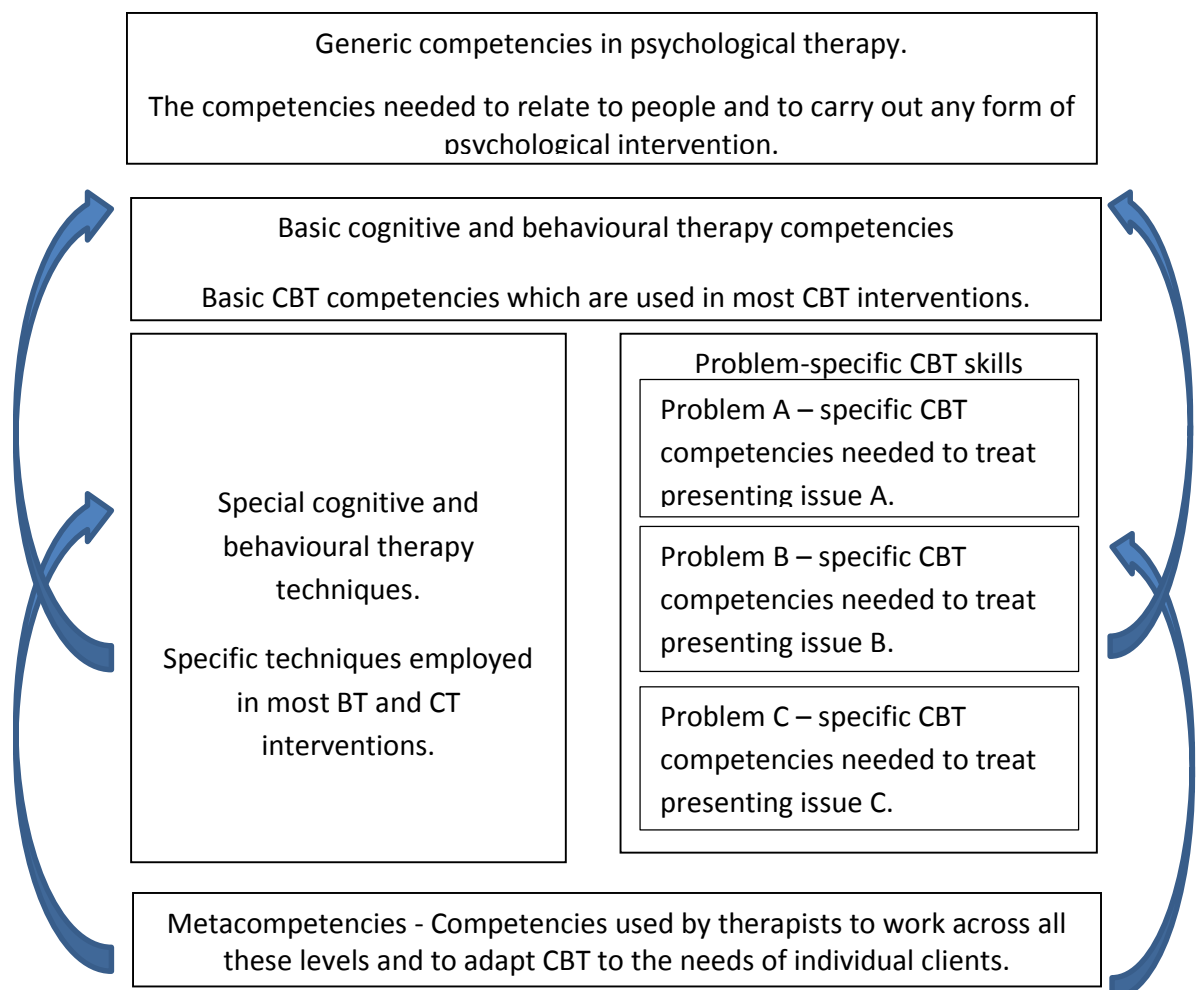


Figure 4.6 Roth and Pilling's (2007) model of CBT competencies

A further consideration from the literature about the impact of neuroscience on education is another issue. Evidence shows that lifestyle, ability to cope with stress, memory training and the value of physical exercise and good sleeping habits are presenting themselves in every individual and have an effect on success in the classroom. The use of NLP techniques in teacher training (Goswami, 2004, Carey, Churches, Hutchinson, Jones and Tosey, 2010, Grosu, Grosu, Preja and Iuliana, 2014) suggests the way the integration of various schools of thought are starting to blend – ie neuroscience, psychology, cognitive science and education – with the sole intent of creating more effective teaching methods and curricula to bring about a transformation in educational policy (Carew and Magsamen, 2009) as a way of situating meaning-making for the learner at its heart (Eatough and Smith, 2006).

The inclusion of CBT interventions presents a number of uncertainties for professionals to contemplate but there are proven gains for the student experience, should they be embraced, as an approach to positively influencing the social development and learning of the students (Gerber and Solar, 2005). In order to progress the research, a secure methodological approach is necessary and the following chapter identifies a number of different perspectives that need to be carefully considered.

## 5 Methodology

### 5.1 Introduction

The importance of social research can impact upon day to day life for individuals. Valuable research findings can inform this process whilst continuing to facilitate evolution and the development of the human species within a phenomenological context, whether that be sociological or cultural (Flick, 2011). The literature review posed numerous areas that support the necessity for human inquiry in order to enable the species to realise aspirational goals and to gain support through various techniques and support structures so as to achieve its full potential in relation to the available resources. The 'unpicking' of the concept of Personal Development Planning within an educational construct identified the importance of the students' 'mental engagement' with their environment and the subsequent identification and implementation of clear processes that will facilitate the realisation of Maslow's ideological vision of 'self-actualisation'.

*"Increasingly, science and research [Social research] - their approaches and results - inform public life. They help to provide a basis for political and practical decision making. "*

(Flick 2011, p4)

Prior to undertaking any research, an appraisal of the various methodologies is essential in order to establish the most appropriate one for the research question. The researcher must analyse the research question thoroughly in order to identify the best way to answer it. Further exploration, application and understanding of research methodology theory can affirm the skills of the researcher in seeking to discover some credible outcomes arising from a robust research approach (Campbell-Evans, 1992). Such contemplation is ambitious for a novice researcher and sometimes requires risks to be taken in order to match a research approach with a research question in a context that might not normally be associated with the research methodology particularly in relation to psychodynamic reflections (Hunt and West, 2011). The evaluation of multiple qualitative research approaches is a necessary requirement in order to select the most appropriate techniques for the research questions.

As a safe starting point, Crotty (1998) articulates four key questions to be answered in relation to any research undertaking. This attempts to give sequence and order to the research being carried out. The first consideration relates to a justification of the *methods* that are being used throughout the research. In this instance, the methods that have been chosen are constructivist case studies, participant observation, semi-structured interviews, content analysis, theme identification and rich, 'thick' narrative. A rationale is presented in this chapter to justify these choices, with an indicative description as to how each method has been used.

The second consideration contemplates the choice of methodology which in this case is Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

*“IPA allows for a detailed picture of the psychological processes and rich descriptions of how individuals think and feel about the challenges they face.”*

(Smith, Brewer, Eatough, Stanley, Glendinning and Quarrel, 2006 pp487)

IPA is most suited to this research as it provides an established structure to work with selected individuals in order to capture their thoughts and experiences in relation to their lives. A more detailed discussion follows at a later point in this chapter that outlines the processes attributed to IPA and shows how this research has adhered to the prescribed methodology.

The third consideration is the *theoretical perspective* that underpins the chosen methodology which in this case is a qualitative one, comprising interpretivism, double hermeneutics and symbolism. These approaches are used to identify ways in which the implementation of the methodology has been carried out, validating the use of qualitative data and its subsequent interpretation.

The final question seeks assurance from the informing research *paradigm or epistemology* that informs the whole process. In the case of this research, the informing epistemology is a constructivist one that allows the individual voices of the participants to be heard from their unique perspective and experience.

This structured sequence of inquiry offered by Crotty (1985) can be helpful to define, organise and add structure to an emerging research framework, justified from within the body of literature. The answers to these questions (Crotty, 1998) in relation to this research investigation are presented in Figure 5.1 and will be discussed, at length, in this chapter, in reverse order.

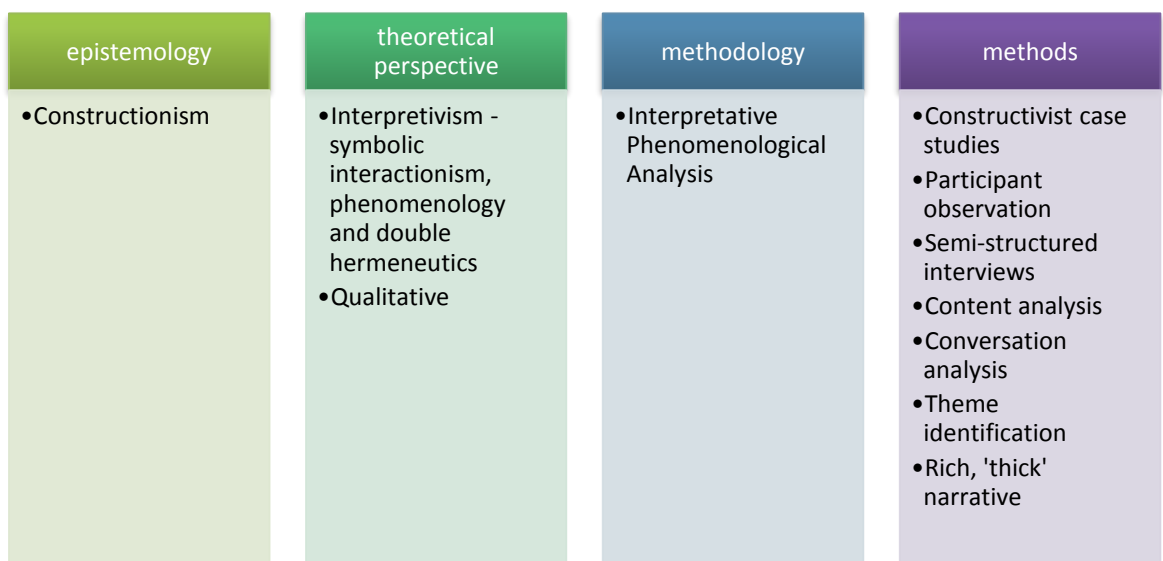


Figure 5.1 The Research Design Framework

## 5.2 Research paradigms and epistemologies

The abundance of literature and writings about research methodologies are a testament in themselves to the complexity of the area and to the hopelessness of any real attempt to identify an 'off the shelf' published framework that can be used for all research topics. In addition, the process of human inquiry is equally complex as the subject is not an abstract entity and is susceptible to numerous influences both from an internal perspective as well as the external environment (Peters, 2012). Subsequently, it is essential that any research is securely underpinned by a robust research design and strategy situated within the most appropriate research paradigm. An investigation of the empirical data in relation to these methods and methodologies has been undertaken in order to determine a credible research framework in relation to this study. The research area itself is from the perspective of an interpretivist, even though the research paradigm sits in a constructionist epistemology, as the essence of informed findings will be deduced from the meanings and judgement statements made by the researcher in relation to the evidence and the qualitative data gathered from human participants. To endorse this approach a qualitative debate will precede the statement of research intent, to fully evaluate a secure rationale and framework for this research.

Creswell (2009) discusses four epistemologies in relation to research design but chooses to use the term 'world view' as opposed to epistemology or paradigm (Cibangu, 2010). A subsequent discussion of each of the four world views presented by Creswell – Postpositivism, Advocacy/Participatory, Pragmatism and Constructionism – suggests that as the nature of this research is seeking an understanding of the meanings and experiences of a number of individuals to ambitiously generate and inform theory, a **constructionist** epistemology is the most appropriate.

To eliminate the other epistemologies, a brief discussion of each is presented.

A **postpositivist** approach in relation to the research aims could potentially produce findings that were not credible due to the nature of the evidence gathering based on human behaviour and subsequent lack of scientific precision. There is, however, considerable literature discussing the varying forms of positivism, arguably more than twelve varieties, some of which suggest a degree of repositioning towards the modernist postpositivist perspective. Whilst the natural sciences have contributed greatly to society with regard to achievements in the medical world alone, to name but one field, critics suggest that the status given to these findings is the problem, not the findings themselves (Crotty, 1998). Subsequent positivists, looking at different approaches from logical positivism and falsification, through to revolutionary positivism, cannot continue to ignore human consciousness in both social and cultural contexts. Some of the measures posed from Crotty, following lengthy theoretical ponderings, suggest that the determination of positivist research is the measure of the quantitative findings against three attributes – objectivity, validity and generalizability.

Without wanting to deepen the debate outside of the scope of this research, those measures are still vulnerable to interpretation.

An **Advocacy/participatory** approach is not applicable as the research is not politically motivated, or collaborative and the research aims are not seeking emancipation, but are looking towards insight and reflection. The subsequent use of this paradigm would add a constraining boundary that could affect the findings.

A **pragmatic** approach may require some deliberation as the essence of it, according to Cresswell (2009), is looking at consequences and real world practice, but it is not attempting to generate meaning of the experiences of the individuals involved in the research. In the case of this research, the intent is to establish the participant view of their experience as individuals, not as a collective body that could be anticipatory in relation to the findings.

Constructionism and the emergence of interpretivism give a contrasting view to that of positivism which was founded in scientific precision and experimentation, ultimately leading to predictability, as opposed to a non-scientific approach that attempts to make sense of people, their life constructs and social reality of their cultures and lives (Crotty, 1998).

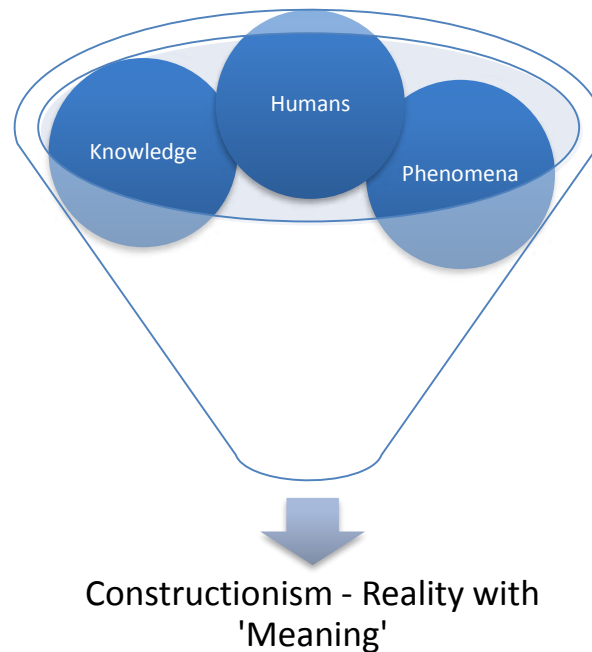
However, whilst the epistemology is comfortably informed by **constructionism**, the complexities of the chosen paradigm will become apparent and are clearly subjective and therefore constructivist, depending upon the interpretation of this concept and its composite variables in relation to the research aims and subsequent attempts at a definition of the context (Lee, 2012). A useful definition is offered below, but potentially poses a number of questions

*“Constructionism is the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context”.*

(Crotty, 1998)

The social context of this research is the university degree programme that students experience and the answers to the research questions in this study are seeking an interpretative understanding of that experience. The accumulation of qualitative data is an integral part of finding answers. Qualitative research interprets and validates data by analysing the meaning that the participants share through reflections on their lived experiences (Bradley, Curry and Kelly, 2007). Thus the idea of a constructionist epistemology is a natural part of a framework for qualitative research. Crotty (1998) discusses views on the term epistemology as a concept dealing with the legitimacy and nature of the knowledge itself, its scope and why it exists. Constructionism is an epistemology that recognises the interaction between knowledge, humans and phenomena and evidences this through narrative accounts that detail the individual

interpretations of such interactions as indicated in Figure 5.2. The use of the word 'crucible' as in 'Crucible of Constructionism' however, suggests the metaphor of a melting pot (aka the university) into which different students with different life experiences, attributes, levels of intellect and understanding all come together, and there is no certainty as to the eventual output or end result for all those involved.

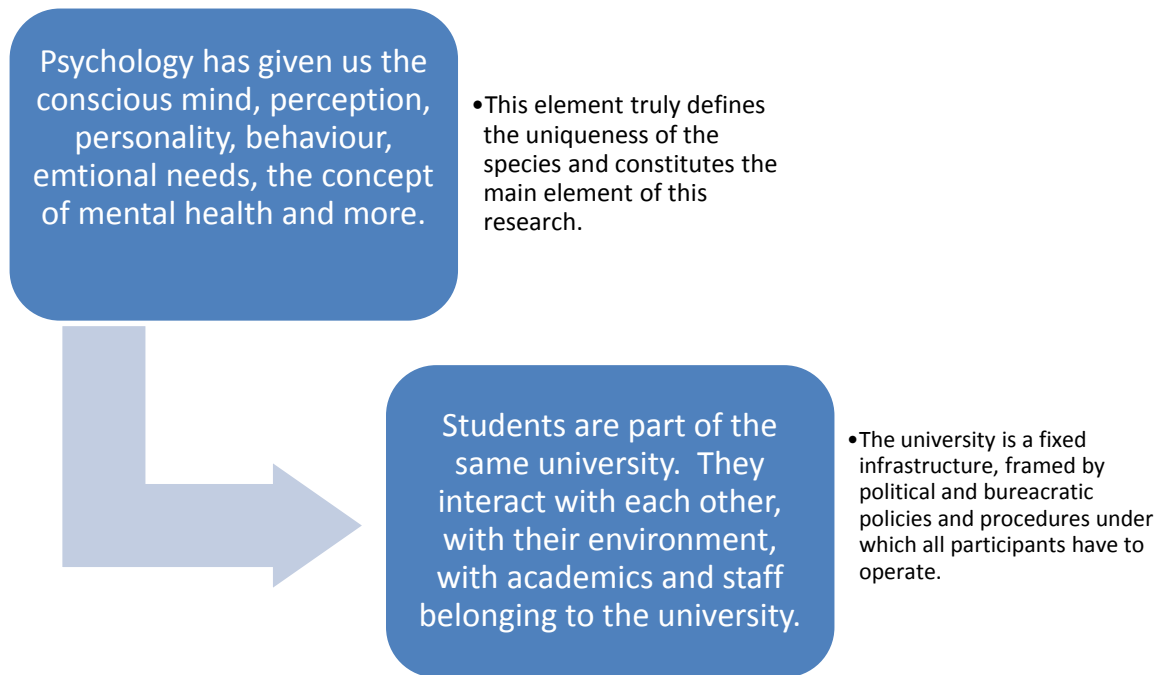


**Figure 5.2 Crucible of Constructionism – diagrammatic representation**

### 5.2.1 Human considerations in social research

The Crucible of Constructionism (Figure 5.2) contains human beings who are a unique and complex species, each one very different - physically, emotionally, behaviourally, responsively and so on, ad infinitum. The 'humans' in this research study are all students of a similar age, all working towards similar goals yet their experience is far from being dystopian (Papastephanos, 2008). It is, in fact, transformative, enabling and it comprises energising ideas and collective meaning making opportunities (Paré and Sutherland, 2012, Pridgeon and Grogan, 2012). These 'students' all attend the same lectures, mostly at the same times, and receive the same education. However, every student is a unique human being, presenting with different knowledge and life experience (Figure 5.2), and whilst the university infrastructure for each student is essentially similar, the experience that each student has whilst engaging with their studies will be different as a result of their lived lives and things that have happened and continue to happen to them along the way, their subsequent response to those happening as well as their responsiveness to the teaching and learning. These are all factors for consideration yet Figure 5.3 indicates

that this cannot be looked at purely from a constructionist perspective as the findings would not truly be reflective of the individual experience.



**Figure 5.3 A possible constructionist perspective of university students. (Adapted from Pernecky, 2012)**

### 5.1.2 Knowledge considerations in social research

A difficult contemplation is 'what do we mean by the term knowledge', as shown in Figure 5.2 the Crucible of Constructionism. In relation to the social research being undertaken as part of this study, knowledge is presented as a range of learning outcomes and objectives, pertinent to the chosen degree programme. There is a required entry behaviour and achievement level that successful student applicants are expected to possess. In theory, Figure 5.4 shows that students enrolling onto a programme of study all have to meet this stated entry criteria and are all therefore deemed to be suitable students who should progress and ultimately be successful. The reality of this experience can be quite different. Students who enter university invariably have to meet specific entry criteria, but the knowledge that is presented and delivered through the chosen teaching and learning approaches is often received in different ways by the students on the programme, essentially the very essence of being human, leading to different outcomes and levels of achievement. The impact of this receipt of knowledge, however, is placed upon human beings, all of whom are different, and therefore the receptiveness and responsiveness from each person cannot be the same, which immediately renders the final statement in figure 5.4 untrue. Despite the mechanisation of some teaching approaches, this is still likely to remain an untrue statement, and the inevitable

scaling of attainment and degree classification delineators are needed to differentiate between the awarding of the achievements.

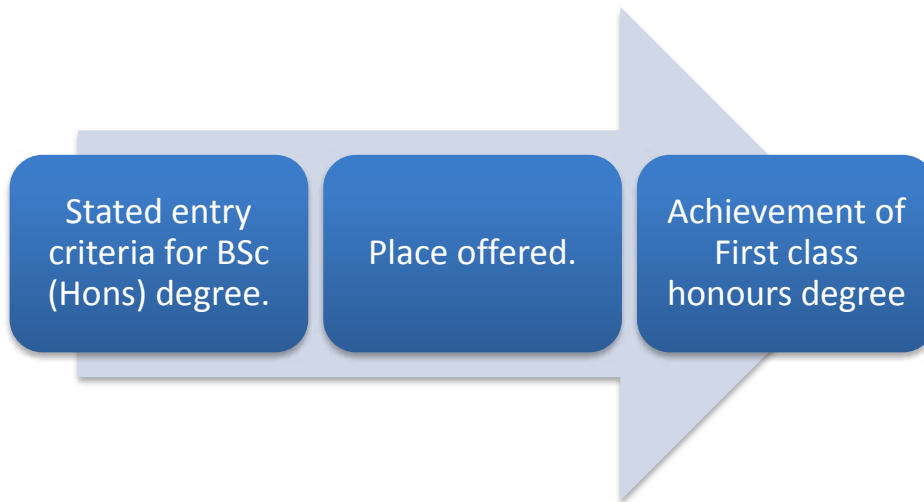


Figure 5.4 Degree student 'journey'

### 5.1.3 Phenomenological considerations in social research

The third element of the Crucible of Constructionism (Figure 5.2) is the phenomenological one. All students entering university may be of a similar age, but have had very different life experiences to date (Brougham, Zail, Mendoza, and Miller, 2009). In order to reflect a diagrammatic representation of this particular discussion point, and to illustrate the complexity of it, a 'stress bucket' variant is shown in Figure 5.5, with an indicative, but not exhaustive, list of elements (NZ Department of Labour, 2011).

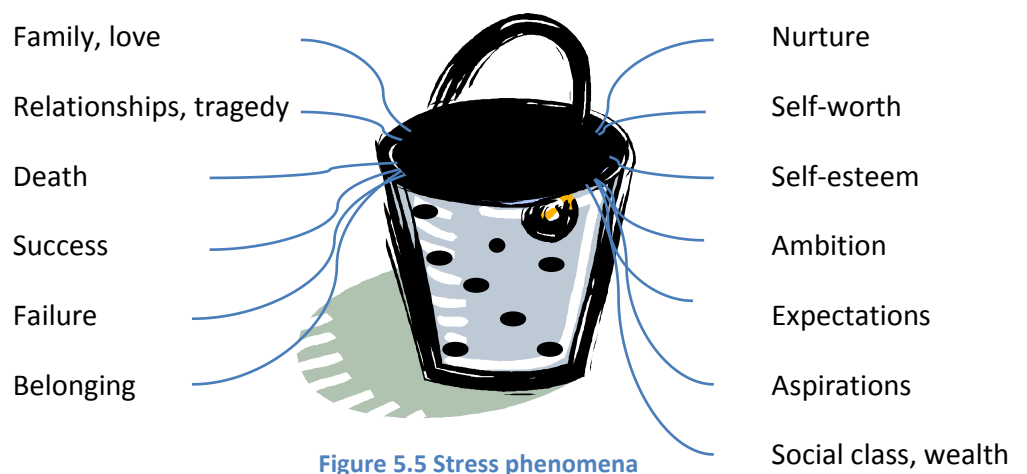


Figure 5.5 Stress phenomena

Figure 5.5 conveys the complexity of the associated elements within the constructionist epistemology or paradigm for this study or for the participants



of this study and emphasises the discourse faced by the interpretivist researcher, seeking to find some kind of resolution to the research questions. Every one of those elements can be analysed differently when applied to different human beings experiencing different situations, and meaning can be made to justify the subsequent outcomes. In relation to the research questions, the literature review has presented empirical data that informs the constructionist paradigm around which this research has been designed, yielding to established and known understanding from a number of schools of education, in particular the social and situational one that underpins the constructivist ideology within education, but cognisant of all of the others. In particular, humanist ideologies looking at individual differences in people and/or students is an important concept of this research investigation, and when those differences are populated by the characteristics that are defined by figure 5.5 the 'stress bucket', the complexity of those differences is compounded even more when applied within a research framework with real participants thus securing the constructivist world view associated with this research.

The simplified diagrammatic representation (Figure 5.2) of how constructionism deals with the interactions between the three composite elements – ie humans, knowledge and phenomena – the individual complexities of these elements, together with the complex nature of their subsequent interactions is diverse and obviously does not converge in a straightforward way to eliminate subjectivity in the epistemological debate. Crotty's (1998) differentiation between constructionism and constructivism suggests a way of describing the latter as being an "individualistic understanding of the constructionist position", thereby suggesting that even more variables are present. He acknowledges the validity of the individual perspectives and the very essence of *weltanschauung* (world view) in a singular context. This then becomes a testament to the collection of evidence from participant individuals, their experiences, perspectives and subsequent reflections and in effect values every single one of them for research purposes. As individuals live out their daily lives they inevitably reflect on what has happened to them, what they are experiencing and subsequently draw conclusions from the events as part of their every-day learning (Coutts-Jarman, 1993). However, the very fact that the participants in this study are all attending a university and essentially working towards a common goal sets the social context for this research and is a predetermined construct within the constructionist epistemology. As the findings from the individuals involved recognise the different perspectives and perceptions of those individuals, generalisability of findings is not anticipated and constructivist values are to be recognised.

Critics take every opportunity to point out that the concept of constructionism or *social constructionism* as it has evolved, can at times be regarded as being questionable, and suggest that its tendencies towards finding the good in every situation lack a credible evidence source (Gergen, 1999, Talja, 2004). Yet the integrity of constructionism as a

research methodology invites continuing reflections based on evidence that is value laden, but it is not morally emancipatory and neither strives to be so. However, the subsequent reflections may themselves bring about transformations within the very social construct from which they emerge. This, in itself, is the essence of what constructionism and constructivism are about. The terms are often used interchangeably but do facilitate individualism and the effects that meaning making has on that individual, and the impact that those individuals have on both those around them and the collective context in which they exist (Brown, 2006, Pernecky, 2012).

The constructs of every-day life and subsequent human and environmental interactions are recognised as a valuable insight for qualitative research data that does not have any clear ontological constraints, although this is a factor for consideration (Berger and Luckmann, 1966 reprinted 1991). The use of language, the observation of behaviours and subsequent consequences, together with the experienced influences and interventions arguably facilitate evolution and development and underpin the role of education as a social process that seeks meaning through reflective negotiation (Lee, 1992) and discourse analysis.

### **5.3 The theoretical perspective**

The world view discussion presented earlier from a social constructionist perspective, alluded to the complexity of the component elements and related factors both within and outside of the research environment (Shotter, 2012). The underlying theoretical perspective that can be situated comfortably within this context is a qualitative one of interpretivism, though the debate is far from being undisputable, but there is perhaps an inevitability about its value in relation to this kind of research. The nature of processing qualitative research is reliant upon the skills and expertise of the researcher in the identification of the research area; the definition of the research questions; the selection of participants and subsequent collection and analysis of the data with a view to informing the research audience. This fact can only be judged by the readers of this thesis, but it is anticipated that the findings will be of interest and value.

As a contrast to positivism, a constructionist perspective is not looking for exactness and truths, through undisputable findings, but is looking for valid and useful interpretations from a world that has been socially constructed and wherein meaningful reality can adopt multiple interpretations from numerous contexts and/or perspectives. From this position, as interpretivism is concerned with people (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006), it is said to be largely idiographic and an attempt to situate this approach within the context of this research will utilise criteria offered by Sikes and Gale (2006) in Bold (2012) that situates qualitative data as a means of finding answers to research questions that involve human beings and their subsequent experiences.

Table 5-1 From Sikes and Gale (2006) in Bold (2012)

Criteria	Description of Criteria
Substantive contribution	How does the narrative contribute to knowledge and understanding of social life?
Aesthetic merit	How does the narrative invite interpretive responses?
Reflexive and participatory ethics The principle of Reflexivity	Does the narrative represent participants fairly and acknowledge the contextual conditions in which the data was gathered? The researcher is aware of how reality is being presented within the narrative texts produced
Impact	What is the impact on the audience
Experience near The principle of historical continuity	Is the narrative a true reflection of the research process? Action

Part of the response to the narrative will be through the evidenced phenomenology and the visible symbolic interactionism that are recognised components of interpretivist philosophy applicable to this context (Saunders, Lewis and Thornill, 2012). The phenomena being explored in this instance looks at the way that the participants in this study make sense of what is around them, and this is supported quite significantly through actions with others within that environment. This process of double hermeneutics, (Giddens, 1984) seeking to construct the meaning from the dialogue and interactions that take place is a main role for the researcher who is seeking to represent a true picture of what has been discovered. Through this reflexivity (Schon, 1991) and the subsequent validated heuristic credentials of the researcher to make quick, yet informed mental judgements (Smith et al, 2009), the narrative that is produced is expected to contribute to a greater understanding of the phenomenology being evidenced so as to inform the sector.

#### 5.4 Research methodology

The theoretical perspective has explored the aspects of qualitative research that discuss the importance of interpretivist phenomenology utilising hermeneutics, double hermeneutics and symbolic interactionism. Any such investigation that analyses phenomenology and the people involved in it might not be credible in the research arena without the identification of a recognised, qualitative framework in which to situate this research and the resultant findings.

Whilst better known research methodologies are included as part of the methodology, such as case studies and participant observation, the underlying framework chosen for this investigation is Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). This methodology facilitates a way to offer an insight into the real world experiences of the participants in relation to their life experiences (Reid, Flowers and Larkin, 2005, Brocki and Wearden, 2006, Mann and Abraham, 2006, Smith et al, 2009, Brunsden and Hill, 2009).

IPA provides legitimacy for the researcher to be immersed in the phenomenological context being explored, and invites individualised responses from all participants, including the researcher, taking into account far more than dialogue alone. More significantly, this methodology highlights the student voice from first year through to final year, looking at changes that occur not only as a result of maturation, but also through the development of the students themselves as emotionally developing and intelligent learners, and as part of a community of learning. The anticipated demographics would highlight two first year students, typically 18-19 years of age, two second year students (19-20 years of age) and two final year students (20-21 years of age). Such an insight will hopefully reveal a greater recognition and understanding of the learning process, gleaned from a representative sample, together with all of the composite stages of undergraduate student development towards their individualised goals in relation to their perceived sense of self-actualisation or not, as the case may be.

The methodology is founded on the ideas of Edmond Husserl (1859-1938) who believed in the exploration of those life experiences as being fundamental as to how we perceive ourselves, interact with those experiences, and subsequently behave as a result of having had them. Other phenomenological philosophers added to the debate considerably – Heidegger's (1889-1976) psychological transgressions into the notion of identifying and accessing the constitution of the human being, and their individuality, Merleau-Ponty's (1908-1961) emphasis on the individual contexts, Sartre's (1905-1980) extensions into existential and evolving phenomenologies in themselves illustrate the complex nature of the area being investigated. Perhaps one common thread is the importance of the researcher who needs to be involved in the process, but also be able to interpret the findings both from within it, and from outside of it. This is the 'double hermeneutic' dialogue that is essential to validating the data in relation to the research questions (Giddens, 1984, Smith et al, 2009).

The premise of IPA is founded on 3 specific concepts that are viewed through a philosophical lens. They are phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography. A suggested diagrammatic view of this IPA investigation, Figure 5.6, illustrates how the three concepts are represented as an integral and necessary part of the structure and methodical processing.

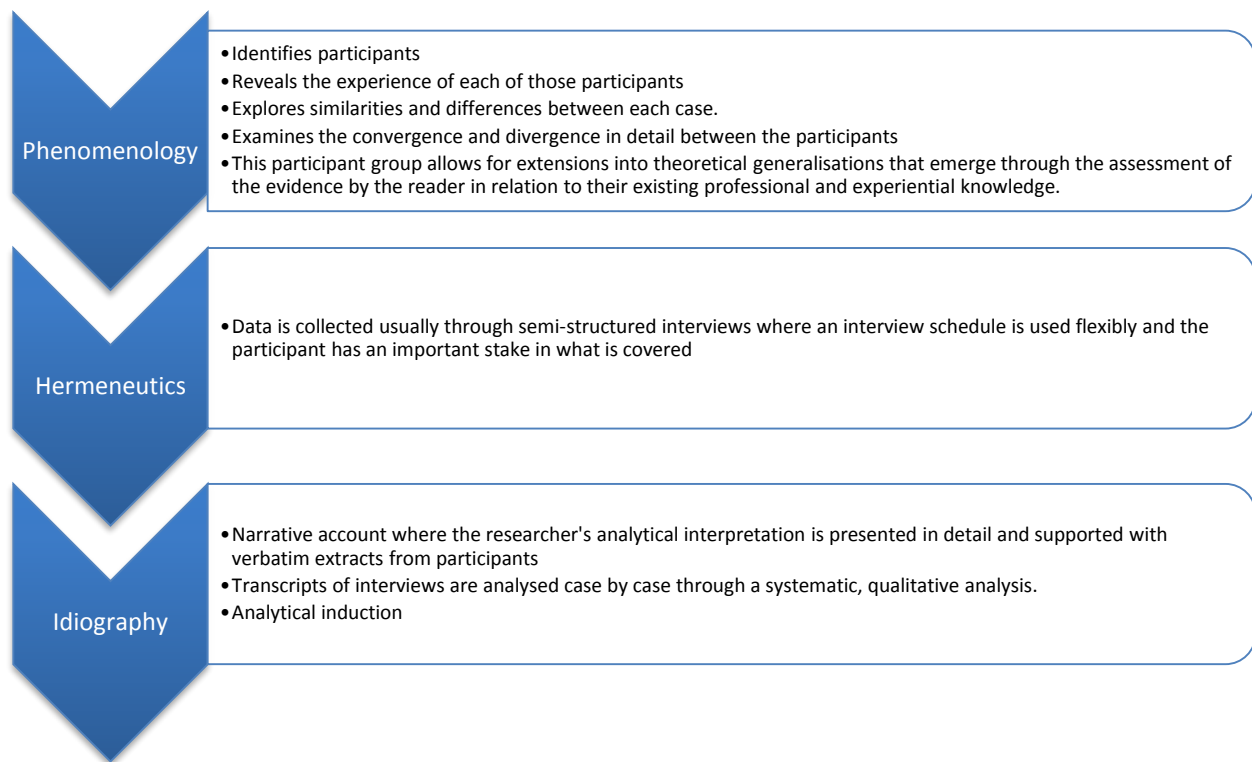


Figure 5.6 A suggested IPA Framework

Phenomenology (Figure 5.6) – Identification of phenomenological concept

A bold challenge that is made from any research that utilises IPA is the relationship between the value of the research and the number of participants (Reid et al, 2005). In this instance, the number of participants that have been selected is six, including the researcher as a participant. Those participants are willing, purposively selected (Pettican and Prior, 2011) and able to present some rich dialogue that establishes their perception and awareness of the experiences and sense making of those experiences that they have had to date, and their individual reflections of those lived experiences. The focus of an IPA emphasises the richness of the data not the number of participants, but gives a voice to those participants (Larkin, Watts and Clifton, 2006). It is therefore anticipated that a maximum of 6 participants (including the researcher) will be identified as part of this research. Those participants will be from all levels of an undergraduate degree programme from the area of Information Sciences (nee Systems) and will all have a deep understanding of the phenomena being researched as they are all immersed in it (Pettican and Prior, 2011). The subject area has no relevance in relation to the research question, but it is the accessibility of these students to the researcher over a continuous period of time that is important to inform the findings. A case study for each participant will be presented, and a degree of cross-case analysis will result in thematic findings.

### Hermeneutics (Figure 5.6) - Importance of the dialogue in IPA

Interpretation of any phenomena is greatly informed by hermeneutics to facilitate the understanding of human-will and intention and also to identify social rules (Huaxia, 2010). The dialogue between the researcher and the participants is through semi-structured interviews, carefully designed to capture that rich data that has been willingly volunteered. All of the selected students were known to the researcher, and had shared their experiences with the researcher in a number of different ways either as part of seminar activities, or in general conversation. An important stage in the dialogue is one of double hermeneutics that is validated by the experiences of the researcher as being suitable to be involved at this level of the process. Attempts will be made to minimise subjectivity and bias by creating a comfortable space for free dialogue without any consequences for the programmes being studied and the subsequent results that would be obtained from those study areas (Sandberg, 2005). As the intent is an interpretative one, it is informed significantly by hermeneutics throughout the investigation (Smith et al, 2009, Bates, 2012).

### Idiography (Figure 5.6) – Crafting the ‘story’

The depth of the analysis is critical in order to create the narrative in response to the research questions. An IPA may focus on single case analysis in order to express an understanding of a particular phenomena and how the participants are making sense of their lived experience (Bates, 2012). From an idiographic perspective, there is a need for cautious development of single cases (Smith et al, 2009), and whilst not ignoring generalisations that can be made, the impact of the single case can be, perhaps, just as effective when informing the research as can the impact of utilising multiple cases.

This application of IPA is from the perspective of the researcher as a first time user so it would inevitably invite criticisms, opinions and observations but these would be well received and recognised as being useful to improve the skillset for future use.

## **5.5 Research Methods and Analysis**

The IPA framework relating to this research identified 6 participants who were already known to the researcher, for whom an individual case study would be presented. The individuals were selected purposively from a strategic perspective, designed to result in meaningful conversations, dialogue and correspondence that would respond to the identified research questions. As IPA aims to generate in-depth analysis from the participant perspective, and as the researcher was known to the students (levels 4-6), access to them was both convenient and opportunistic, suggested by shared dialogue throughout the year and the different experiences they were bringing to the research conversations (Bryman, 2008). The resultant IPA case studies in this research are entirely constructivist as they reflect the individual's thoughts, feelings and experiences whilst studying at university.

“A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.”

(Yin, 2009)

The above definition attests to the validity of a case study method in relation to a qualitative research approach such as this as the boundaries are unclear and the phenomenon is unpredictable. The data collection methods can be situated within evidenced case study methodological criteria (Benbasat et al, 1987) relating to the context in which the research is being undertaken (Pickard and Dixon, 2004), and the subsequent methods being applied. The complexity of the research area being investigated will result in a number of constructivist case studies that attempt to explain meaning making in relation to the individuals involved. These findings are potentially reliable as the researcher possesses a robust understanding of the context due to their subsequent immersion in it, and also due to the collaborative processes that have been employed throughout the research time-frame. The individuality of the case studies is rich and complete, and it is anticipated that the emerging findings from each are transferable and have a voice in the wider research arena that is relevant to HE (Pickard and Dixon, 2004, Pickard 2012). They also combine a number of techniques for data collection including participant observation, text and document analysis, interviews (Darke, Shanks and Broadbent, 1998) and social linguistic discourse which is based on constructivist thinking and is a way of identifying context, mapping significances and providing a deeper level of understanding of the phenomena (Jansen, 2008). A discussion of each of these data collection techniques is offered to validate and secure the choices made in relation to this research.

### **5.5.1 Participant Observation**

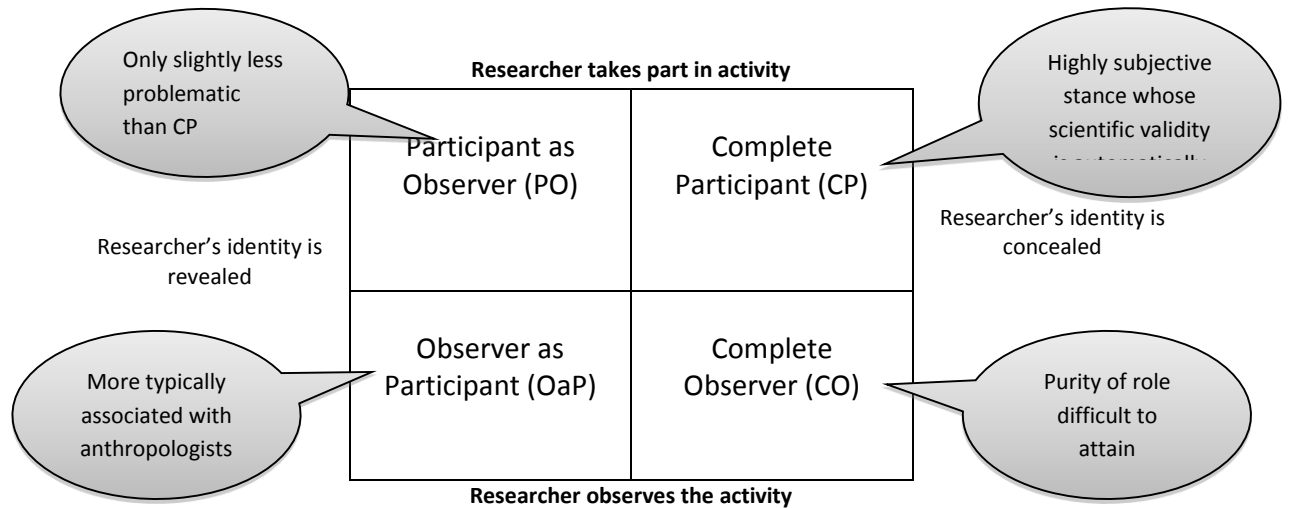
“Qualitative social scientists are observers both of human activities and of the physical settings in which such activities take place.”

(Denzin and Lincoln, 2013a p151)

Whilst the logic of observing the research phenomena for the purpose of analytical interpretations might seem sensible, a discussion of the actual method is essential to give credibility to its inclusion in this investigation and the fundamentals of what is understood as participant observation provide a useful basis for discussion, though the method is not without its critics.

The importance of participant observation as a research method underpins the premise of this research and thus the credibility of the researcher to postulate about the findings and interpretations from a double hermeneutic perspective is a desirable element of proving observational efficacy. The typology discussed by Saunders et al (2012, p343) based on earlier work by Gill and Johnson, (2010) cited in Saunders et al, (2013 p343) and attributed to Gold (1958) in Denzin and Lincoln (2013a) gives clarity

and definition of roles and functions of participant observers. An adaptation of this typology is shown in Figure 5.7 with critical annotations offered by Denzin and Lincoln (2013a) alluding to a more consensual approach that is regarded as essential to give credibility to the research method and thus dismiss the critics.



**Figure 5.7 An adaptation of the participant observation typology from Saunders et al (2012 p344) with annotations from Denzin and Lincoln (2013 p153)**

Critics of any kind of naturalistic observation citing lack of objectivity as a potential issue of significance for the validity and reliability of any subsequent findings have prompted a rethink amongst some qualitative researchers to recognise the observer role as an “active partner” working with the research participants referred to as “subjects” and collaboratively formulating and implementing a research plan based on “informed consent”. This can be viewed as an ethical imperative to validate this element of the research data seeking process that uses a model of collaborative research that embraces the roles of both participants and researchers and stresses the importance of informed consent, facilitating an emerging picture of the research phenomenon (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013a).

This is described as a three step process of observation, recognised by anthropological ethnographers, and can be seen as an approach that can be employed as a means of validating the integrity and reliability of this research method and the subsequent research data arising therefrom.

A representation of this model in Figure 5.8 indicating a triangular visual gives consistency to the underlying research assumptions of self-actualisation, though at this stage, it is recognised that the research is yet unproved and therefore this diagram is nothing more than a ‘visual pointer’ and a useful framework for participant observation that illustrates a suggested timeline and the collaborative nature of this research.



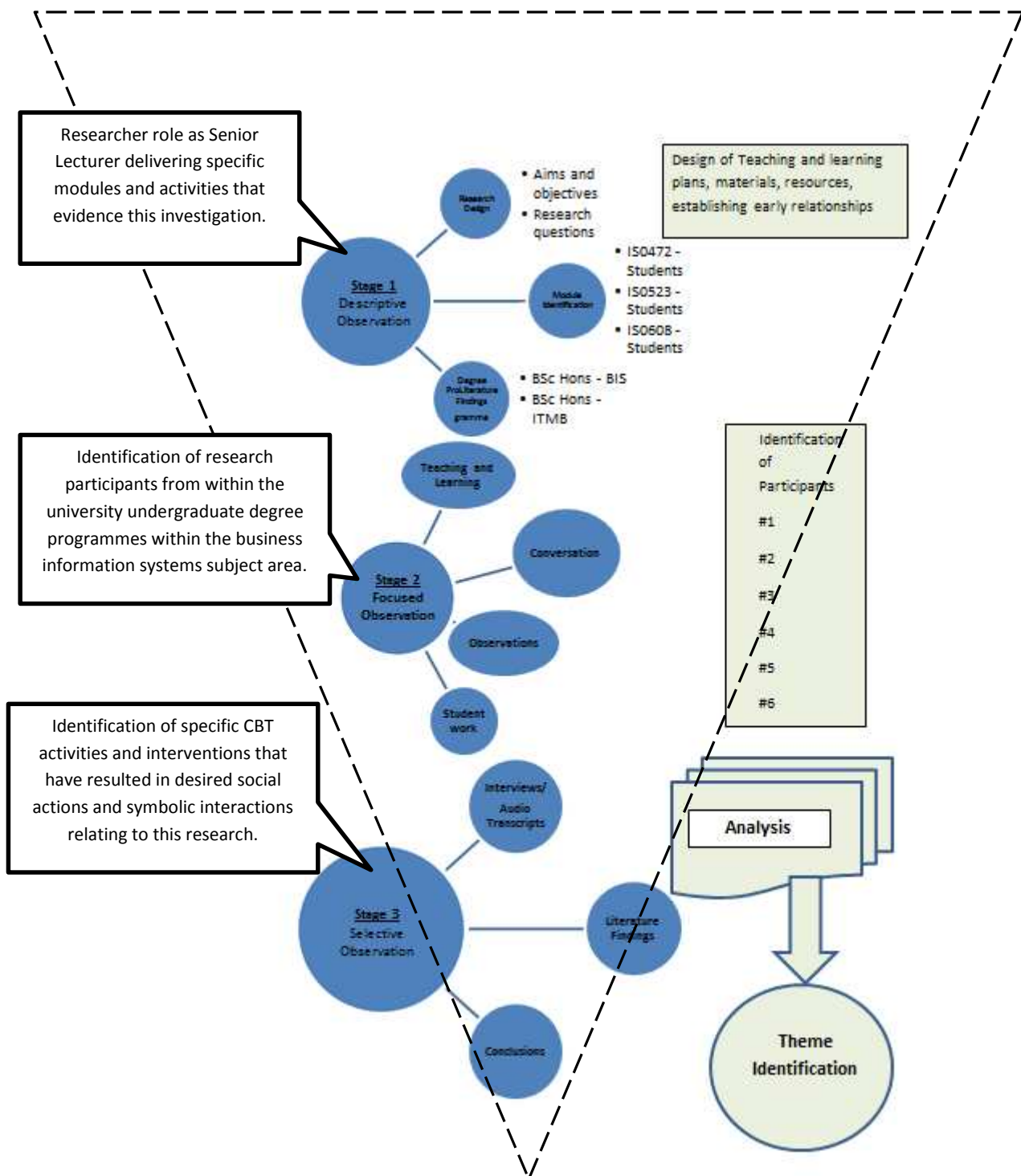


Figure 5.8 An adapted collaborative research model (discussed in Denzin and Lincoln, 2013a as suggested by anthropological ethnographers) – an indicative timeline.

Implementing a research method such as participant observation can be constraining and may restrict the emergence of exciting new data, yet for scoping purposes the collaborative research model indicated in Figure 5.8 will be systemised (Table 5.2) to meet the criteria expectations from any IPA research investigation and to also fit within time constraints for containment and completion within a dynamic environment that is constantly subject to change and self-reinvention and redirection. The three stages represented in the model shown above suggest the timeline followed for this research.

Table 5-2 A systemised Collaborative Model for Participant Observation - Suggested Implementation Plan

Pre-stage Literature Review – Year 1		
Stage 1: Descriptive Observation - Year 2		
Situational Context	Research Subjects	Evidence
Researcher role as Senior Lecturer delivering specific modules and activities that evidence this investigation. Level 4 Module: IS0472 Level 5 Module: IS0523 Level 6 Module: IS0608	All undergraduate students from within the subject area.  Colleagues working on teaching teams.	1 Ad hoc <b>work based scripts</b> and <b>reflections</b> from university modules/assignments. 2 Observed <b>behaviour transcripts</b> describing and reflecting on the identified activities. 3 Teaching and Learning <b>Plans</b> . 4 Seminar/workshop <b>task sheets</b> .
Stage 2: Focused Observation – Year 3		
Situational Context	Research Subjects	Evidence
Identification of research participants from within the university undergraduate degree programmes within the business information systems subject area.	Two students from Level 4 of the degree programme (aka first year students). One student from Level 5 of the degree programme (aka second year student). Two students from Level 6 of the degree programme (aka final year students).	5 Digital <b>audio recordings</b> of the interviews. 6 Typed <b>transcripts</b> . 7 Work based <b>scripts and reflections</b> from university modules/assignments. 8 Overall <b>grades and module marks</b> achieved.
Stage 3: Selective Observation – Year 4		
Situational Context	Research Subjects	Evidence
Identification of specific CBT activities and interventions that have resulted in desired social actions and symbolic interactions relating to this research.	All participants identified above, and not excluding all other undergraduate students from within the subject area.	9 Correlation of work based scripts and reflections from students selected at step 2 in relation to CBT activities and subsequent IPA interview dialogue. 10 Observed symbolic interactionism as a result of CBT interventions and activities.
Stage 4: Write Up – Year 5 (including evaluations and analysis)		

The data emerging from the utilisation of participant observation methods will significantly inform this research, but one of the key opportunities for capturing the voice of the participant will come through the interview process. This would be regarded as one of the main visible testaments to an IPA study and it would inevitably subsume much of the known information that has been captured as a result of Participant Observation.

### 5.5.2 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are a significant aspect of the IPA research methodology that has been chosen for this investigation. This is an opportunity for the six participants selected as part of this research to tell their individual stories within a secure, yet facilitating environment. The questions that form the basis of the conversation are used as a guide and steer to facilitate the collection of the data (Aresti, Eatough and Brooks-Gordon, 2010) and the interviewer listens whilst the participant talks freely and openly, without feeling constrained in any way. An hour time slot has been planned for each interview but more or less time would be taken, as appropriate.

It would be wrong to ask questions that are either over-empathetic, manipulative, leading or closed, as this would pre-empt the findings which is not the intent of this research. In addition, the researcher has the opportunity to gain deep and rich accounts of the learning experiences (Bates, 2012) through the establishment of empathy and rapport (Partington, 2001). It is also an opportunity for the interviewer to recognise and reconstruct the emerging themes that assist with the data gathering and subsequent analysis. (Smith et al, 2009). Whilst the questions that are to be utilised (Appendix 8) are based on the suggested categories (Smith et al, 2009) that are a part of this investigation, during the course of the interview they are to elicit the open dialogue rather than restrict it so it is likely that they may not all be asked using the precise wording. In addition, the nature of the question is inevitably seeking affirmation of the personal responses that may or may not have a bias towards the provision of socially desirable responses (Fisher, 1993), but the application of the double hermeneutic cycle will attempt to minimise this, where possible, through indirect conversation (Schwarz, 1999). These categories are as follows:

- Descriptive
- Narrative
- Structural
- Contrast
- Evaluative
- Circular
- Comparative
- Prompts
- Probes

Initially, a number of sample questions, based on the suggested categories, were framed to inform the interview, and were used as a guide. A discussion to validate the questions in relation to the suggested constructs for an IPA methodology is provided.

**Q Can you tell me a little about coming to university? How did it feel once you got here? What did you think it would be like?**

This *narrative* question is intended to allow the participants to own the conversation and to begin at a point which would have represented the pinnacle of success for their achievements in finally getting to university. The interviewer would be hoping to look for key elements of personal motivation, drive and ambition, the settling into university life, and the awareness of the importance of self-discipline, planning and focus. The anticipated richness of the dialogue from this first point of interaction is expected to be very important to the interview.

**Q Did you understand the degree structure when you got here? How many credits you needed each year, how many modules you were studying, what the significance of the marks were in relation to your potential classification degree/award?**

This *structural* question is rather clumsy and would not be asked outright, but woven into the dialogue. The intent is to establish how the participant has strategically familiarised him/herself with their programme of study and how it is structured. This would indicate their cognitive awareness of the degree programme (or not), and it is anticipated that the responses will vary considerably from Level 4 students to Level 6 students, the former not having a full awareness of the organisation and their subsequent programme of study, as opposed to the latter who would fully comprehend at the end point of their programme, through reflection and understanding.

**Q How did you feel about the work you did at university?**

This *contrast* type question *probes* into the participant view of the activities undertaken whilst at university in an attempt to identify their attributes and characteristics in relation to the goals and milestones within their course and their own motivation and self-discipline to meet them. In addition it allows them to give a view of their own construct of its value to them as part of this process.

**Q What degree of independence did you apply to your own learning, and subsequent responsibility for that learning?**

This *evaluative* question is looking for self-awareness of how the student has engaged with their studies whilst at university and is seeking to identify any specific activities that have assisted with motivation and autonomy. The student groups should have different perceptions of this from their study experiences that are uppermost in their memory, which undoubtedly will come from their year of study. Whilst Level 4 – 6 activities are relevant to the interviewer, the results from the students may reinforce the importance of the experiences of each year to inform the whole programme of study.

**Q How responsive were you to support and feedback that you received from both tutors and peers?**

This is another *evaluative* question that addresses the interactions that the participant may have engaged with. An element of the question is also *circular* as it offers the opportunity to look at how those responses might have been used to feed forward and inform subsequent activities and behaviours.

**Q Did you recognise cohesion of everything you were doing, together with the people you were meeting/working with, and being in the institution as being part of your 'journey'?**

This is another *narrative* opportunity to explore the social constructs recognised by the participants in relation to their degree programme. It also allows them to *describe* the events, activities and consequences of those relationships encountered as part of their 'journey' and to look for significant influences and behaviour changing elements and experiences.

**Q Have you any thoughts on the university's employability agenda?**

This is a *prompting* question that *probes* the impact of a wider issue such as employability on the skill set of the participants, and their own recognition of the importance of that for future opportunities.

**Q Employers interact with universities constantly and the term 'graduateness' is often used. What are your thoughts with regard to what employers are looking for from graduates?**

This is a *probing* question that attempts to identify the participant view of themselves in relation to this term 'graduateness' and how they see traits and characteristics in themselves that respond to this questionable, sometimes intangible term.

**Q Do you think that your experience at Northumbria has made you fit for employment? If so, what do you see as the contributory factors?**

This *structural* question is seeking affirmation of the activities and interventions offered as an integral part of the degree programmes and their fitness for purpose and subsequent influence on the success of the participant experience.

**Q If you had to do it all again, would you do anything differently?**

This is a *comparative* question looking at how the experience of being at university might differ with the experiences to date and given the opportunity to apply them again. It is anticipated that Level 6 students may have a wider reflective view of this as opposed to Level 4 and Level 5, yet the maturity of this reflection has great potential value and significance to this research.

**Q How would you rate your own personal performance with regard to what you have achieved whilst being at university?**

This is another *narrative* question that wants to capture the student story of themselves.

**Q Where do you see yourself in 5 years' /10 years' time?**

This question is both *narrative* and *structural* looking to see how the student intends to move forward utilising their skill set for future opportunities – both strategic and aspirational.

The opportunity presented by the interview experience as a whole allows the interviewer to enter the student domain from a hermeneutic perspective, and because the interviewer is creating and delivering the student experience the value of double hermeneutics is realised. In one way, the credentials of the rights of the interviewer to be in the student experience are undisputed as the constructs of the university itself dictate this, and the rights of dialogue and conversation are an integral part of the role of the interviewer as a Senior Lecturer within the university, and underpin the core essence of qualitative research (Conboy, Fitzgerald and Mathiassen, 2012). This collaborative research opportunity gives sufficient opportunity for the hermeneutics of the student experiential narrative to be intertwined with the skills of the interviewer in listening to, whilst informing and being part of the student conversation.

From a constructionist perspective, the interview is the actual social setting in which the conversation takes place and the data set is constructed (Silverman, 2001, Roulston, 2010) and from this the opportunity to evidence meaning can be situated.

There are a number of generally recognised issues that potentially discredit data arising from semi-structured interviews, (Saunders et al, 2012 p380) in relation to bias from both interviewer and respondent, and also the reliability of the qualitative data. However, the rationale for the chosen research methodology is based on the importance of idiographic data based on an understanding and interpretations of the phenomenology. The interviewer has a long established career within education and has been immersed in this phenomenology both reflectively and reflexively (Schon 1991) and the individual dialogue and subsequent findings are supported by documentation, diary evidence and behaviour observations across a larger cohort.

The nature of the interviews is intended to produce a picture of the reality of the situation at the time of the interview, and does not seek to make assumptions or generalisations wholly based on a small number of interviews. It is primarily to evidence the participant's meaning making and wider understanding of their experience (Aresti, Eatough and Brooks-Gordon, 2010). It must be recognised, however, that if this dialogue is a reflection of the phenomenology at a particular point in time, it cannot be ignored as it is anticipated that the findings may assist in reshaping the student experience when aggregated with further evidence.

In addition, whilst critics describe the intrusiveness of the interviewer as a contributory factor resulting in bias, the nature of IPA recognises the collaborative role of the interviewer as a crucial one, merely to facilitate conversation rather than lead conversation. Also, the nature of the questions is largely facilitating and not intended to lead or pre-empt a desired response, and an IPA requires a full and complete transcript of each interview, which could evidence bias under scrutiny, if needed.

An IPA interview requires a verbatim line numbered transcript, together with a note of any non-verbal utterances (such as laughter) and any pauses. Usually a wide margin is allowed for coding (Smith et al, 2009). This would facilitate early stage analysis of the data into indicative themes using some simplistic coding techniques.

For the purposes of this research, the interviews that take place are regarded as the conversations between the researcher (aka the interviewer), the primary role for whom is listening, and the participant (aka the interviewee) who is facilitated to tell their own story, albeit through this ‘artificial conversation’ (Smith et al, 2009).

From an interpretivist perspective there is still the necessity to justify the inclusion of such rich data as being valid and potentially transformational. Events, dialogue and interactions within a context enable meaning making and social understanding (Smith et al, 2009), and Much (1995, in Smith et al, 2009) states that “cultures are effectively frameworks for meaning-making”. These points were further supported by Bishop (2008) who described the discursive repositioning of teachers via a GPILSEO (Goal, Pedagogy, Institutions, Leadership, Spread, Evidence and Ownership) model for educational reform. This theoretical framework for educational reform reinforced the importance of how educators can reposition themselves within the actual discourse in order to understand and make sense of what is happening. This research largely rests on Foucauldian ideology (Kendall and Wickham, 1999) that has “four indispensable characteristics”:

- 1 The statements refer to the same object
- 2 They are enunciated in the same way
- 3 Share a common system of conceptualisations
- 4 Have similar subjects or theories

(Jansen, 2008)

These ideas can be further analysed under a number of potential styles or approaches to Foucauldian thinking although Jansen (2008) citing Sawyer (2002) maintains that this approach is not wholly attributable to Foucault. These approaches can be classified as follows:

*Social Linguistic Analysis* – wholly constructivist, focusing on individual texts, and providing insights into organisations and other phenomena.

*Interpretive Structuralism* – similar, but also recognising broader contexts that influence the context.

*Critical Linguistic Analysis* – similar to *social linguistic analysis* but also concerned with the influence of the surrounding power dynamics.

*Critical Discourse Analysis* – this is the emergence of unequal relations, attributed to power, as a result of the discursive activities.

(Phillips and Hardy, 2002 cited in Jansen, 2008)

The anticipated outcomes from the IPA research conducted as part of this thesis will largely focus on the analytics of the conversations and narrative findings from the first two perspectives highlighted above. As the research paradigm sits within the social constructivist world view, the importance of the individual perspectives in relation to their own meaning making of their lived experience is the primary information provider for understanding the lived phenomena of this snapshot in time. The importance of this discourse will provide understanding, and will enable informed transformations that can directly influence the value of the experience – in this case, the undergraduate experience (Stingl, 2011). The subsequent development of the analysis will be evidenced through verbatim excerpts from the data which is a key commitment of IPA analysis per se (Reid et al, 2005).

Whilst Bold (2012) defines the importance of analysis for educators as being a way to understand the experiences of others and develop shared meanings, critics may see this as a vulnerability of qualitative research approach due to lack of certainty in the proven outcomes. However, when similar research projects are discussed and shared, there is an inevitable commonality in the findings that lead towards a common goal.

### **5.5.3 Content analysis**

Whilst there is clear significance in the value of the interviews and subsequent transcripts in relation to this IPA investigation, other potential evidence (Table 5.6) has been analysed to further support the evaluations. Institutional research that relies on interview based narrative, has also been informed by looking at a wider range of documentation in relation to both the institution and the people therein and in the relevant environments (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013a), to assist the interpretation of the emerging data arising from the interviews and the subsequent identification of the themes. This research is looking at the impact of CBT interventions in a similar type of institution and the results of these interventions should also result in observable behaviour which could be significant, together with ad hoc documentation and related student outputs – both scripts and reflective transcripts - that again, could be influential in relation to the findings.

In order to assist the systemisation of such analysis, a number of related processes have also been analysed to capture the data and facilitate the subsequent



interpretation of that data. Notes have been taken in relation to both behaviour through observations and documentation.

The table below, illustrates the types and purposes of each.

**Table 5-3 List of process data sources**

<b>Process</b>	<b>Description of use</b>	<b>Related documentation/ opportunity</b>
Behavioural observations	Monitor observations from selected timetabled sessions and meetings, including project supervision for IS0608 students.	Teaching and Learning Schedules for: IS0472 Skills for Information Systems Professionals, IS0523 Project Management and Personal Development, IS0608 Undergraduate project in Business Information Systems Student comments arising from IS0608 supervision Relevant seminar/workshop task sheets
Analysis of transcripts	Data emerging from completed task sheets, writings and reflections from selected and wider student population.	Identified tasks and activities from the Teaching and Learning Schedules, relating to the identified modules.
Analysis of results	The grades and results of the students being interviewed will be scrutinised in relation to the emerging themes.	Transcripts (x5) – interviewees, University results data (MCRF)
Ad hoc conversations	Selected dialogue and/or conversation between students, staff, or 'students and staff' that might be relevant to this research.	Module Review Meetings Ad hoc conversations

The findings from the literature and the data gathered will form the basis of this investigation and underpin the subsequent thematic analysis.

## 5.6 Presenting Findings

This research has produced 6 IPA case studies, all of which are analysed both singularly and through cross-case analysis. The ultimate aim will produce a rich narrative that tells the story of the participant experience. In order to achieve this, the narrative is generated through a number of emerging themes that come from the data.

### Theme identification

The literature has presented a number of leading areas that form part of this research. These exist around the student concept of self-actualisation in relation to their understanding of employability, insight into themselves, subsequent engagement with the learning environment, and their own acknowledgement of personal development planning. The logistics of implementing any IPA investigation enable the interview transcript process to facilitate the emergence of these themes as being naturally occurring from the conversation and the student experience itself. The wide margins used in the transcripts facilitated a number of indicators that captured a robust thematic analysis whereby the themes can be analysed and subsequently identified within the narrative, but as a direct result of the existence of the relationships between all people and contexts situated within the constructionist and constructivist phenomena being explored. Bold (2012) suggests the relevance of thematic analysis as a preferred research method when the intent of the narrative has the potential to

provide the desired or perceived information. It is also widely regarded as a flexible approach which is useful within the context of any qualitative approach that brings with it diversity and complexity in its constructs (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The content of the narratives provides opportunities to look at the social linguistic aspect of the stories, together with the influence of the wider contexts from an interpretive structuralist perspective, and the retrospective reflections in relation to the research questions are a significant part of the analytical process for the future self-actualisation of the participants. The analysis of the discourse itself presents structures of knowledge that are helpful to understand the claims and practices of the participants when held against the intent of the phenomena being investigated (Chambers and Narayanasamy, 2008).

The dominant themes feature a number of sub-themes that have arisen from the evidence gathered from the research and have been processed to assist with the data filtering and emergence of findings. For illustrative purposes these findings will be diagrammatically presented in a later chapter to assist clarity and emphasise significance.

### **Rich ‘thick’ narrative**

Denzin and Lincoln (2013a) discuss the importance of the qualitative approach as “producing knowledge about a particular phenomenon through generating a deepened, complex interpretation.” Building on the in-depth stories arising from Geertz’ (1973) “thick description” they champion the crystallization approach which pivots multiple perspectives around specific phenomenon, some of which challenge the claims. This approach makes a number of claims about crystallized text.

**Table 5-4 Claims relating to crystallized text (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013a)**

- |  |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1 It produces knowledge about a particular phenomenon through generating a deepened, complex interpretation.</li><li>2 It utilises different forms of qualitative analysis across a number of opposed perspectives – constructivist, postpositivist, and interpretive</li><li>3 It can be written across a number of genres through careful blending and segmenting of the text to challenge the epistemological boundaries.</li><li>4 It features a significant degree of reflexive consideration of the researcher’s self.</li></ol> |
|--|

It is not anticipated for an amateur researcher to attempt to produce some sufficiently robust crystallized texts (Table 5.4) as a result of this research, yet the anticipation of phenomenological stories based on rich, ‘thick’ narrative is an expectation that might satisfy the transformational element of the research intent in relation to improving the student experience.

## Generalisability

The nature of the constructs involved in qualitative research are complex and whilst an IPA study focuses on individuals, there is an involvement of a wider number of evidence sources from a greater number of people, situations and events involved in the phenomenology being explored. There are no statistical claims being made from this potential research data that can be said to be representative across a wider population, but the importance of an interpretivist stance can be used to facilitate change and development and to generalise to theory, by studying the context or setting inhabited by the participants (Cresswell, 2009, Bryman, 2008).

### **5.7 Validity and reliability**

The debate surrounding the validity and reliability of qualitative research is steeped in opinion that attempts to attest to its credibility (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, Furlong and Oceana, 2005). Yet the uncertainty of what is valid qualitative research defines its existence. It suggests opinions, is fluid in its nature, (Lincoln, 1991) results in emergent ideas that are significant and important to the research situation or scenario being investigated (Whittemore, Chase and Mandle, 2001).

Attempts to suggest rigour and certainty through exacting evidence, conclusive results and unambiguous findings have no secure place in measures of validity for qualitative research (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, and Spiers, 2002) and substituted words are more appropriate. The lens of the qualitative researcher is also one that is representative of the views of all of the participants involved (Table 5.5) - researcher, study participants, contributors to the literature, reviewers, etc (Cresswell and Miller, 2008, Healy and Perry, 2000). From this, the notion of establishing the trustworthiness of the research can be applied to all participative persons and elements, and validated using a number of secure measures that are well regarded in the field - credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Within the constructivist paradigm an established framework (Cresswell and Miller, 2000) can be used to encapsulate a number of overarching elements and indicators that are useful to iterate those secure measures previously mentioned – credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability - and in this research, this framework has been used as a starting point, but has then been developed to include a number of key criteria that are well situated within IPA research design (Yardley, 2008), that again subsume and imply those four criteria but affirm them through sensitivity, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence, impact and importance, all of which are associated as reliable measures for validating IPA research.

Table 5-5 Validity Procedures Within Qualitative Lens and Paradigm Assumptions (Constructivist) (Cresswell and Miller, 2000), established measures (Guba & Lincoln, 1981) with additional IPA Criteria (Yardley, 2008)

Paradigm assumption/Lens	Constructivist Paradigm	IPA Criteria (Yardley, 2008)	Established Measures
Lens of the Researcher	Disconfirming evidence	Sensitivity Commitment and rigour	<b>Credibility</b> – persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, referential integrity
Lens of Study Participants	Prolonged engagement in the field	Transparency and coherence	<b>Dependability</b> - consistent and could be repeated (enquiry audit)
Lens of People External to the Study (Reviewer, Reader)	Thick, rich description	Impact and importance	<b>Transferability</b> – applicability in other contexts <b>Confirmability</b> – neutrality, shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest (confirmability, audit trail, triangulation, reflexivity)

Each of these measures suggests a number of processes and indicators that can be utilised to examine trustworthiness in the research design. An exploration of the processes and indicators is given below. (Table 5.6) and the robustness of this investigation in relation to the validity measures is outlined and should be visible in the researcher integrity, selection of participants, process data and audit trail and the ‘thick’ description.

However, whilst a framework for validating this research is expected, the criteria for validity need to be applied with a degree of flexibility as IPA is a creative process. What works for one study, may not work for another (Smith, 2009).

Table 5-6 Validity and Reliability Framework for IPA

Criteria	Approach	Evidence
Sensitivity to context	<p>Purposive sample of participants</p> <p>Shared experience</p> <p>Researcher skills and credentials</p> <p>Good rapport with participants</p> <p>Participant Observations</p> <p>Giving a voice to the participant and validating the interpretations</p> <p>Literature review</p>	<p>1 'The researcher', 2 Level 4 Students, 1 Level 5 Student, 2 Level 6 Students</p> <p>All immersed in the same subject areas</p> <p>Over 25 years' experience in Higher Education, substantial qualifications in the area of learning and teaching.</p> <p>Secure relationship between the researcher and the participants – non confrontational, comfortable and supportive.</p> <p>Double hermeneutics, purposive development of idiographic data between participants.</p> <p>Verbatim extracts to allow checking of the interpretations.</p> <p>Informs the investigations and assists the development.</p>
Commitment and Rigour	<p>Researcher's Commitment</p> <p>Appropriateness of the interview questions</p> <p>Carrying out the interview</p> <p>Analysis</p>	<p>Personal commitment, credentials, attentiveness, intuitive, listening, responsive</p> <p>Choice of questions suitable to selected participants and the research design</p> <p>Making sure that the participants are comfortable</p> <p>Thorough, developing narrative, idiographic engagement, systematic</p>
Transparency and Coherence	<p>Research Design</p> <p>Participants Response</p> <p>Selection of Participants</p> <p>Rich 'thick narrative'</p>	<p>Methodological compliance</p> <p>Data – credible reflection of the participants' realities of the social phenomena</p> <p>Purposive selection of participants</p> <p>Reflects the complete 'story' and can be verified</p>
Impact and Importance	<p>Does it tell the reader something interesting or useful?</p>	<p>Literature – identification of sector need, knowledge gaps</p> <p>Data – responsive to student voice</p> <p>Employer – seeking 'future-fit graduates' with a positive attitude</p>

## 5.8 Summarising thoughts

This chapter has set out the design and processes relating to this research, following an empirical steer (Crotty, 1998). Having considered numerous methodologies, the most appropriate methodology for this particular research enquiry is Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis which has been undertaken from a social constructionist world view. The utilisation of qualitative data has been discussed within the chapter, together with the various techniques for gathering data. The main choice of selected methods include case study, participant observation and documentary analysis, all of which have followed an IPA framework for subsequent implementation. There is a clear justification presented as to why this is the most appropriate research approach with a discussion of the associated research paradigms, phenomenologies and methods that have been considered. Furthermore, a clear identification of data gathering tools, subsequent analysis and presentation of findings is essential to clarify the credibility of the research question and subsequent importance of the findings for the Higher Education sector.

A high validity for this research has been achieved through the implementation of a robust IPA framework based on carefully crafted questions designed to facilitate dialogue and conversation (Saunders et al, 2012). The basis of the research design has been well considered, based on a robust and well established body of literature attesting to the worthiness of this approach, and the scheme and plan of this investigation have been developed to include purposively selected participants who have a valid contribution to make to this investigation, and who can provide situated insights through rich, thematic descriptions of a view of the learning experience and their life experiences in general (Cope, 2011). Published criteria for assessing validity and reliability have been addressed resulting in a secure and confident justification of the research approach. The next chapter presents the six cases that have been utilised as part of this research, providing a unique insight into the participant experience, highlighting the student opinion and response to the research questions being asked.

## 6 IPA Study – Presentation of cases

The research evidence gathered over a number of years has resulted in a number of superordinate themes that have been derived from the process of interpretative phenomenological analysis (Appendix 6: Final table of themes). These themes are present in the ideologies of the humanist theorists who seek to describe the ways in which we understand ourselves and subsequently recognise our achievements in our lives. The descriptions of the superordinate themes relating to the first study are:

- Forms of self-doubt relating to a lack of awareness of self
- Recognition of own skills and abilities
- Self-actualisation – plateaus and re-grouping

Each superordinate theme was a characteristic of every participant in the study, although the experiential attributes of each participant was very different and variable.

The first study is an insight into the researcher and an attempt to validate the credentials of her suitability and integrity in relation to conducting an IPA investigation with student participants.

The remaining participants were all interviewed for approximately one hour, and each one was transcribed verbatim and analysed using an IPA framework. In addition to the interview transcript, additional dialogue was analysed from written evidence submitted by the student for assessment in relation to the relevant modules -

Table 6-1 Demographic of Participants

Gender	Programme of Study	Age	Home Region
Female	Researcher	53	North East
Female	ITMB Level 4	19	South
Female	ITMB Level 4	19	Northern Ireland
Male	BIS Level 5	21	Northern Ireland
Male	BIS Level 6	21	Teesside
Male	BIT Level 6	21	North East

Additional documentation has been included here from those modules and provides a 'pen portrait' of the student during her first year at university as an undergraduate student (Appendix 5). Elements of this documentation have informed the analysis here as it is part of the relationship between the teacher and the student. It provides a precise 'snapshot' of the life and mind of the student, looking at their emotional development and their view of the world as they see it. The interpretation by the researcher in all cases is multifaceted, through a crystallised lens (Denzin and Lincoln , 2013a) in an attempt to bring in elements of psychology, behaviour, and the subsequent interaction between the human being, the student and their experience of higher education. A full breakdown of the thematic analysis for each individual student can be seen in Appendix 6, which has been utilised to further inform the narrative for each case.

## 6.1 Case Study – The Researcher’s story: ‘self-analysis and interpretation’

Jackie has been working in higher education since 1989 as an Academic Lecturer, and Senior Lecturer. She is a woman of 53 years who is married with an 18 year old daughter, and a niece who has lived as part of the family for 20 years, since she was 7. She has been married for over 20 years and would say that the family relationship is traditional and stable. Having been in full-time teaching since 1989, Jackie has experienced a high degree of satisfaction from her job and this is of considerable value to both her and the subsequent stability of the family. Whilst not presuming to discount aspects of early childhood which will not be explored in depth here, there are latterly some significant areas of convergence that have clearly had an influence on her life, some of which prevail across many other people’s experiences, but which have been categorised here under three broad headings – Music, Education and Career choices. In this particular case, the three areas are individual, yet connected, through an amateur IPA crystallised lens (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013a), and whilst they are being presented individually here, they cannot be considered in isolation due to their interconnectivity across the decades. Part of the dialogue involved in this case description, as it is from the perspective of the researcher ‘herself’, includes the inner voices referred to by Vygotsky (1978) which shape some of the consequences and actions of the involved party. For the purposes of illustration, some of those inner voice interjections are put in quotation marks to highlight them to aid the discussion. The primary discussions suggesting the emerging themes are focused around the cultural and social interactions with music, and this then leads on to education and career choices as being naturally occurring within a chronological sequence of events.

### Superordinate theme 1:

*“I can remember from a very early age, 5 onwards, going to piano lessons with an old lady who lived in a very messy house. My dad used to ask me every day if I had done some practice. My dad was lovely and was always pleased when I had done my practice every day.”*

Theme description: **Form of self-doubt relating to lack of awareness of self (Music, Education and Career Choices with moments of Gestaltism)**

*Subordinate theme 1: Flawed infrastructure and lack of higher order intellect*

### **Music**

The approach and guidance given by the parents was one of providing a structure for learning how to play the piano and this was duly set up through weekly piano lessons which went on for a number of years. However, looking back on the process, it might be deemed to have been flawed (or not) for a number of reasons. In the first instance, the old lady might have been able to play the piano and was in a position to help young children learn how to play the piano, but she may not have been very good at it. Also,



early recall suggests that the relationship between ‘teacher’ and ‘pupil’ was one of slight fear and trepidation, largely due to the age of the pupil – 5 years old, in this case, felt too young. As the pupil got older, the relationship was more comfortable but there was an inevitable drift due to the lack of steer and progression whilst in the learning situation. Inevitably peers who began music lessons in various ways – school and different teachers – seemed to progress much quicker through elements of certifications that appeared to give them superiority to Jackie who had been doing it for longer. Different personalities also began to emerge as more confident pupils were keen to ‘show off’ their skills. Their repertoire was different to that of Jackie, and her perception on hearing it was that it was much better.

*“I’m not very good really. He is much better than me. Everybody always comments on his playing. Do you really want to listen to me play?”*

*Subordinate theme 2: Perception of self to others*

Jackie’s growing age and lack of music certification inhibited her developing a level of confidence in her own ability when she compared this with the abilities of her peers and fellow students. The reason for her perceived lack of confidence in her own ability, even though she had been playing now for a number of years, she attributed to not having the right certificate. If she had had the right kind of teaching and accomplished success through certification, then she perceived that this would have made the difference to her playing. Feelings of inadequacy with regard to music playing ability seemed to fester and grow, even when a change of teacher eventually happened at the age of approximately 16. This new teacher was perceived as being very unfriendly, even though this label is probably unfair. Pupils were made to sit on a bench in a passage way and wait to be called. The house always smelt of cooked cabbage, and the ‘teacher’s’ wife never acknowledged the pupils (so Jackie remembers). Being mechanistically pushed through to Grade 5 playing and Grade 6 theory gave some degree of accomplishment in relation to having the right certificates, but the experience was not one that was enjoyed. Still, at home, the parental steer was ‘have you done any practice’, and not one that offered any direction or opportunities of where to take her musical talent. Such points are difficult to document, as whilst it is easy to blame the teacher and the lack of parental insight into channelling musical abilities, there has to be a recognition of self in all of this.

*Subordinate theme 3: Pupil is not mature enough to make decisions relating to herself and becomes conditioned to allow others to make them for her.*

*“I’ve been going to piano lessons since I was 5. Now I’m fed up with it but I know my dad will be disappointed if I stop. I’d rather go out with my friends.”*

As a 5 year old going to piano lessons back in the day Jackie felt singled out and special. However, the whole process became a set, monotonous routine, without any apparent direction or input from Jackie other than having to turn up to the lesson and keep

doing the practice. Inner voices and feelings were potentially becoming self-destructive as outwardly the pretence of enjoying it was being maintained, and there was some enjoyment in the music, but internally feelings of lethargy, not wanting to go, wanting to do other things, not feeling that accomplished anyway were starting to get in the way. The teacher was difficult to talk to, and parents did not recognise the frustrations. Eventually, Jackie quit, and after a period of time, it stopped being uncomfortable in the house even though the piano in the living room of a small council house was a bit of an elephant in the room.

*Subordinate theme 4: Thinking that you know that you have reached a point when it is time to 'stop' but you could be wrong about this.*

*"I've got Grade 5 now and can play most songs, so it's enough for me. I can read music."*

Any musician with a degree of maturity recognises that practice is essential to maintain a skill set and level of playing ability. Jackie assumed that as she had the 'certificates' then she could play, and every time she went to play in the present time, on her terms, it was 'never as good as it used to be' and she used to say 'I'm a bit rusty now'. It then became very easy for further life experiences to take over – marriage, family, career. Jackie had quit music lessons at the age of 17, had her first child at the age of 34, after much difficulty. There was always a piano in the house, there merely for moments of personal playing, but never particularly going anywhere. Again, over the years when anyone wanted somebody to play the piano when one was stumbled across at random venues, and it transpired that the only person with any musical ability was Jackie, the experience became one of embarrassment and inadequacy, and was uncomfortable. Jackie would attribute this down to lack of practice, lack of familiarity with the music, not being good enough, and never ever took any accolades with good grace, and turned away from it even more. As time passed, and different life experiences and interventions happened, Jackie's daughter, from about the age of 7, began music lessons to learn how to play the piano. The chosen teacher was not the first choice that everyone else's child seemed to have, but a second, lesser known person. When he started to come to the house every week to teach Jackie's daughter how to play, after some time, Jackie's interest became renewed in playing 'properly' again, as in reality, she realised that she was playing again by 'proxy', through her daughter, and in some ways repeating the patterns on her own child. This time though, with lots of words of encouragement, praise and motivation in relation to Jackie's existing level of ability, an unwritten plan of action started to evolve. Further rewards were achieved, not only for her daughter, but also new personal goals were set for Jackie too.

## **Superordinate theme 2:**

*“Are you really putting me in for Grade 7 and not Grade 6? I was thinking Grade 6 might be enough for me at my age”.*

Theme description: **Recognition of own skills and abilities (Music, Education and Career Choices with moments of Gestaltism)**

*Subordinate theme 1: Do you really think I’m capable of that?*

### **Music**

The teacher, was an inspiration. Not only was he working with Jackie’s daughter, and the results there were both audible and visible, as her daughter’s own level of confidence and self-belief were contributory factors, but he was interested in talking to Jackie about how she felt about her own abilities. He constantly reassured Jackie about the rewards that came through the practice and that Grade 7 was easily attainable if the required work commitment was put in. Obviously, with the growing desire to accomplish recognition, there was no doubt that Jackie was going to put the work in. Grade 7 was passed. At this point, Jackie then had the confidence to try and ask if the local theatre group needed anyone to play for them and was accepted as a member of the music band. They already had a piano player – Dave – who was reasonably long standing with the group. They normally asked for Grade 8, but they told Jackie that there were so few people that played beyond Grade 5 that they would happily take her with Grade 7. She informed them that that she was doing Grade 8 quite soon which she also subsequently passed this one. Realising that she had achieved Grade 8 was an amazing accomplishment for Jackie whose own level of self-belief had not risen that far, even at this stage.

*Subordinate theme 2: What credentials do I need to have in order to believe in myself just a bit?*

*“Not many people seem to do piano now to Grades 7 and 8 so there is nobody about who can play and read music the way we require.”*

Having the qualifications to be accepted as part of an established theatre group was one thing, but then having to work on Jackie’s own self-belief did not have a certificate attached to it. Other people then became involved in the support network, and were usually very willing and motivating. A slow route, painful at times, was then embarked upon, leading towards an ability to be able to play live as part of the stage shows. Learning how to make mistakes and carry on was a great achievement in itself, as opposed to falling apart. Being able to keep going and not ‘quit’ ‘because it was not right for me’ was not a preferred option at all, but recognising that this was the way that it had to be done to overcome all of the fears and stresses that threatened to sabotage the performances. Part of the security in this situation was working with the established piano player – Dave. Again, Vygotsky’s inner voices that might have said

‘what if you forget what key you are playing in?’, ‘what if I forget to turn the page?’, ‘what if my hands get too sweaty so that I cannot play?’, ‘what if Dave has a night off and I am left on my own?’ are all little bits of self-destructive speak that might make Jackie want to run away from the challenge rather than overcome it, even though she spoke back to the voices saying that this wouldn’t be the case, but clearly there are still deep seated issues to be overcome.

*Subordinate theme 3: Finding hidden depths*

*“Sometimes when I play the piano I seem to go somewhere else in my head and it’s like it’s not me playing anymore and I probably feel that I can play anything in the world at that point and I feel very strong and confident and never want to stop playing but then I’m back to being me again.”*

As the levels of competency and playing ability developed through considerable hours of practice, it became apparent to Jackie that there were times when her immersion in the music knew no boundaries. It was as if some kind of inner dimension of the performance that was unprecedented, and considerably greater than at other times became possible. The feelings are difficult to explain and when Jackie describes it as ‘going somewhere else in her head’ that seems to suggest that a trigger has been pressed that opens up a totally different level of performance, one that has its own ‘inbuilt’ confidence and knows no boundaries. However, in reaching this level, in the case of Jackie, it cannot be switched on every single time the piano is played. Sometimes it needs intense practice before it is reached, whilst at other times, it would seem as if it was not possible at all due to perhaps an agitated mental state.

**Superordinate theme 3:**

*“I don’t seem to have as much time. I still enjoy it and think it’s the best thing that I’ve done in my life, but I’m not sure now what I want to do.”*

Theme description: **Self-actualisation – plateaus and re-grouping (Music, Education and Career Choices with moments of Gestaltism)**

*Sub theme 1: No more goals established so not sure where to go now!*

**Music**

The intensity of striving for Grade 8 certification, fitting in a full time job, children, a house and a husband were variables that required strict time management skills and scheduled planning in order to ensure that the desired goals were realised. Once those goals were realised, the quandary of what the next steps might be became an unknown element. In addition, there was nobody to provide guidance as no more lessons were needed so what happens next? The realisation of self-actualisation became apparent, but there were clearly plateaus that had been reached. The table below indicates the perception of self-actualisation, but also represents the ‘plateau state’ which is used in

this context to potentially symbolise the ‘end of a journey’ or ‘the end of a road’ with nowhere else to go. Clearly some questions need to be determined.

**Table 6-2 Realisation of self actualisation – plateaus and re-grouping**

<b>Self-actualisation</b>	<b>Plateau</b>	<b>Emerging questions</b>
Achieved Grade 8	The highest playing grade in piano examinations (ABRSM)	What do I do now?
Play ‘live’ with theatre group	Regular outlet for playing piano. Established group, predictable type of shows and performers.	Do I <i>really</i> want to do any more than this? Have I got <i>time</i> ? What if <i>Dave</i> is not there? Could I do it on my own?
High level of skill	Need an established way of building upon this level of skill to maintain the standard.	How much practice should be done? What happens if this cannot be maintained? What music should form a repertoire that might impress people listening to Jackie play?

**What do I do now?**

This question can still not be answered several years after achievement. It could be answered simply with the response that nothing more needs to be done as the successful grade 8 certification was the ultimate goal. The realisation from the perspective of a musician is, however, that the certification itself is not perhaps as important as is the ability, desire, and confidence to be able to play as and when required, in any location. The certificate itself does not guarantee this level of performance. Therefore, this question, at the present moment, is unanswered, and whilst the goal has been achieved, there needs to be some kind of re-grouping to change the inertia plateau state into some reforming of goals and intents.

**Do I *really* want to do any more than this?**

Being part of the theatre group has provided some scaffolding within which to overcome a number of fears relating to performance. It is routine, reliable, and comprises of a safe group of people with whom to share the music. However, there may be new goals that emerge from this experience. It is an outlet for practice and performance, and the infrastructure in which it sits ensure that a certain amount of time each week is allocated to playing the piano, and around that must be some goal orientated practice, undertaken in Jackie’s own time. One goal could be having the confidence to play the required pieces in a way that helps other to learn.

### **Have I got *time*?**

Another goal might arise from continuing to be part of the theatre group as the time that is needed to be part of this group in itself generates practice time. This is needed to maintain a level of skill and performance.

### **What if *Dave* is not there? Could I do it on my own?**

Another goal might arise from the other pianist not being there all of the time, necessitating Jackie having to do this on her own, despite nerves, inadequacies and lack of confidence. Thus actually doing this alone could alleviate some of the issues and anxieties that did not disappear just because grade 8 certification had been achieved.

### **How much practice should be done?**

There is a general unwritten rule in the world of music that one hour of practice per day, at least should be done to maintain and improve a level of skill. This has to be put into a realistic context of balancing work and family commitments into the timeframe. This should be self-managed by Jackie in order to see results, and if this is not the case, than an inevitable drop in the level of skill will occur.

### **What happens if this cannot be maintained?**

If this does occur, then the solution is to re-group and put in the work. An element of realism does need to be factored into this recognising that from time to time, the context will be altered, resulting in a lack of opportunity for maintaining the level of skill. However, this is not insurmountable at any juncture.

### **What music should form a repertoire that might impress people listening to Jackie play?**

The answer to this question should be fairly straightforward, but it is not the case. The repertoire of someone who is 53 years old can be extensive in as far as the amount of music that has been encountered throughout that time. However, this again, from the perspective of Jackie, seems to require an intervention. That intervention is validation on the part of a third party, not only attesting to the ability of the playing, but also selecting a range of music that would suit a listener. It would seem that answering this question has been elusive for a number of years now, and cannot be decided by Jackie who still seems to need to be told what to do, even after achieving the level of certification. Once again, it does not seem sufficient for Jackie to hold this qualification, yet be able to make sensible judgements about how the playing actually sounds.

The intense discussion relating to the music element of the case study suggests a number of thoughts, feelings and behaviours that have impacted upon the personal development of the participant. There are two further elements that should be

considered as part of this idiographic analysis as there are significant parallels and contrasts, each of which impact upon the other.

### **Education and Career Choices (with moments of ‘Gestaltism’)**

*“I got 8 ‘O levels’ and thought I was very clever. I failed all of my ‘A’ levels but it was alright because I managed to get a good job in a Personnel Department in a factory.”*

At 16 Jackie thought she was clever. At 18, on the day of collecting A level results, the bits of paper in the envelope indicated failure. The only ‘good thing’ was that Jackie’s parents did not really understand the qualifications’ structure and there were no university expectations on the part of either Jackie or from her parents. Looking back, this was a failing in the family support network to provide guidance and advice on the next steps to be taken. Jackie was clearly not making her own decisions, and was in some way trying to evaluate options within a very immature mind-set at the time. The examinations had been failed due to too little work being done to secure any chance of success. Too much time was given to socialising with friends, with no expectations or pressures from within the household to study. The school itself (a grammar school in its first year changing to a comprehensive at lower 6<sup>th</sup>), did not provide a supportive infrastructure to secure good exam results from its students. Due to this new comprehensive state, however, Jackie had secured some successful business administration qualifications that had not been offered under the grammar school regime, that were, in her opinion, very easy to obtain. Typing was one area of great success, largely attributed, according to Jackie, to being able to play the piano – touch typing came very easy. Shorthand was also easy, requiring patterns and symbols to be learned, practised and transcribed – could be similar concepts to reading music and playing. Therefore at the end of 6<sup>th</sup> form, Jackie did achieve some qualifications and there were good job opportunities for someone with 8 ‘O levels’ and first class business administration qualifications.

**Career Gestalt moment:** Jackie had always wanted to be a teacher but not going to university was limiting this option. However, through being able to experience commercial subjects such as shorthand and typewriting at 6<sup>th</sup> form, and being one of the best in the class, she decided that teaching was still an option that was available as conversations with the teachers provided Jackie with relevant career information in the business administration area.

Her first job, lasting 5 years was within a manufacturing company, initially in the Personnel Department, but then in the Purchasing Department. Jackie found aspects of the job mundane, but worked hard at it. However, she was able to observe others at work, find out how the career structure worked within the organisation, and was able to attend day release to improve her qualifications. A change of role after 5 years into another manufacturing company offered a higher status appointment.

**Career Gestalt moment:** The job advertisement wanted the successful candidate to be aged 25 or over. Jackie applied as she had the confidence in her abilities and skills/qualifications to be able to do the job. She was selected for interview and on the day of attending for interview experienced a minor car accident when a stone shattered the windscreen on the way to the interview. She still managed to get there, and secured the job – both the ambitious nature of the application and the personal ability to cope with the car accident were factors in showing aspects of Jackie as a person suited to the type of work being offered.

The second job provided great experience of working with different types of people, technology, and finding opportunities through networking and personal development. Jackie attended night classes and was at this time doing teacher training certificates in business administration skills. Interestingly, she started these at one college and was given some very unrealistic requirements from the teaching staff and did not feel right either about the college or about the course and ‘dropped out’. Enrolling again at another college helped her to refocus her mind on becoming a teacher, and the experience in a new place felt totally different. Each teaching certificate was of two years duration, and Jackie secured three certificates, and on completion of each stage was able to offer night classes to college students. The level of part time teachers’ pay was good, the hours were intense – working full time, attending night classes herself (two nights a week), and teaching one night a week. Also, the job provided valuable experience from within the right context for teaching business skills.

The teacher training qualifications were tested by examination, and Jackie failed the first one. She recognised that she had not prepared for it through distractions and lack of focus, and immediately re-sat it giving full attention where needed and was successful a second time. This was the wakeup call that was needed to show the attainment of success through hard work and application, and deviations through negligence and lack of attention needed to be eliminated.

With a secure full time job and part time teaching experience, new job opportunities within the teaching profession started to become options for Jackie. A full time job was secured in the college where Jackie had acquired her teaching qualifications. This position was a Lecturer, in the first instance, that eventually led to a Senior Lecturer and Course Leader role at a managerial level. Whilst working in the college, further self-study was undertaken and a Certificate in Education was achieved (one that previous university attendance could have resulted in), and then a Masters’ in Education was acquired. These qualifications were significant and made a dramatic impact on the status of Jackie whilst carrying out her role within the college. Her confidence level within the context of her career was secure and job satisfaction levels were high. Within the college there was an invaluable peer group for support, and an inspirational mentor who has been a continuous source of encouragement and motivation through constructive conversation and debate.



*“I can remember when I went to my Masters’ congregation that was held at Durham University on the Palace Green, and my parents came with me. I walked through Palace Green in my black gown, trimmed with purple and gold. When I was talking to my parents, who were very proud of my achievements, my father said to me ‘you would look good in red’ – which was the PhD gown colours. At that moment, even though I thought I was ‘finished’, he opened up sufficient curiosity for me to pursue a PhD.”*

Moving on to another job for one year before joining Northumbria University provided experiential opportunities and insight into how to secure desirable jobs through strategic applications and targeting strengths. These experiences all help to inform the knowledge base needed by job applicants, particularly from a university candidate base. Course and module structures were evolving and desirable outcomes for undergraduate students were very much expected to include aspects of PDP and employability. Furthermore, the peer support network with colleagues of similar status, values and beliefs, led to the beginnings of some intense research involving the reshaping of modules from knowledge led to a social constructivist approach in order to attempt to embed employability and PDP into an established curriculum utilising the latest technology available, which at the beginning was a virtual learning environment (VLE) with an ePortfolio option. This subsequently became surpassed by PebblePad which was a developed tool specifically for PDP purposes as well as a multitude of other uses. The early research looked at how the module could embed PDP type activities and employability tasks in ways that resulted in student engagement with the module, recognition of technology skills and abilities, and the ability to write reflectively about previous experiences in order to become ‘self-aware’, to identify strengths and weaknesses, and to look at how scaffolded activities could support the development of the ‘whole’ student whilst at university. There were elements of recognising strategic drivers that were occurring both inside of the university and outside, and also validating individual work effort and commitment, duly awarded with a mark that was set in line with university assessment procedures. This research led to a number of publications and conference presentations developed by myself and a colleague, (Appendix 14) but part of their subsequent development mapped across to the similar thoughts, feelings and behaviours that Jackie had experienced previously, when learning to overcome anxieties in relation to playing the piano. In the same way that Jackie experienced discomfort and some distress when playing the piano, students were backing away from exploring their own areas of strength and weakness and projecting themselves in an environment that was presenting itself as potentially hostile and competitive – ie future employment prospects. As Jackie had needed dialogue, coaching, mentoring, support, and even counselling, that eventually she found from a music teacher much later in life who seemed to understand and recognise her feelings, Jackie saw that many of the same reactions were emanating from some undergraduate students who were uncomfortable with being at university.

There were a number of reasons that became apparent as to why students felt uncomfortable at university. Some of these reasons were as follows:

- 1 'A' Level grades had been disappointing resulting in students not feeling worthy to be in a university.
- 2 Living away from home was more difficult than they expected, leading to distractions from studying and settling into university life.
- 3 University lecturers did not always seem to tell the students exactly what they were supposed to be doing, resulting in some students not being mature enough to cope with this type of learning and subsequently doing very little.
- 4 Dialogue with other students confirmed the same experiences at this stage and thus statements such as 'the first year doesn't count', and 'university is much easier than school', and more latterly 'this is not worth the money'.

What was becoming apparent to Jackie was that the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of the students needed more focused interventions that would facilitate dialogue and guidance that would attempt to alter the shape and direction that the students needed to take in order to fit into that very competitive employment environment, and also to recognise what university life, academia and studying could mean.

At this stage, the dialogue from this case study is ceasing as it potentially adds little else to the debate, but its intent is to validate the integrity, skills and experiences of the researcher.

**Career Gestalt moment:** The students experiencing the learning activities needed further assistance and interventions from the lecturer in order to overcome anxieties and doubts in relation to their own abilities. Therefore the activities that they needed to experience should provide 'scaffolding' to build up their confidence and self-belief.

In order to close the loop on this research case, the earlier table is presented with some additional qualifiers in relation to education and career choices.

Table 6-3 Realisation of self actualisation – plateaus and re-grouping (with updates)

Self-actualisation - Music	Plateau	Emerging questions
Achieved Grade 8	The highest playing grade in piano examinations (ABRSM)	What do I do now?
Play 'live' with theatre group	Regular outlet for playing piano. Established group, predictable type of shows and performers.	Do I <i>really</i> want to do any more than this? Have I got <i>time</i> ? What if <i>Dave</i> is not there? Could I do it on my own?
High level of skill	Need an established way of building upon this level of skill to maintain the standard.	How much practice should be done? What happens if this cannot be maintained? What music should form a repertoire that might impress people listening to Jackie play?
Self-actualisation – Education and Career	Plateau	Emerging questions
Teacher Training Qualifications	No plateau reached as changed career.	None
Certificate in Education	No plateau as continued to self-develop.	None
Master of Arts in Education	Gained promotion and still pursued further development.	None
PhD	Ongoing	I need to complete this in order to continue in my career. It has taken a long time to believe that I am actually doing a PhD, let alone having something interesting to research and write about.
University Lecturer	Satisfaction but potential complacency	What do I want to do when I get my PhD? How can I alter the shape of my career? Do I want to?

***“I need to complete this in order to continue in my career.”***

The drive for fulfilment both educationally and within a career structure, in this case, is leading to the attainment of PhD status and a continuing career in academia. Once this award has been achieved, educationally Jackie will have reached perhaps a pinnacle point of self-actualisation, although this may become an altered view. Not achieving this award will, in the view of Jackie, result in an unfulfilled career, lacking in credibility and validity. The almost five year pursuance of this has evolved from the early thoughts of -

***“It has taken a long time to believe that I am actually doing a PhD, let alone having something interesting to research and write about”.***

Being situated within a faculty of Engineering and Environment and being aware of Engineering post-graduate students achieving PhDs in an engineering domain, looking highly complex and technical when compared to a social research PhD.

***“I had to deliver a research seminar about my ‘research’ to a room almost full of engineering PhD students, many from overseas. Sitting through their seminars before mine, looking at technical data flow diagrams, made me feel that my research was not in the same league. At the end of the seminar I was surprised at the number of students who came to talk to me. In fact, one of the professors said to me that he could only look at so many ‘diagrams of central heating systems’ and that made me feel really good as I had never thought about it like that before.”***

**What do I want to do when I get my PhD? How can I alter the shape of my career?  
Do I want to?**

At this stage, the answers to the above questions are an unknown entity, so whilst they are emerging questions, they are for the future, not now. The subsequent consequences of these future states would need to be revisited.

#### Summary of Case 1

Whilst the narrative offered above is extensive, and at times perhaps unnecessary, it is representative of a period spanning more than 40 years and suggests a degree of insight, points of self-actualisation, and periods of plateau. A key finding is the cultural and social interaction with the world in which the participant lives and the people within that ‘Zone of Proximal Development’ having an influence and/or impact on the consequences and life changing happenings. The period of time might appear to be over stated, yet there are obviously a number of key life issues omitted from this story involving friends, family, life experiences etc, and it would be pertinent to state that those ‘things and life events’ that have not been woven into this narrative would have also impacted upon the outcomes.

## 6.2 Case Study – Neina (Level 4)

### Finding out about *Neina*

As a result of having known Neina (19 years old) for over two years as her teacher, and following a subsequent interview with her as part of this research, this chapter presents a phenomenological analysis of that relationship, built on hermeneutics and double hermeneutics, and richly detailed participant observations. The participant has been called Neina to protect her identity and to preserve her anonymity as part of the agreed terms of this research. The findings from this study highlight a number of interesting themes, evidenced from the student experience and analysis of the accessible dialogue – both written and spoken, together with observations, achievements and patterns of behaviour. There are a number of contributory factors that are an integral part of the learning experience for this student. Whilst these may not be true for every student, they illustrate one example of the individual differences and phenomenology that can shape people’s lives, and that institutions and programmes of study also have to accommodate.

### Analysis

The first analytical theme *“I wanted to come to Northumbria because I was born here and all my family live here and my mum and dad are based ... ”* emphasises the phenomenological experience of taking a step towards leaving home. In the case of Neina her experience is almost cushioned in a way as she is not moving very far from home, and is in fact living in her home locality, with a support network around her from within her family group. This seems to be very important to Neina who is a very well mannered, attractive girl, who appears to have had a loving family upbringing. Whilst attending university is a key milestone and achievement for her, she still needs to have her family nearby. For example, further extracts below show how this dialogue is repeated throughout the interview, and extends to friends and peers also.

N. Yes.

Int. And you’ve got a nice family network.

N. yea amazing family,

Int: good support group of friends?

N. Yea, definitely yea, my girls are amazing.

A further interesting reflection that Neina shared was when she was moving into her halls for the first time, and her father was helping her. At the sight of a ‘mature student’ Neina was upset to think that her vision of the university experience might not be as it seems due to the fact that she initially thought she was sharing a property with an older person. However, as soon as she realised this was not the case, she was fine. But the dialogue shows a degree of immaturity in expecting certain things to be in place, and to feel very much thrown off course if this is not found to be the case. Again, reassurance came from

the family network, and eventually the situation was rectified in a way that made Neina feel good again about coming to university. The extract is shown below:

Excited and nervous we started to unload my belongings with my mum and dad and I received my flat keys flat 5 room 70, I was on the bottom floor. As I walked into my new home I saw an older women who politely said "Hello" and welcomed me when I came into the flat, straight away I unlocked my door and as soon as I got into my room was very upset by the fact that I'd be living with a mature student.

This initial reaction from Neina to what she perceived to be the situation immediately upset her. She described herself as 'devastated' and felt that she would not be able to have a proper student experience.

I was devastated; straight away I thought that I wouldn't be able to party and do all of the 'studenty' things that students do. My dad reassured me and said I was being silly for getting upset.

Neina needed support and reassurance from her family to try and help her control her emotions which were viewed as being a little 'silly'. When the reality of the situation became known to Neina, that the 'mature student' was in fact a mother of another student, Neina describes herself as having a 'sudden burst of relief'. This again is an interesting reaction that shows how pleased Neina was to know this, and how much she really needed it to have been resolved in this way.

Once Neina had settled into her halls, she was then eager for her family to leave, as everything had fallen into place in the way that Neina wanted it to, and now her family could go home. She also knew that they were not going that far away.

As soon as I was introduced to my housemates I was keen to be left by my mum and dad, it wasn't that emotional saying goodbye as they were both staying in Newcastle that evening so I'd see them the following day.

However, throughout the interview, the support network around Neina was evident, and any little deviation she might have that could cause her to waiver from her university pathway was talked through with her parents who helped her to get back on track.

N. I'm determined now, yea, Definitely after this summer I spent a lot of time last year with my boyfriend at the time, and I spent too much time with him and I wasn't going to do a placement year because I wanted to just get out of uni and stuff like that and I spoke to, I've been having like an intense summer with my dad chatting all the time about university and he's like you need to get your head down. No I definitely am more motivated now.

The deviation in this case was possibly a relationship that was threatening to alter the course for Neina, but after some 'intense' dialogue with her father, who she said was a lot like her tutor, Neina declared that she was back on track.

The second analytical theme "I went off the rails" refers to how the student feels and responds to different cultures and environments, initially beginning when Neina left school and went to a 6<sup>th</sup> form college to do her 'A' levels. Because the environment was very different to that of school which she described as a 'posh school' and the focus of learning was shifted more towards the student taking responsibility, Neina says that she "went off the rails" which means that her level of work and studying lowered, and subsequently the results she achieved were not enough to get her onto the first year of a degree programme. Instead, she went into a foundation degree programme which is, in effect, an extra year that would give her almost a right of passage thereafter to enter her preferred degree programme which was BSc ITMB (Information Technology Management for Business). From the dialogue Neina found the foundation year to be a little more structured, providing a framework in which she was able to function and achieve the required results. However, observations of Neina in the foundation year revealed that she appeared to be a little disinterested in the programme, easily distracted, and only doing what was needed in order to pass the course. Subsequent observations of Neina from the foundation year to first year undergraduate programme were, however, significantly different. The student was engaging with the ITMB programme, talking to tutors, and producing some good work, at 2:1 standard and above. The interview that took place revealed an interesting contributory factor to this potential change in attitude and emotional development.

N. When I came in the first year to university in the foundation year I didn't feel like I was at university because the classes were quite small so it was like being in a classroom and from college to being in foundation year it was nice because you as teachers were pushing us along a bit and it felt like being back in high school but this year feels more like university having big lecture halls and big groups.

Clearly the university environment, "big lecture halls and big groups" made the student feel different about the experience she was going through. Neina related to her view of what it meant to be at university and being part of a large community of learning. Further revelation suggested though that actually being part of the experience did not really mean that Neina knew what she was supposed to be doing whilst she was there.

N. Yea. You are relating better to what your idea of university is. Big lectures where you have to be there whether you understand anything or not, it's irrelevant you have to be there.

The dialogue in this instance was very immature suggesting that Neina was enjoying being at university but was not naturally academic, or mature enough to be able to know how much work was required or able to do it independently.

Int: Do you think being here in that environment is making you engage or not?  
What are you getting from being in those classes?

N. the big ones? I dunno its, I like, it feels more grown up, it sounds silly but,

Int: no, no, no,

N. I dunno more mature. I'm in like a massive lecture hall and stuff with loads of people, you have to, there's I mean hundreds of you, they don't care if you don't do the work or not, you have to do it if you want to learn and succeed in this place

The conversation hinted that there was some emerging maturity taking place as a result of being in the university environment and the culture was perhaps partly shifting the onus of the learning from the organisation to the student which could be the first steps towards becoming an independent, autonomous learner. Obviously, this is speculative at this stage, and whilst other elements of the dialogue illustrate self-doubt and uncertainty about what is required to be done, it is interesting to hear comments relating to the impact the actual environment and culture are having on shaping the university experience. "They don't care" refers to a sub-culture perception that the tutors do not care whether the students 'learn' or not. This is not the case, but is irrelevant in the context of this discussion as it can actually be a positive motivator for students who believe it is up to them to participate in their own learning, having to find their own way.

The third analytical theme "*I got a big sheet with the individual grades but I don't think I worked out the actual percentage*" shows the lack of recognition and understanding that *Neina* has in relation to the way in which a university functions, the bureaucracy therein, and the methods of communicating to students and awarding marks and progression. In the case of *Neina*, there was clearly a lack of awareness of her being strategic as a student, having the emotional development to be in control of her own pursuance of her degree, and taking full cognisance of all available information in order to continue to move forwards. She did not know really how well she was doing but thought it would probably be alright. At the end of each academic year, the students receive a sheet of marks for each module, showing their results.

Int: So do you know how many credits you are doing? In a year, how many?

N. 120?

Int: Yea and erm, last year what was your, which was your first year what was your average?

N. Percentage?

Int: Yea roughly?

N. I actually don't know, I don't think I worked it out properly.

From this spreadsheet (Appendix 10) it is clearly evident to see the overall marks that *Neina* has achieved from her first year – 77, 64, 63, 53, 50, 42 - and also an indication as to her level of working and potential degree classification – 50-60 (Lower Second). Whilst the interview itself did not talk about documentation such as this informing future career options (HEAR, 2014) *Neina* did not make the connections or think this was relevant. Even



though the curriculum offered activities relating to employability and personal development, *Neina* did not demonstrate any awareness of being able to correlate her internal progress in relation to individual modules with her potential external future career choices and/or opportunities.

Furthermore, it became evident from the interview with *Neina* that attaining high marks in a number of the modules was very rewarding. Seeing the mark itself gave *Neina* an awareness that she was doing very well, working hard, and getting the rewards. When speaking about those modules, *Neina* did so with pride and pleasure, and those feelings of elation were evident in the mannerisms and body language at the time of the interview.

Int: Right so the module that you did with me you got quite a good mark for didn't you?

N. I got 2 in the 70s, 73 and about a 68 in (EJ's) one? (Smiling, showing pleasure)

However, known to the researcher was a mark for a module that by comparison to the other spread of marks, was considerably lower, so did not fit in well with the portrayal of the student. When asked about this result, there were evident changes, lots of justifications being made, and promises of future change as a consequence.

N. It's weird cause I thought I'd not, I thought I'd done well in her module because it wasn't the programming and stuff that I was struggling with, however I did a lot better in the programming when I got my head down, but I think I focused all my attention on the programming and Andrew's and EJ's group project I just forgot about that one and left it right 'til the end. I just, I messed up. I rushed it.

What was becoming apparent was that *Neina* had recognised a weakness in one or two particular modules, focused her attention there, and left herself vulnerable to another module assignment that she had misjudged. The first year students on the same degree programme as *Neina* all study six modules. Managing the learning needs of each is not always easy for each student as they are making their own assessment as to the study needs of each and do not always get the balance right when it comes to allocating the appropriate amounts of effort required for each module.

N. I didn't do well, I did 42 and that's why I've just has an interview with her.

Int: Right

N. So I just really rushed my last piece of work that I had to do with her erm and all the citations and stuff were wrong

As this issue was discussed during the interview, *Neina* reflected on this and suggested some dialogue that would try to make sure that this situation would not happen again. Yet the vagueness in describing all of the books for the second year, in itself posed a little doubt as to the true success of the implementation of this intended behaviour. This is, of course, speculative and would need to be verified on another occasion.

N. Yea, I would, I'm not rushing, I've bought all my books this year and I'm going to try and do a chapter a night like it's telling us to do after our lectures and stuff and I'm going to get my head down (Laughing).

It was being said retrospectively, having reflected on the first year experience, but clearly was as a result of a year where very little outside reading and study had been committed to.

N. Yep found that, yea they were things that you recommended to read but I didn't really go and search them.

Int: But things like how to get a good degree or how to study well are they of any use to you do you think? Or are they. (Trails off)

N. Well they are now (Laughs). Last year, it wasn't, it wasn't so much.

There is an aspect of strategic understanding, however, that students do seem to think they have grasped in relation to the first year course of an undergraduate degree programme. A wide consensus prevails across many university students that the first year does not count, and as a consequence of this belief, many students, *Neina* being one, want to believe that this is the case. *Neina*, despite the dialogue between us in the course of the interview, wanted confirmation from me that the first year was not important, so that this would give her the chance for a fresh start with new approach to her studies in the second and subsequent years.

N. So first year is that really important or?

Thus the belief that a 2:1 degree certificate was achievable despite first year results.

N. I want a 2:1 realistically

Int: You want a 2:1?

N. I don't know how realistic that is. I do think though erm if I do work hard this year I will get a 2:1 because last year I didn't do as much work as I should've.

N. Like outside work because I came to all the lectures and stuff like that but I wasn't doing any reading around the courses, the modules or anything.

*Neina's* belief that she could achieve a 2:1 from her second and final year studies is a proven realistic option, if she does manage to change her approach to her studies. The language used in the interview was continually vague and lacking in focus and intent and was without substance and content. However, she did exhibit resilience and emerging emotional development, as she was starting to attempt to recognise what was required from her in order to achieve the desired results. The constructs of *Neina's* emotional development were still requiring a degree of steering and nurturing in order to channel and focus her future efforts. She demonstrated being flattered that she was being interviewed for this research through her responses and her mannerisms. This reassurance in the dialogue was needed in order for her to recognise that value of the visible shifting in her

approach to her degree course from the foundation year to her first year on the ITMB programme. Once *Neina* accepted this reassurance and internalised it, she was able to move the conversation on a little by agreeing that she was feeling more comfortable and confident in herself.

Int: Can you remember some of the things that you did in the first year? Erm on 472 er because some of your writing towards the end was one of the reasons why I wanted to interview you.

N. Really?

Int: Because I recognised that you were starting to get it a little bit.

N. Oh really?

Int: Did you realise that or not? (Pause) Or where you just saying it

N. I think I do, I did realise that things that you were, like the skills and stuff we were learning were rubbing off on me.

An interesting development occurred as a result of 'The Stress Bucket' activity that *Neina* completed as part of the first year module – IS0472. She used the 'bucket' to demonstrate an area of stress in her life but was able to then look at it and potentially think of a way of resolving it. As *Neina* had already acknowledged that she was not very good at dealing with stressful situations, this potentially highlighted some possible progress in this area as a result of being a part of an activity (intervention) such as this. Whilst it needs to be developed considerably for future potential situation, it does illustrate a way forward.

Int: With the bucket with the holes in I think you had something on about a house didn't you? Getting a house or..?

N. Yea that was stressful, I don't like not planning in that like future I find finding a placement stressful because I want to stay in the house that I'm in now with my best friend Eve but if I don't get a placement for like you know January I er don't know if I can renew that contract on the house. Things like that stress me out (Laughs).

Int: So do you think that's something that you have to deal with then? So do you think the activities about the stress bucket because it had to word 'stress' in maybe has triggered off things that you were thinking about ermm but do you think that that is a weakness of yours to not..?

N. Stressing? Yea.

Int: So what do you think you could do about that? Or how could you help that?

N. I don't really know, I guess be more organised?

Intertwined with the 'house' problem *Neina* is clearly worried about getting a placement, yet from the outside looking in she would make an ideal candidate for placement, but she

obviously cannot see this and is worried. Even though the first year results on the whole were quite good 58.3% average, despite her admission to not having done enough work, *Neina* demonstrates a lack of belief in herself, her abilities and her likelihood to succeed in securing a placement when measuring herself against other applicants. During the interview, there were a number of opportunities for giving reassurance, compliments and praise, and these were still received in a way that suggested disbelief in herself and her value. The results from the modules alone were not enough and support was needed from other sources – ie dialogue with tutors.

Int: Because I'm sitting here listening to you worry about a placement and I'm thinking why is she worried yet?

N. Really?

Int: Yea.

N. Yea maybe I am too stressy (laughs.)

Her recognition of her own growing confidence emerged as the dialogue progressed, again, as a result of further reassurances given during the interview. She needed to be praised and told that her writing style had improved considerably during the first year. If the student work had not improved and was being discussed as an issue of concern, the fragile behaviour displayed by the student would not have been sufficiently robust.

Int: Right. But I still think what you showed us towards the end in terms of your written work was good.

N. Really?

A key issue for *Neina* from the first year was to do with planning and organising her workload, and recognising the problems that not doing this might result in. She was able to reflect upon this and look at ways to make sure that it did not happen in the second year.

Int: So I suppose I would ask you then about working under pressure and how do you feel you do that?

N. I think working under pressure I'm OK. However I don't like rushing and stuff, and as you can see from last year I rushed through on stuff and it wasn't the best.

As the interview was beginning to close down, a further factor relating to the overall experience was expressed by *Neina* who displayed a feeling of still being incredulous in her state of belief about being in a university. There were future states to look forward to, lots of changes happening in her life with regard to placement, and apprehension for second year studies that looked much more exciting than her previous experiences from foundation and first year. The thought of the future appeared to be very motivating to *Neina* and as it was potentially being viewed as an opportunity to move forward from the previous years that ceased to count in the bigger picture, she showed that she was very much looking forward to it. A lot of her positivity was coming through her feelings that she was sharing here, together with the thoughts she had about her immediate future – ie

second year and placement, and the way that she was going to plan and organise her workload and study commitments in order to meet the standards in securing that elusive 2:1.

Int: So what do you think would influence, what do you think has influenced the way you feel now then? Do you think it's the environment? (Overlapping)

N. Definitely like the grades from last year as well, a massive thing, the fact that I'm not in foundation year anymore I'm in first year. Then its second year so you've got to get your head down. I dunno I'm really excited about getting to placement and getting properly into this course coz last year's it's a bit coz I did foundation year it's kind of samey, not the coding module and stuff like that but it was quite similar and things. So now I'm going into like more project management things and it's getting more exciting. I think that's also why I'm raring to go (Laughs).

The fourth analytical theme from *Neina* is that of her growing maturity - *N. (Laughs) probably just growing up. I think.* – which is a relative concept, but an important one. The dialogue still demonstrates her reliance on her surrounding network, and the need to be able to have conversations with tutors as required. This factor was very evident to me as recalling *Neina* as a foundation year student would have been as someone who avoided any dialogue at all about her work, her studies, the programme, and the eye contact she made at that point displayed characteristics of wariness about engaging in any such conversations. That was when she bothered to attend. The following year this was noticeably different, and the opposite was happening whereby *Neina* would seize every opportunity to discuss things that she was doing, thinking about, or needing to know, and she was always present. This behaviour change was very marked and elevated her as a first year to me from a comparative perspective to how she was in her foundation year.

Int: I think something else on the, I noticed about you last year was you were talking more to me.

N. Oh really!?

Int: And to other tutors, rather than coming and going sort of thing. And that showed a little bit more engagement.

N. Ok

Int: And that in the foundation year, that was less visible.

N. Yea definitely.

Some of the reasons stated by *Neina* when this aspect was discussed were confirmed through her belief in her own maturity, but also in the security of her support network.

Int: And that was a big difference that, did you realise you were doing that unconsciously? Or do you just think you are growing up or?

N. (Laughs) probably just growing up. I think. I wasn't so nervous because I'd met most of my tutors before in foundation year; I know a few of them anyway.

Int: So you were comfortable?

N. Yea more comfortable.

It is interesting to suggest that an individual student like *Neina* might take a little longer to settle into such a dramatic environment change when making the transition from school or college to university. It appeared that the foundation year provided a guaranteed entry to the preferred degree programme of choice – ITMB – and also enabled an opportunity to settle into a new lifestyle that required aspects of independent living, meeting lots of new people, and coping with university work that was not too onerous for *Neina* at this level.

Looking at validating some of the curriculum interventions, the dialogue was pushed towards qualifying from *Neina's* perspective the usefulness of some of the activities relating to personal development and employability. Aspects of the dialogue appeared to be one-sided from the view of the interviewer, but *Neina* is a very pleasant person who appears to be uncomfortable when criticising things in communication with other people. When asked about whether the activities relating to personal development were necessary as part of a degree programme, the response from *Neina* was almost resigned acceptance that they were, on reflection, useful activities.

N. Well, I'm not going to lie. Some of the things we did last year then we had, one of them was I think Wendy took it, and it was edit this piece of writing or something because it's not got the right grammar or spelling in. And I sat there and I was like 'What?' It's like I'm at uni, I shouldn't have to do this. However just an hour ago we had a CV talk and we were talking about CVs and getting spelling and grammar right and I thought 'Oh' I understand why they did those kinds of activities and stuff so (trails off).

The reluctant acceptance of the activities poses difficulties for the tutor who imposes them regardless of the student reaction, but anticipating an acceptance at a later date, following a period of reflection, occurring as a result of experience and possible maturity.

Int: But you're being pushed through them?

N. yea.

Int: Against your will?

N. yea kind of

Int: because if you were left to your own devices sometimes it doesn't always work does it?

N. yea.

The admission from *Neina* that without being pushed through the activities, they would not happen as the students themselves, not seeing the relevance in the present moment, would potentially choose not to do them. This is an interesting reinforcement of the necessity for considered collaboration between Careers Centres within a university and the Tutors leading the curriculum as without some kind of employability bridge, it can be supposed that some students would choose not to take up services which could potentially then become regarded as ineffective. When *Neina* described 'running out of time' earlier, and 'rushing' her assignments in the first year, and with the anticipation of increased workload in second and final years, the opportunities to spend time independently seeking careers advice may be impossible as the intensity of the second and final year studies increases. Establishing links in the first year is a chance to underpin a rich body of knowledge applicable to *Neina* and others wishing to secure careers of choice through preparation, role-play and networking.

In summary, *Neina* has demonstrated a number of thoughts, feelings and behaviours that are not untypical of first year students. She is more comfortable with a support network around her, consisting of family, friends, peers and tutors. At times, she needs reassurance that she is doing well. Her view of the institution is one of being slightly in awe of her being part of such an elitist group of members, and she believes that it will probably all work itself out as long as she manages to pass her modules, preferably to a higher level. In order to achieve this she responds better to structure and guidance. She recognises that she needs to work harder, if she wants to do well, but does not think that it is too late. Her view of herself as starting to grow up suggests a little more insight to relaxing into her environment, but this is obviously ongoing, and subject to change and variance. The themes emerging from this case, together with all of the other cases will be analysed and cross referenced in the following chapter.

### 6.3 Case Study – Eva (Level 4)

The second case study, Eva (19 years old) again was known to me as her teacher, and following a subsequent interview with her as part of this research, this chapter presents a phenomenological analysis of that relationship, once again built on hermeneutics and double hermeneutics, and richly detailed participant observations. The second participant has been called Eva to protect her identity and to preserve her anonymity as part of the agreed terms of this research. There are parallels being drawn from this second case study that map to those from Neina – the first participant. Those similarities help to inform the direction of this research, but do not negate the importance of the individual experience for the student herself.

#### Analysis

The first analytical theme became apparent at the beginning of the interview when *Eva* started to tell the story of her first coming over to Northumbria with her parents, bringing lots of luggage, and being apprehensive about not knowing anybody here. *“I actually had people from home whom I didn’t realise had applied for Northumbria ...”* – this was expressed as a significant expression of relief and realisation, emphasising *Eva’s* feelings at finding people that she knew, and with whom she could explore the city.

... but they were in different secondary schools from me so I didn’t realise they had applied as well so I was contented they were there if I needed them so before I started class obviously I came a week earlier and spent my time with them. We all got our bearings together and then I started class so I was quite confident where I was going and what I was doing, where the town was and where everything was around me, the local shop.

Whilst the initial step of leaving home, moving to a different country with no immediate known support network, *Eva* was brought here by her parents and made contact with people from her home country with whom she could share the experience, learning from each other. This provided a little bit of security and familiarity that helped *Eva* become settled in her new environment.

The second analytic theme *“I think I was a bit nervous about it because I was uneasy that I didn’t get onto the ITMB straight away so I was but I was just glad that I had a course to get onto that could be a passport to maybe doing my degree”* interestingly referred to the application and acceptance into the university of choice, regardless of making any attempt to ascertain the validity of the entry qualifications. *Eva* did a ‘COPE’ programme – a Certificate of Personal Effectiveness – which is a qualification awarded by ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) which ironically attempts to develop personal effectiveness and employability skills. It was allocated 70 UCAS tariff points from 2007 onwards. (UCAS website) *Eva* obtained a B in Information Technology (100 points), a C in Health and Social Care (80 points), a D in Product Design (60 points) and a COPE award (70 points).



E. Before I did the COPE programme I knew I was applying to Northumbria so I made sure they accepted it.

Int. What's it called? COPE?

E. Certificate of Personal something, I can't remember. ... so I did that at A level just to make sure I had enough points but I don't think they took that into consideration so that's when I had to do the foundation degree then.

The tariff totals amount to 310 points, and *Eva* advised that she had checked as to whether Northumbria University accepted the COPE award and believed that they did. This particular issue raises two very significant questions:-

- 1 Did the university systems fully accredit the entry qualifications in line with their stated information, or did their system not recognise the COPE award?
- 2 Why did *Eva* not find out about this, prior to starting her course? If the answer had been that they did not accept it, then *Eva* would have done the ITM (Information Technology Management) Foundation year, which was what she did. Or, if they did accept the COPE award, as clearly indicated on the UCAS website with eligible tariff points from 2007 onwards, then why did *Eva* not follow this up as it would have potentially saved her a full year of study, fees and expenses?

On further enquiry within the university, the message that is being communicated from our admissions administrators (checked in August 2014) is that the COPE tariff points are accepted as is every possible accrued point. This may not have been the case when *Eva* applied but too much time has passed to check back at this stage.

This type of behaviour exhibited by the student also questions the validity, at this juncture, of a programme such as COPE, that clearly has not equipped *Eva* with a range of skills that she can potentially utilise to problem solve and answer questions as in this particular case. *Eva's* dialogue during the interview, when responding to questions, asked questions not only from the wording, but also from the intonation and inflections demonstrated in her voice, clearly unearthing an area of unresolved uncertainty. She was so afraid of not getting a university place at Northumbria that she would have almost taken anything that was being offered as long as she got into the university, and was also too scared to ask the question in case the response resulted in a rejection altogether. She also displayed characteristics that suggested that she felt that her credentials were not worthy of acceptance into a university, even though she had 310 points. Her own feelings of self-worth, and her view of her 'self' were distorted in relation to how she viewed a student who had more credible qualifications than she held for getting into university.

The application process was undertaken by *Eva* who sought very little help and assistance as her perception of this was that she may not get a place at all. Her support structure could be described as weakened and ill-informed as her parents did not fully understand the problem so did not intervene, and as the student was 'maturing' the decisions were hers, as were the consequences of this. There could also be an issue regarding communications here as whilst the support structure was clearly loving and supportive, the

student may not have been receptive to any advice and as the parents did not fully understand the situation they offered none. On reflection, *Eva's* awareness of any impact of this on herself at this stage has not been felt by her.

E. I mean in a sense that doesn't mean any difference does it?

Finally getting onto the ITMB programme was a significant step for *Eva*. This was the realisation of everything she had ever wanted, and once there she settled very well.

E. I really wanted to be on the ITMB then because I was doing the foundation degree so then once I got on there I was kind of happy and content and wanted to do well then.

These feelings were evident from *Eva's* behaviour this year as opposed to the previous year. She was much more focused as a student on her studies, on participating in seminar activities, and doing preparatory work. She demonstrated a willingness to talk through things with her peers, lead groupwork and engaged in dialogue with her tutor. These behaviours were a marked improvement from those exhibited during foundation year as at that time she displayed opposite behaviours – ie distracted, absent, unwilling to participate, lack of effort.

Int. So looking at your first year ITMB then I've read your reflective commentary and your personal statement and been through your portfolio again. You got a good mark, a mark in the 70s which indicates that you are capable of working at a fairly high level, 2:1 and above, potential to aim for. Was that indicative of your overall profile or not for the year?

E. My overall grades, em I think I focused my attention too much on subjects that I found were harder so I focused I'd say about 80% trying to get my head around like say programming was one of them. I tried to like get my head around it. I should have focused obviously half of the time on other ones, maybe 50% on programming and then 50% on the other subjects but I did quite well in them but then group work kind of brought me down then. Because in a group, I think I was in groups that were kind of laid back and we wanted to get the work done but they were kind of well we'll do that and then they were so laid back that when it came to the time they were so rushed at the end yea, so I would definitely do that differently this year.

Whilst the results overall were good for the first year (Appendix 10) there clearly were some areas for improvement that the student had identified herself. Some of the language used during this exchange gave the impression of blaming some of the other group members, as well as herself for some of their shortcomings. This showed that *Eva* did not fully take responsibility for her own learning and subsequent results at this stage, and looked for a reason to justify a lower result in one of the modules. As this was not wholly down to *Eva* herself, she believed that this would not happen again. Interestingly, her awareness of the group dynamics suggested that she would make sure that this would be the case and that on reflection she would ensure that this situation would not re-occur at a

future date as now she had had the experience of it happening she would be better prepared. These ideas suggest the third analytical theme which was *Eva's* response to a question asking her about her perception (out of 10) of her own capacity for studying. *"I think I would be about (pause) 6."* Further probing around this area suggested reduced levels of working during the foundation year, and whilst some behaviour changes are becoming evident, they are very gradual and still immature. Asking *Eva* about keeping up with the work, her response showed a little apprehension and very little strategic intent.

E. I think so. I think I will. I hope I do, I'm hoping that I keep up with the work yea.

In addition, *Eva's* language used in relation to work placement was reactive rather than proactive, and very much reliant on the infrastructure providing the momentum and guidance to secure a placement opportunity.

E. Well they set up the student support module for placements which is basically what you're going to do and how you're going to go about. And they obviously inform us of the placement team is here to help and we have our tutors, course leader Andrew he always puts out that he is there to help us when it comes to placements. And then we have CV checks and we have guru lectures, people coming in.

This dialogue was quite similar to the tone of that relating to future employment. It seems that *Eva* believes that this will all just fall into place, somehow, and therefore very little ownership of the ultimate pursuance of this end is evident at this stage.

E. Em after my final year after hoping I graduate with a 2:1 at least and then I would I think I would go straight into looking for a job and then maybe in the fourth or fifth year maybe do some travelling. Maybe once a year somewhere different.

The fourth theme in relation to maturity emerged from dialogue in relation to an additional summer placement and to her ongoing approach to her studies - *"I was treated as if em, that I wasn't just there, I was always there and in the meetings they were giving me input and there was an older man, not that it's harder for older people they like grasp IT but he er maybe he wasn't in the IT kind of mind frame. So I convinced him that it was going to be better, so I thought that was an achievement. Like he jumped on board then."*

Also, an additional placement undertaken during the first and second year summer period involving digitising a family business gave *Eva* confidence in her research abilities and IT abilities.

E. I done a few weeks placement over the summer. I was digitising a family business. Kinda they were looking for digitisation because it was all paper documents. They had wanted to obviously put it all on computer. So I looked up a scanner that would. I've never looked up so many scanners in my life but researched what they needed, what they were looking for and got a scanner and software that was suitable for them and then scanned documents and sped up the whole digitisation process then.

E. I was treated as if em, that I wasn't just there, I was always there and in the meetings they were giving me input and there was an older man, not that it's harder for older people they like grasp IT but he er maybe he wasn't in the IT kind of mind frame. So I convinced him that it was going to be better, so I thought that was an achievement. Like he jumped on board then.

Int. um, hum, that was good. It sounds very grown-up and very real, that as well.

E. I actually felt like that, yea. Good. Good.

As a result of that summer experience there was an experience that *Eva* had had that made her feel a valued part of an organisation that existed outside of education. Her input was well received and her contribution rewarded. This helped *Eva* to recognise aspects of her own abilities to add value to organisations.

*Eva* was also very forthcoming about her changing attitude in relation to her studying.

E. "This year I read up my first year. I wouldn't have read briefs and seminars but now I read the briefs before. That's good. Help you provide the work faster."

*Eva* was able to demonstrate a more mature approach to her attitude towards her studies, and through looking at errors that she had made she was able to improve her overall performance and approach.

E. I think it's obviously going to give me knowledge on it anyway that I'm going to need and if it comes up that I need do to think you could actively fill your own head with lots of knowledge irrespective. You don't teach knowledge, you acquire knowledge so you get an understanding of things. I kind of learn from the mistakes that I've made. For example last year for programming I would have looked at the example and changed the example punctuation, everything in it.

Some of the tangible experiences that are encountered in *Eva's* university experience can easily be looked at, understood, and learned from. Aspects of strategic awareness appear less transparent at this stage, though there is sufficient time for developing a more acute awareness of the institutional and world demands placed upon graduates today. Gathering knowledge in relation to modules and studying is evident, but personal development appears to be an area in which she has less confidence, despite the previous summer placement experience. This would also benefit *Eva's* CV but seeking out ways of building a CV that would be competitive and that illustrates more about the person than the degree programme is not something that at the present moment seems to be on *Eva's* agenda. Therefore attempting to secure a placement of choice is not something that she seems able to achieve due to her perception of the competition and her own 'self-worth'.

E. Well I looked at Proctor and Gamble but there, we've been talking about them and they seem to be really difficult.

In one sense, *Eva* is ruling herself out of competing in a 'high stakes' arena as she does not view herself to be as good as others who she perhaps believes to be better than she is.

And whilst she does want to “end up with a good career” there are things that she could do to assist with this process. Building up her CV would be one thing through joining associations and organisations, and taking part in the wider university agenda.

E. I have been to the student’s union but there are not many events on there.

Developments in *Eva’s* life may have an influence on her future choices, but at this stage it is difficult to pre-judge. As she develops further, within the structure of the university and her learning experiences, and as her confidence levels increase, she will become more in control of the choices she makes and the opportunities that she seeks. At this stage, this aspect of *Eva’s* personal development is immature, but showing signs of change.

## 6.4 Case Study – Kenny (Level 5)

### Finding out about Kenny

As a result of having known Kenny (21 years old) for over three/four years, as his teacher, and following a subsequent interview with him as part of this research, this chapter presents a phenomenological analysis of that relationship, built on hermeneutics and double hermeneutics, and richly detailed participant observations. The participant has been called Kenny to protect his identity and to preserve his anonymity as part of the agreed terms of this research. The findings from this study highlight a number of interesting themes, evidenced from the student experience and analysis of the accessible dialogue – both written and spoken, together with observations, achievements and patterns of behaviour. There are a number of contributory factors that are an integral part of the learning experience for this student in particular, and whilst they may not be true for every student, they illustrate another example of the individual differences and phenomenology that can shape people's lives, and also that institutions and programmes of study have to accommodate. Furthermore, this student is interviewed as part of this research as a level 5 student going into final year, and the subsequent changes that are evident epitomise the rationale behind this study.

### Analysis

The first analytical theme *“I done very well for my final 6 months of my GCSEs I really put my head down I think it was largely to do with my mother on my back most of the time.”* indicated the support network that Kenny had around him from within his home environment. He was the eldest of 4 boys, went to grammar school, and was looked up to by his brothers. There were expectations placed upon him to achieve some success at school, and with such a robust support network at home, his progression into a university was encouraged from the start. The A level results that he achieved (A, B and C), together with an AS level were enough to get him into Northumbria in his first choice of course that focused around computer coding. He subsequently did not enjoy that course, did not feel as if it were right for him, but finished his first year and then changed over onto our BIS course and began first year again. For some students, such a change in direction could have been a stumbling block in his pathway through higher education. However, he viewed this situation as one of making an informed decision about his future with the full support of his family behind him, whatever he decided. The fact that he was at university was sufficient of a reward for his family. Whilst the first year on the computer coding course was not stimulating, definitely not enjoyable, yet something that he still managed to pass, he was not put off by this experience and approached his new choice of programme with enthusiasm and an optimistic mind-set, and full family backing and support behind him.

K. And as I got into my new course Business Information Systems, I think I automatically liked it straight away and I was more dedicated to this and more motivated.

With his support network, Kenny was able to make his preferred selection and embrace those choices with no pressure on him to either hurry up and finish his education, or to get a job. Being the eldest of four brothers, he was potentially setting some standards for his siblings to aspire to. But Kenny was not a traditional type of academic student, and often regarded himself as a joker or a student with a tendency to be easily distracted. Despite all of this, his parents wanted him to do well at university, recognising the greater need for his future.

K. ...so they just wanted me to continue learning so I suppose they didn't want me to go home and get a trade, I was spending so much time in education so that was that.

Ironically, Kenny failed one of his modules on the first year of the BIS programme – it was, in fact, IS0472 Skills for Information Systems Professionals which is my module. He failed it primarily due to non-submission of his work through not following the protocols for submission, largely due to inconsistent attendance and not understanding the requirements of the module. From his first year on BIS Kenny gave an impression of being a little flippant with regard to his studies, not always taking them seriously, and subsequently failing a module in the first year was not a surprise to me and other lecturers who knew him. His exhibited behaviour was slightly *deviant* and his tendency to become *distracted* was a stronger influence than the learning experience he was having.

K. So I failed that and I had to resit that while I was on holidays but I had all the work done so it was just a case of resubmitting it so it was a bit of a bummer so I suppose.

Int. How did you feel about having done that? Did you feel silly or?

K. I felt so stupid because I'd done the work the way we were doing, the work was not like so straight forward I felt like such a dick for making this, I could have got maybe a 60 and I could have got a 2:1 and that, but was only first year so it didn't really matter. But just because I was so laid back, it's always been one of my problems like just a little bit too laid back a little bit too lackadaisical towards everything.

In the second year Kenny's attitude changed and he seemed to show a lot more interest. He was always a very likeable character, never seeming to be particularly bright and/or studious, but he did show more engagement. In fact it would appear that one of the things that he was doing was quite a bit of independent learning in order to fill any skills gaps that had become apparent through the first year and as a result of feedback during the second year.

K. erm well I started researching first online writing styles, just seeing that my writing style was totally wrong, I was using 'I' too much, I was talking about 'me' all the time, I wasn't focusing on the topic enough, erm, then my girlfriend who is actually a Masters student at the minute, she sort of helped me with bits and pieces and helped me understand why my writing

wasn't right. Erm she said she went to classes at the library, writing, reading classes so I decided to go to one of them.

Seeing such self-initiated changes suggests factors associated with the second analytical theme '*Adapting to varying learning environments and cultures*' when as a result of feedback and dialogue, with both tutors and peers, and 'super peers', Kenny is able to attempt to increase his commitment to his studies in order to achieve greater success. Elements of self-realisation, where his own weaknesses were exposed, and his ability to receive this information in a positive way, resulting in the appropriate responses to these weaknesses in order to turn them into non-weaknesses, would be potentially a great leap forward in the right direction. Although Kenny's view of looking for a formulaic way of filling these skills gaps still shows a deficiency in how he views himself in relation to his own potential in academia and the subsequent requirements therein, though this perception may be time-related for the moment and over a longer period may result in further changes that do benefit him considerably and bring about longer term desirable changes. Surprisingly, his view of himself as being able to write a paper that might be read by others who view him as a very knowledgeable author is an interesting aim that was probably not evident prior to his coming to university, but one that has only become desirable since being here. It may not ever be realised, nor might it be something that he views as desirable once he has left the university, although this is only speculative, not something that is proven as part of this research.

Being in a university is clearly something that is important to Kenny at the moment, and his attempts to adapt to the requirements of the organisation are evident from his dialogue though his approach could be a flawed one.

K. Yes, I think my technique was wrong because I hadn't tried, I hadn't really done much reading of academic papers, and towards the end of the year when we were doing our ethical reports on our subject that's when I really practiced my writing the most.

His approach to university has developed through from a euphoric state at being part of such an organisation in the first place, to one that says 'tell me what I am supposed to do and I will do it so that I know it will be right.' Simply having such a view as this is a little immature and naive, but from the dialogue and conversation during the interview, this is how Kenny tasks himself to approach his development and subsequently be successful within the university.

From the first year to the second year Kenny's belief in how he has had to change in order to fit into the organisation is an explicit one. The desire to do well has occurred as a result of his reflections back over the first year and the successes he achieved and the 'near misses' in relation to letting his guard down for one module in particular. Realisation of the consequences of that gave him a jolt that he needed to address any skills deficiencies and apply himself to his studies, taking responsibility for his own areas of weakness. His awareness of his support network, peers and family, was also a motivator for him to be able to speak of his own successes. Wanting to do well and achieve some good marks has pushed him along a particular route that is a responsive one to the learning culture that he



is experiencing and of which he wants to be a part. It has taken to the second year before he has any awareness, and then it is a responsive awareness.

This is evident from the third analytical theme “*Lack of understanding of the degree programme and no clear career aspirations*” which seemed to begin well with a desire to come to university, but with little understanding of how to behave once he was a part of it.

K. So I muddled along through the first year and I managed to pass maybe 75% of my modules but with not very good marks, scraping a pass and whenever I thought about resits I just thought I don't want to do this and I know through looking at some of the other classes in the university because I'd had this idea for a while that I wanted to change.

The earlier discussion looked at the family support and expectations in that the eldest of four boys would be given a chance to go to university in order to get a degree, but that was possibly the only expectation that could have been a prescriptive one. His choices were made through subject interests at school that he may or may not have been good at, together with a potential area of interest in computing. But making the wrong choice was not expected to happen, but even when it did, it did not take away from the primary aim of getting a degree through 'regrouping' and making a different selection of degree programme. Kenny was at university to get a degree. He would do whatever he had to do in order to get one, but he did not know the rules and was learning them as he went along. His family would support him throughout. Conversations with his peers, his tutors and his girlfriend were all giving him more insight into how the university functioned. Feedback on work that he had undertaken was essential, and he would then respond accordingly, doing whatever he had to in order to overcome a potential 'blockage'. His career choices were not really set in stone either, and that would probably be something that would emerge whilst he was studying at university.

K. Erm, to be honest I really don't know where I'm going to be. I'd really love a consultancy job. I'd love to be able to look at maybe three or four projects a year, where I'm looking at three different businesses and three different sectors and it's constantly changing and I get to challenge myself and to think well this business deals with swimwear and makeup or whatever, how can I improve this business and then go into somewhere else that deals with sports and going OK because I like to get my head around the area of the business.

In reality, Kenny's experience at university could be described as a very exploratory one where he has entered a world in which the possibilities are endless and not pre-conceived. After settling into the lifestyle, and recognising things that could go wrong, realising his own behaviour and attitude deficiencies, some of the possible openings clearly start to become apparent, if Kenny is successful and achieves a good degree. This type of learned behaviour is in response to the undergraduate pathway, and Kenny's ability to adapt to this has evolved throughout his time at the university. A positive development from this course of action is one that calls upon his integrity and work ethic and channels towards his chosen degree programme. The first year experience on the computer coding programme

that he subsequently 'dropped out of' possibly resulted in greater resilience to make a choice that could lead him towards a lifestyle choice that he was starting to see. In addition, to then fail a first year module that he needed to resit during the summer also weighed heavy upon him. Kenny was having to make many decisions on his own, with the option to talk them over with friends, family and tutors, but ultimately making his own informed choices, sometimes in response to travesties, to help shape his own destiny. His confidence in his own personality was a strength that facilitated much of the dialogue with everyone with whom he interacted, and he was fortunate enough to be in a position to respond to the advice that he was given within an institution that chose to offer a culture of support and encouragement to their students.

The final analytical theme "*Growing maturity as a result of the life experiences whilst at university*" in the case of Kenny was a very visible one. His exhibited behaviour changed over the course of time that he had been studying from that of a student who might have been perceived as a bit of a time waster and who did not have sufficient attention span to participate well in class, to someone who wanted to know everything about the subjects that he could possibly glean from any person who would give him some time. He wanted to become more knowledgeable than he was, and he wanted to know what he had to do in order to know everything that he needed to know. He did recognise his own weaknesses and was very responsive to suggestions for improvement.

K. Yea when I, in my second year course whenever we would start doing research into our pdp learning and we were doing some of the testing about the sort of people that we are that sort of made me think what we were, and some of the other reading we were doing about behavioural types and I was very interested by that and how different people act in teams and I can't remember what test that was?

K. So I was re-drafting my part of the report for a group for assessment. I was re-drafting it and I was taking it and showing it to my tutors and to my girlfriend and she was saying 'this is what I think you want to say' ... and then putting some red pen through some of the things and just re-drafting and re-wording it. But it was definitely the reading of some of the other journal articles that we had to go through in class that made me sort of seek, compare what they had written to 'oh I nearly said that but I said it in a different way.' An 'oh I would make that point differently – it is nice to see how this person has made this point.'

Remembering Kenny from the first year was a time when his attention span was very limited and his extended reading and writing was unnoticeable, regardless of how many times he was advised that it would be a useful exercise. Subsequent changes in his attitude and approach ensured that he made some positive behaviour changes in his life, external to his programme of study.

K. erm well I started researching first online writing styles, just seeing that my writing style was totally wrong.

Kenny was making these changes as a result of realising that some of his interactions with the university had not been of a standard that would lead him towards success. He was clearly starting to mature a little, and making such gradual changes, progressing well with his programme of studies, and doing what was needed if he was going to leave the university with a degree. His school years had already identified him as a 'class clown', albeit quite a clever one, but unless his capabilities could be steered and channelled the outcome may have been very different. That family expectations were well verbalised in a positive, supportive way, but at the end of the day it was up to Kenny to make it all happen. He subsequently took whatever he could, what he perceived he needed, and changed the outcomes to those of a successful student achieving good results. He knew, however, that he needed these outcomes for his family and himself, but he still was not clear on what he wanted to do when he finished university, but he recognised that he had some degree of choice in this, if he graduated well. Ironically, his enjoyment from the second year onwards was very evident. He wanted to talk and share ideas and opinions, he was constantly present and never had to be chased for work. His immediate change was still fairly low level, but nevertheless he was evolving into someone who would look back on his time at university as a great experience overall.

K. yea definitely I'm having the time of my life at the minute.

As Kenny's second year was ending, and he had not managed to get a placement in the normal way, he had secured a temporary job with a logistics company for 3 days a week. He felt that he needed to gain some real work experience to build his CV and compensate for not getting a placement previously.

K. So it's nice, it's really good to look back when I leave it will be really good to look back and see well all that stuff that I've learned and I went I there and I was telling them how to do it.

Whilst he did not need to do this, it was something he felt that would be valuable to him, and even though as one his tutors I had some awareness of the problems that he faced during the first semester of his final year, he had the ability to make the right decisions for all parties and not compromise his relationships both within the university and within this organisation for whom he was working. Balancing work and studies was not going to be straightforward, but he had the maturity to cope with the demands of both. This experience was an 'employability bridge' for him that let him try out his new found skills and expertise in a real organisation. Also, it would help him, at a later stage, to shape his future choices. He expressed a lack of certainty about studying further at university – a Masters perhaps – but did not rule it out. He recognised how his experiences of having to adapt to the needs of higher education have shown him how being responsive to a learning culture can be very satisfying and rewarding, and may result in his belief that anything is possible and achievable with hard work.

In summary, Kenny's experience has shown a shift in his behaviour and attitude in order to achieve his goals. This has been enabled through his engagement with the learning culture of the organisation, his realisation of his own strengths and weaknesses and then having

the ability to do something about it, and also in his developing ability to establish meaningful relationships through dialogue and interactions.

## 6.5 Case Study – Dan (Level 6)

### Finding out about Dan

As a result of having known Dan (21 years old) for over three/four years, as his teacher, and following a subsequent interview with him as part of this research, this chapter presents a phenomenological analysis of that relationship, built on hermeneutics and double hermeneutics, and richly detailed participant observations. The participant has been called Dan to protect his identity and to preserve his anonymity as part of the agreed terms of this research. The findings from this study highlight a number of interesting themes, evidenced from the student experience and analysis of the accessible dialogue – both written and spoken, together with observations, achievements and patterns of behaviour. There are a number of contributory factors that are an integral part of the learning experience for this student in particular, and whilst they may not be true for every student, they illustrate another example of the individual differences and phenomenology that can shape people's lives, and also that institutions and programmes of study have to accommodate. Furthermore, this student is interviewed as part of this research as a final year student and the subsequent changes that are evident epitomise the rationale behind this study.

### Analysis

The first analytical theme *“Erm my mother didn't really look after me growing up she kinda just left it to my gran ...”* was the beginning of a fairly dramatic description of a troubled family background, with limited support from one grand parent. Details were offered telling of suicide, drugs and alcohol within the family network, resulting in the participant describing himself as *“supporting himself financially from the age of 14.”* The little bit of help from the grandmother at a later stage got him away from his home town and away from his family, which was felt by Dan as a much needed escape towards his future.

D. My mother didn't really look after me growing up she kinda just left it all to my gran but I couldn't fault my gran at all, she did the best she could for me and everything like that.

Unlike other students, Dan's background was very much a *troubled* one. Not only was his family infrastructure both fragile and volatile, it was one that he very much wanted to leave behind him and from which he got no guidance, support, advice or money (very little, only from his grandmother). On numerous occasions outside of this interview, Dan would tell me that he was not like the other students who had a supportive family network. His school experience, prior to coming to university is one that he describes in an almost dismissive way. He describes the environment as one he did not care about, his behaviour was erratic and inappropriate. In fact he describes himself as having been an idiot at school, spending time in isolation and repeatedly being banned from lessons. However, despite this, he managed to get 13 GCSEs, grades A-C, apart from English which he got a D for in school, and later, at college, managed to pull this back to a C. His 'D' in school was as a result of his refusal to do coursework.

D. I guess I am quite lucky because I am naturally clever that I managed to get through school and get to where I am now.

His initial career thoughts were looking at an apprenticeship in a power station, but after a friend persuaded him to go to a Catholic college, he achieved sufficient 'A' levels to get into university, an option that he chose almost by default, as the Catholic college infrastructure was steering its pupils towards university education and he just went along with it. This typified an almost drifting journey through education, a place where he felt he was clever enough to belong, but did not know why he was there and had given no consideration to how he got there either. Yet making transitions was not difficult for him as he displayed a considerable degree of resilience, resulting from his life experiences to date.

This 'arrival at university' facilitates analysis of the second analytical theme arising from Dan's story "*I felt absolutely totally fine, because one of the reasons I chose this university was because I knew a lot of people that were in Newcastle already*" – a statement that conveyed a degree of confidence about coming to Newcastle and settling into a university that would be fit for purpose. However, there was still not a great deal of considered decision making in the application process as the degree programme that was chosen was not the first choice, but was made through clearing. Some students do seem to make some key decisions in their lives without any structured thought processes, and yet the students can 'grow into their choice' and it sometimes turns out for the best. Not all cases are like this, but Dan seems to have drifted along from school GCSEs to 'A' levels, all of which he succeeded in, and then literally ended up at Northumbria which has been proven to be right for him. Ironically, his choice of university was within travelling distance of his hometown that he was desperate to get away from and had no desire to ever go back to again. Money was an issue, and perhaps one of the reasons he did decide to stay local, as well as the known friends and colleagues he had who were staying in the area too which made the transition an easy one to make.

D. Just because, to be honest I was drunk when I applied. Because I went out after results day and just ended up applying while I was out. I saw business and just applied for it. If I knew what the course was about I wouldn't have applied I wouldn't have come here.

Thus settling in for Dan was not perceived as being difficult as a part of him wanted to leave his home town behind. But because he was local, he still had the option of travelling back when required, and he was in a long term relationship at the time, so he visited a little more because of this. Although when speaking of this he suggested that this contributed to a poor level of effort in the first year but as he did not understand the grade boundaries at university and how they correlated to previous known measurement scales that might grade his work numerically or with A, B, C, etc, he was not perturbed by this lack of knowledge and still posturing on actually getting to university despite his upbringing.

I. Do you think students don't know enough about that, do you think we make too many assumptions?

D. Maybe, especially if a student has come from a background like mine, where I'm the only person before I got to university, I didn't know anyone who had been to uni from my area. The area from *anon.* where I live is like a really rough area, probably the highest earning people are like car mechanics.

He also enjoyed sports and seemed to enjoy the support from his team mates with whom he felt secure and comfortable. Having a support network around him clearly enabled him to adapt to the new environment, although throughout the discussions his views on the actual teaching and learning experiences are quite negative with regard to the scheduled sessions relating to the programme, but his engagement with the tutors is one that has worked for him, not just at university, but throughout his life. His remarks about lectures suggest a total lack of engagement, with little interest in the seminars and workshops, and he has spent quite a lot of time in relation to his education working as he would say independently, yet the credit for this ability, in his mind, is all down to his own ability to work on his own.

D. I think lectures are absolutely pointless, and I don't remember anything from them at all. For about the first 2 years I didn't go to any.

D. I find that 20 minutes is too long for me and I couldn't concentrate for 20 minutes with someone talking at me.

D. Yea maybe I've looked at when I've been to lectures I've looked at the further reading when we've got references at the end and stuff like that. I've looked at them references and tried to do a bit more, I think lectures are just too long, people talking at you for so long you just switch off after 5 minutes.

I. If that was the case for lectures then what about the seminars and workshops?

D. Em I do find them quite helpful. Erm sometimes I fail to see the importance of the big picture like obviously doing a task in the workshop or a seminar but sometimes I fail to see how that's important, even though, common sense should tell me it is obviously important otherwise I wouldn't be doing it, we are not wasting our time doing it so its obviously got some importance somewhere. But I think that's me, it's just me being, you know, a bit stupid but er ...(trails off)

Dan's firm belief in his own ability is a definite strength of character that has kept him on track throughout his time at Northumbria University, and his skills as an independent learner he sees as fundamental to his continued success in life.

D. Erm, I don't rely on other people really, and I haven't done for a long time now."

However, in spite of his beliefs, he has needed advice throughout his life from the friend at

school who “convinced us to go to college”, and the support he got from his business tutors at the Catholic school where he did his A levels just because “the common room was right next to their offices and I would see them and they would be really helpful” going on to suggest that without them, then who knows? In addition, “Colin actually phoned” him up and that was how he ended up on the degree programme, whilst in the university, even if his views on the ‘taught lectures’ were dismissive, his recognition of the tutor support he received was very necessary to his continued attachment and subsequent success.

D. No I think the tutors here really helped me out, er probably if it wasn't for youse I wouldn't have done as well as I have done because I mean you have really helped me. I mean just coming to talk to you all the time about dissertation and stuff like that just little bits of advice, even another school in this university I wouldn't have got nearly as much support as I have here.

Access to tutors has been an area of support for Dan throughout his studies. He views this as essential, and perhaps this might be something that has been partly responsible for why he has managed to complete his degree programme. His insecurities with his family origins expressed themselves in part as vulnerabilities yet whilst engaged within the university he displayed the opposite much of the time. He appeared to be confident, not really academically clever, but with strength of character and resilience he was a known student with whom contact was unavoidable as and when he needed to speak about an issue. Subsequently he almost came and took the educational inputs and dialogue on his terms from selected academics, to suit the way he wanted to learn. And whilst that may have been a risk from one perspective, it was something he did through his engagement with me as one of his tutors. One of the key things he needed from his tutors was empathy and understanding of his needs. There were times, prior to final year, when he exhibited behaviours that were irritating and almost troublesome, but not to the point of causing disruption, and he was often perceived by myself as a bit of a nuisance, but otherwise a very nice student, about whom nothing of his family background and circumstances was made known other than the odd utterances he had offered. Yet, with hindsight, he was developing a relationship with me as his tutor, and determining the boundaries. Following on from a year's placement experience, he came back to university with a visibly changed level of maturity and/or emotional development. He still did not like the traditional teaching and learning infrastructure of lectures and seminars even though his attendance was never a problem, but he did want to have constant dialogue with as many academic members of staff who would give him some time. Without such interactions he may not have found his subsequent levels of success, and whilst this claim is perceptibly speculative, it is based on instinct and insight from being one of those academics who gave him the relationship he needed, having recognised his capabilities and truly empathised with him.

D. Someone with my background, yea, without a doubt if I didn't have as much support, you would have just thought I was crap and I considered dropping out in second year and first year.

The third analytical theme relating to a lack of understanding of the degree programme



and no clear career aspirations - “*Yea I didn’t really care, like I said when I was at my college it was the seen thing to do, you go from school, college, university*” - reaffirmed the chaotic ascent into higher education with no strategic underpinning knowledge and guidance to guide him through it.

D. Before I came to university even for the first half of the year I didn’t understand what the grade boundaries were. I didn’t understand that a 1<sup>st</sup> was like an A, a 2:1 was like a B, I didn’t understand what that was.

He had entered an environment without looking back on friends and family at home, but with a support network around him of friends, yet no clear understanding of how that environment functions and what you needed to know in order to fit in there and progress through an undergraduate degree programme. This lack of understanding did not even awaken a desire to strategically find out about it, as his assumption that he would be alright because he was clever was sufficient for him to just carry on regardless. Furthermore, his behaviour in the early stages could possibly have been described as *flippant* as if he had no cares or worries about his course, and this was possibly the case. He was still drifting through his education, believing that it would all be fine. His belief system of being able to put in more effort if he ever needed to was firmly situated in his mind-set, and the consequences in the early stages were of no concern to him.

D. I think if I really wanted something I can put the effort in. I mean but I’m not, I do really want a good degree but I didn’t feel as though I had to put as much effort in to get a good mark.

Whilst in the university, even as a second year student, the potential degree awarding boundaries were of little relevance to Dan and he still did not appear to understand their significance, but there was great insight gained from a placement experience at Nissan, a motor industry factory situated in the North East of England.

D. I think it was when I got my placement at Nissan. I got my place and was told I needed a 2:1.

Dan felt valued whilst on placement and believed that he was a great employee during his time there. He was being paid money during his placement, and even though he had had employment for most of his life from the age of 14, albeit part-time work, this was the first time he had been paid a good salary and enjoyed it. Being part of a real organisation gave him the opportunity to establish himself as part of a successful business and to play a part in that success. He was working with a variety of people and experiencing real activities. On completion of his placement he was offered a permanent job, subject to getting a 2:1 degree, yet if anything, the placement ended up showing him what he didn’t want.

D. No, although the money is a big drive for me, I don’t want to be stuck in a job that I don’t want to do. Cause I’m not going to spend all that time I’m at university just to get a job that I’m not going to be happy with. I mean the job, I wouldn’t put it down, the job is a good job, is quite a good job but I mean it’s not what I want to do and I’m not going to be unhappy for the rest of my life working in a job.

On his return to university and a re-engagement with academia as a final year student the required level of working towards this now known achievement aspiration – a 2:1 – was a commitment that he had to make. Whilst his attendance was still constant and reliable, what he did subsequently was to step up his relationship with his dissertation tutor who was, in fact, me. Any aspect of deficiency in his skills and abilities was talked through and then he would go away and attempt to fill any gaps in his knowledge. This intense focus with the world of academia then resulted in another aspiration that was a considered contemplation within postgraduate education.

D. Well the way I see it is if I don't do a Masters now I'll never do one, I mean I know you can do it part-time but realistically working full time I don't really think I'd bother.

At one time he was quite intent on this particular course of study, but as he approached graduation he was offered a job that was giving him life choices, possibly for the first time in his life, and he subsequently took it. This decision making process, whilst seeming to be more focused than those made previously by Dan, is still indicative of a person who is unclear about his life course. Achieving success is his primary course of action, but the next steps are variable, depending upon lifestyle choices. This is where the fourth analytical theme relating to his growing maturity as a result of the life experiences he had had whilst at university became apparent - *"I think it's down to if that's the case it's more about independent learning, really I need to go and do it off my own back"* – as well as his subsequent development as a lifelong learner.

One of the greatest insights from this transcript is talking with a student who had a very difficult home background and a fragile infrastructure who proceeded to stumble through various educational experiences, ended up at a university doing a course that had the word business in it and came out the other side with a 2:1 degree, a job offer, and a chance of further study at post graduate level.

The four superordinate themes that have emerged from this case study illustrate some of the complex issues that exist from within the lives of students coming to universities.

## 6.6 Case Study – Phil (Level 6)

### Finding out about Phil

As a result of having known Phil (21 years old) for over three/four years, as his teacher, and following a subsequent interview with him as part of this research, this chapter presents a phenomenological analysis of that relationship, built on hermeneutics and double hermeneutics, and richly detailed participant observations. The participant has been called Phil to protect his identity and to preserve his anonymity as part of the agreed terms of this research. The findings from this study highlight a number of interesting themes, evidenced from the student experience and analysis of the accessible dialogue – both written and spoken, together with observations, achievements and patterns of behaviour. There are a number of contributory factors that are an integral part of the learning experience for this student in particular, and whilst they may not be true for every student, they illustrate another example of the individual differences and phenomenology that can shape people’s lives, and also that institutions and programmes of study have to accommodate. Furthermore, this student is interviewed as part of this research as a final year student and the subsequent changes that are evident epitomise the rationale behind this study.

### Analysis

The first analytical theme *“they both said to me you want to go to university – don’t get a job with your hands ... ”* demonstrates that whilst Phil clearly had support from his parents and the family unit, early seeds were sown in his mind to determine a course for his life. It was clear from the dialogue that his parents were not particularly academic, but did want the best for him and encouraged him to work hard and to do well.

P. They are not really academically inclined. They just made sure that I went to school ... and they pushed me really to get to university and my mum was always saying about the financial incentives to go there to get a good job and have nice things.

Putting this into practice, however, was clearly not without difficulty, and the second analytical theme emerged as *“I got kicked out of school though, was a bit of a jack the lad and a class clown.”* Phil acknowledges that his behaviour was erratic whilst at school and even though he was ‘kicked out’ of school, as a result of his behaviour, he still managed to get 14 GCSEs.

P. I got kicked out of school though, was a bit of a jack the lad and a class clown. But when I went back there was a teacher called Mr J..., Head of Year and Mr S..., my English teacher, and we kind of got on, and they said look what you’re doing and they gave me all my textbooks to study from home.

Phil, reflecting on this experience recalls that he did not learn from it as there were still problems at the next stage of his education, partly due to his perception of himself, and his own level of ability, without having to put in a great deal of studying.

P. I never really learned my lesson from being kicked out of school because despite that I had this mentality that you were clever – got A stars and did not even need to be there. Did quite badly in my A levels because I thought I was already clever.

Int. So what happened at A levels?

P. I completely messed up at AS level and had to drag it all back up in A2.

Int. So you did?

P. Yes. Through hard work. They were quite hard subjects that I could have studied again, but for me that was not an option because I didn't want my friends to see that I was bricking it.

The consequences of not achieving the grades at A level, apart from not being able to apply to Oxford or Cambridge, to study medicine, which was perhaps the initial idea, was to make sure that Phil got sufficient grades to be able to go to Northumbria to do English Language, as all of his friends were going there and it was important to him to be moving forward at the same time as his peer group. At the time, English Language was Phil's strongest subject. In some way, it became clear that whilst university was always a goal, deciding what to study at university was perhaps an unknown at this stage. The strongest subject became the steer, and in this instance resulted in Phil making a bad choice of degree as after one year, and talking to one his best friends, he decided to change courses and left English Language in order to study Business Information Technology (BIT).

P. I was looking at some of the work he was doing and I thought I'd be good at that and think it would be far more useful for getting a job cause I didn't know what I'd be doing so just finished my English Language at the end of year one, came on to BIT which is not a bad thing because you've still got the environment.

The situation within the family seems to have been consistent, despite some issues with regard to Phil's relationship with his mother who, at this point, he has not seen since he was 18, but the early course for independence and university was very established, and Phil did not seem to be uncomfortable with the situation. However, possible flaws in his decision making due to a lack of intervention and guidance might have been a factor that was in part responsible for the initial doubts in relation to choice of programme, although this was not said during our discussion. It was clear that Phil is very independent, constantly striving to do well and make good choices, and if it happened that changes had to be made he would constantly strive to make good any bad decisions, unaided, but learning at this stage through interactions with his peers and the university.

Int. I think it helps to make a difference if your parents give you all these life skills, doesn't it?

P. Yea, cause, like completely the opposite way was my best friend, who I said was head boy. He was kind of really mothered and even now, to the point where, I was house mates with him in second year, if we wanted a take away or something like that he just can't ring them. He cannot ring them he just doesn't like it.

Phil's own belief in his coping abilities and comparing them to others was very important in building his confidence and self-belief. He could rationalise his study route, as whilst not having been a perfect student, he was still going to be very successful in life, due to his interpersonal skills and his coping strategies. Continuing to discuss his 'best friend', -

P. Yea but it, that's the exact situation we've got now. He er got a very very high first in Northumbria as well in computer game design em and he is still struggling to get a job.

Int. So that doesn't correlate necessarily then the high first equals a great job?

P. No, no, not at all. His CV is brilliant and he gets assessment after assessment after assessment and then he just can't secure a job.

Int. So interesting, er side strand to discuss your friend, but what do you think is missing from your friend's CV?

P. No, no, his CV is brilliant. I think it's just the em, he's just not confident. He's not confident like, I think I've said to him you need to just go in there and kind of not be arrogant but kind of say why you are perfect for the role.

The third analytical theme coming through from the discussion was Phil's own awareness of how he had changed and was still changing as a person, and when the dialogue was moving towards this concept, Phil prompted an answer to a previous discussion about my working with first and final year students. *"To see the change"* which was Phil's interpretation of my reasons for doing so. By reflecting himself on his 'journey' through from school days to university, he stated that as a person he had changed gradually over this time from his early perception of himself as a 'jack the lad' to a person who cares about how well he does, how other people see him, and through increased levels of motivation and determination. He started to look at his ways of working on assignments, - the timing, the effort put in for each one – and related this to the marks he now realised he needed to get in order to get a 2:1 at least.

P. I've felt like I've learned a lot more erm, up until this year I was learning things but not to the extent that I was now. I was kinda just turning up erm kinda turning up and doing the assignments as and when they appeared, although I was here I wasn't, if you get what I mean? I wasn't fully engaged. My mind was on other things but this year I have given it my all em, whether or not that will have a positive impact because I've started to, for the first time in my life I've really cared.

Part of this insight came from a realisation that the second year of university marks could count towards the final degree classification which gave him the motivation to change and refocus his attentions. The goal at the end of second year was a placement, and it is only when returning to university that Phil became aware of this. These thoughts produced the fourth analytical theme *"I discovered I had 58 and I was just like I could very easily mess this up and that for me it was just like er that was the big realisation this year and erm because I only got 58 and I needed at least 69 to score throughout the year em otherwise what have I come here for? I just keep on thinking that the amount of money that I have*

*invested and what I think I'm capable of if I did get less than a 2:1 em I would have just wasted almost 5 years essentially, like £30,000, like half a decade of my life em so that kind of really spurred me on to work harder."* This theme brings in the early aspirations that were encouraged as a child that were leading Phil towards achieving a degree and having a better life, but as he realised very quickly on returning from placement, it was a now or never situation.

P. I wouldn't be bitter about not securing a first but if I got 59 I would kick myself for the rest of my life because I would just be like 'urg' why didn't I just work harder in the second year because then it would have been an easy 2:1?

This realisation resulted in a greater level of visible engagement and greater rewards as a result through higher marks, and surprising degrees of enjoyment in the subjects and modules being studied which is in fact about more than getting a 2:1.

P – talking about research methods module ISO608.

P. The module descriptions and 'oh god' like, it's a bit of a dry subject and I'm not looking forward to that.

P. I would say it's peaked an interest kind of thing.

P. yea but it also identifies as well while you're researching the different aspects you can clearly identify which one would complement your own skill set which then you can apply to the dissertation.

P. But that essay helped me identify which ones would erm kind of be best suited to my skill set so that I could apply that to my dissertation.

Also, another module was posing a number of problems for Phil yet he realised this and changed his approach.

P. Er no I think that the module there it was by far the weakest. I was never really good at programming and I kinda identified that if I didn't fix that problem it was going to end badly. And as I did it I found out I got really into it and em it's probably been one of the most enjoyable modules.

P. It could literally be the highest module this year in something that I thought would be my worst and I've turned it around to be my best.

Overall, the journey taken by Phil was one built on idealism and aspirations, but without the initial input and hard work. His support network was slightly fragile, but as a result of this he has become stronger as an individual and also very determined.

P. I think what it was is kind of the environment that I was in. I had kinda gone from, for me personally, a town where it was very industrialised, like B..... you know, very small town, nothing there, bored pretty much every day really and then you come to university. It's in the centre of Newcastle and you have your own house. For the first time you are out of the jurisdiction of all parents and things like

that. And I really didn't think about the university establishment. I just thought 'this is my new life'. You know the studying took a secondary kind of aspect because I was more interested in the new life that I was leading, the lifestyle. It only became in final year when I realised 'hang on a second' at the end of this year I'm leaving and if I don't get, if I get anything less than a 2:1 I've got to go back to that place that I don't really want to be at you know. These last 5 years have been the best years of my life and they are going to come to an end and I don't want to go back to the lifestyle that I had before. And then I was just like I was like I really need to study you know. It kind of made me engage more with university.

The above paragraph says such a lot about Phil. His desperate need to better himself, and build a life that he wanted was dependent on his success at university. He equated success in life with success at university. He never doubted his own level of intelligence or ability, and he had a great deal of confidence as a person. However, he needed to apply himself to his studies otherwise the life plans he wanted would not materialise. This would typify a view of students who do need to play a part in their own destiny rather than a view that on entering university with the required points students will leave it with a first or a 2:1 at least. Whilst this example does exist, in the case of Phil's friend, it did not secure a job for him at the end of it, because without life experiences and coping skills, this was proving, in his case, to be difficult to obtain.

Phil learned a great deal from failure. It made him stronger and made him work harder. He has succeeded in his studies despite failure along the way and developed a strategic insight into being successful.

P. I think it's good that you have failure because it teaches you how to deal with it. It teaches you that you're not as good as you think you are.

Obviously Phil has a great deal of resilience. Not only did he succeed at GCSE level when being asked to leave school, and then turning around his A levels after failing at AS level, he then recognised what he needed to do in the final year in order to get a 2:1 or a first. There are many students who would not have the resilience that Phil has shown in this case. Yet by engaging with his peers, tutors, and with his studies, his story has been one of remarkable success almost against the odds. From still being remembered as the 'class clown' not only at school, but at first and second year university this student has changed his attitude totally, channelled his intelligence and abilities in a very focused and strategic way, and as a result achieved a high level of success at the end of his university career – a first class honours degree.

The four superordinate themes that have emerged from this case study illustrate some of the complex issues that exist from within the lives of students coming to universities.

The next chapter will discuss each of these themes, synthesising the literature findings and responding to the aims and objectives established as a part of this research.

## 7 Findings and Analysis

### Introduction

The data presented is a representative aspect of the life of the researcher to date, interwoven with the lives of the undergraduate student body. The analysis has identified a number of themes, and from the context of an IPA research investigation, those themes are categorised across two levels – superordinate and subordinate. Whilst the emerging themes from the ‘Researcher’ are worded differently to those of the student participants, there is visible convergence from the analysis of the transcripts. In addition, the qualifiers from every participant all reveal different stories but in effect address thoughts, feelings, behaviours and attitudes, relating to traits assigned under the emotional intelligence banner, all of which seek to amplify the individual differences in human beings experiencing higher education. The following analysis will focus on the emerging themes from the student participants during section 7.1, and the findings from the researcher will be added as part of the extended narrative presented in section 7.2.

### 7.1 Cross-case analysis

#### **Theme 1:** ‘The lived experience of leaving home and coming to university’

When students elect to come to a university there are numerous influences that impact upon the choices that they make. Across the 5 participants in this study, *N* and *E*, the first year participants, both typically 19 years old, came from a strong emotionally-dependent family, were well supported, with influences from friends and teachers. Their experience of coming to university exposes a degree of anticipation and excitement, whilst still being a little anxious and displaying some fragility about moving out of the family home, away from their known support networks into something new. Neither of them had, ironically achieved their preferred degree choice of ITMB, but ended up on the extended degree programme, (level 3), potentially without the full realisation of their parents although the impression was that this would not have made a difference. However, *N* believed she had enough UCAS points to have got onto her preferred degree programme but did not seek to challenge the offer that was made to her in case she ended up with nothing. The second year student *K* (21 years old) was excited to come to Northumbria as a known group of friends were coming here, but his first year was on a different degree to the one in which I got to know him. This choice for *K* had not been right for him, in his opinion, and therefore by chance he had happened to have a conversation with a lecturer from BIS and made the decision to change. He then felt totally happy with his choice, largely assisted through supported decision making with peers and tutors, but nearly did not get through the first year due to his approach to studying (distraction and deviation) and producing sub-standard work. *P* also got into Northumbria in the exact way that he wanted to, but had also made a wrong choice of programme, so after his first year, he also changed



onto a BIS (BIT) degree, again through dialogue with peers and tutors that assisted his choice. All four students had family support to varying degrees – the females seemed to be more protected than the two males – one of whom had family expectation placed upon him as the eldest of 4 boys, and the other who was pushed by his working class parents who wanted him to do better and gave him every opportunity to do so. *D* (21 years old), did not have that supportive family network and used the chance of getting to university as a way out. For him, there was no going back. His choice of programme was random, not really considered, but fortunately, in the long term, it has worked out for him.

Already, the experiences of the 5 participants in this study, all of whom were aged between 18 and 20 when they came to university, and none of whom have tailored pre-requisite entry qualifications that have led them away from home into this specific set of degree programmes, show significant differences in their home lives and their rationale for choosing their university. One of the key common drivers, however, is clearly Newcastle – the city of choice for all five.

### **Theme 2: 'Adapting to varying learning environments and cultures'**

This theme related to the process of settling into the university, particularly as first years, adapting to the learning culture and environment has again been quite different for all of the students. The three males *K*, *P*, and *D* were all quite immature in their attitudes and their approach to their courses. There was quite a bit of deviant behaviour exhibited, particularly in their first year when *K* failed the skills module (IS0472) as he failed to submit his work. *P* and *D* admitted to not really recognising the value of lectures, and believing that they were more intellectual than the learning that they were experiencing, therefore their behaviour in class was at times disruptive, showed some disregard for the rules and regulations, and expectations in relation to conduct. Familiarity through conversing with lecturers quite informally at times, led to a culture of showing off in class, knowing that they had the intellect to do the work irrespective of the class input that they were jeopardising. However, as all three transgressed through the years, this visible behaviour changed and their relationships with their peers and their tutor support became valued and important to their future success. *E* and *D* used their level 3 year as a time for being a little deviant in their commitment to their studies, partly because it did not feel real to them as they were not in lectures with lots of students as they had believed university to be. Subsequently, their attendance was markedly poor (less than 50%). When they did get onto the ITMB as first years, their approach to their studies changed because of this change in perceived infrastructure - ie large lecture theatres – and they openly admitted to feeling important by being present, even if they had very little understanding of what was going on. Their first year grade patterns however, were very similar with a little slippage in one/two modules only as they struggled to meet the demands seamlessly for all of those studied, but their acknowledged realisation of these results impacted upon their renewed approach to the second year where they

were intent on establishing a greater degree of independent learning and an improved approach to their own study planning and organisation.

Again, in relation to this theme, the 5 participants brought different stories to this research, but another area of commonality was relating to the first year experience being regarded as less significant than the rest, thus allowing more time for study distractions attributed largely to settling into a university that shifted the emphasis for study patterns firmly onto the student themselves rather than the rigidity of the infrastructure. The two females displayed this more on their level 3 experience, and as a consequence were more settled at level 4. What was also evident from the first year data was that there was still plenty of time ahead to get serious about studying at university.

**Theme 3: 'Lack of understanding of the degree programme and no clear career aspirations'**

All participants lacked knowledge and understanding relating to the whole bureaucratic tariff system for entering a university and the subsequent realisation of what the assessments revealed to the wider world about their approach. First and second year students always assumed that there was still time. They did not see the need to start at the beginning to establish benchmarks for themselves in relation to their endeavours as they had far too much going on in their lives.

Final year participants understood the seriousness of the degree classification calculations, as they approached their point of exit, and almost always stepped up their game plan and became more strategic in their endeavours. There was a shift in their integrity and work ethic, their determining expectations of achieving a 2:1 were heightened, yet there was not clear evidence of a link between the employer expectations in seeking graduates with a 2:1 and their 'score' for a particular module component – it was the end result that was the focus. The correlation for them was not always something that mattered at that time. Final year was different. Their dialogue with their tutors had greater significance as they seemed to use every opportunity to seek ways of attaining greater control over their marks in order to almost guarantee their 2:1. Sadly, anything less was going to be perceived as a failure and the value of anything less than a 2:1 to this final year group was dismissed and not part of their aspirations.

On entering university all of the participants seemed to exhibit a blurred understanding of how a university worked, how they were assessed, what mattered and what did not matter. This only visibly appears to change in emphasis as they focus on their 2:1 exit strategy from university into a well-paid job.

**Theme 4: 'Growing maturity as a result of the life experiences whilst at university'**

What was evident from all participants is the changes in their maturity as they grow and develop as part of a nurturing environment. Although maturity generally occurs in

many people as they grow older, the impact of the university environment cannot be discounted in the case of the participants, as it has become part of who they are. *D* and *P* were such an intrinsic part of the university building in their final year, largely caused by their constant presence in it, yet there was a clear recognition for them of the hard work that they needed to put in to achieve the success that they thought they deserved. Their view of university as their key success in employment was unquestionable, and the metaphor of it being an employability bridge fitted the dialogue quite well in their case. This was also the case for *K* who, whilst needing a considerable amount of reassurance and support, was getting towards having confidence in his own abilities and his writing – which for him, was a perceived barrier.

All participants exhibited and recognised their changed behaviour, largely achieved from the support network that they realised they had all around them. This ability to be able to think clearly when taking control of their own lives, is part of their developed emotional state which becomes apparent as the students go through university.

## 7.2 Extended Narrative

The following sections add to the debate the contributions that come from the explorations of the researcher herself. The emerging themes related to self-doubt arising from a lack of awareness of self, largely attributed to a flawed infrastructure, immaturity and poor decision making resulting in failure to establish goals are now all subsumed within the PDP and employability area and form a part of what universities are consistently being told they should be aiming to provide as an integral component of all of their degree programmes.

Whilst the impact of not having access to a nurturing environment providing support and mentoring is viewed as a negative aspect of HE, it can be bridged by a curriculum that provides PDP and employability as a component of a university education as is evidenced with the Information Systems area at Northumbria University. Having the experience of being a part of a structured environment in which an individual is nurtured, influenced, and shaped by the people within it, can be critical to decisions and choices that are made that can shape lives.

The researcher, in a comparable way to the other participants, entered higher education in a rather convoluted way, having experienced disruption and poor life choices that limited opportunities. However, having still managed to achieve desired goals regardless of those disruptive circumstances, the assumed ability to relate to the student body (both disaffected and not disaffected) gives greater credibility from the perspective of insight to the role played by the researcher as their lecturer. Bringing these experiences into the university environment, having a robust background in teacher training and educational psychology, coupled with life experiences from within industry and also from a personal perspective, the researcher (as a lecturer) is in a strong position to carry forward these life experiences under the auspices of a well-established research banner – that of employability and PDP. It is here where the

convergence of the experiences of the researcher and the student participants happens. The unpicking of this data set and mapping it to a model for teaching students of all kinds is where this research has led to, as the sector has, for a long time, struggled to integrate PDP and employability into established curricula, although the literature recognises that there are numerous occurrences of it already being done, albeit as an implicit part of many degrees, yet the language needs to be explicit in order to increase both the awareness and the subsequent engagement of the student body.

The following table shows all of the themes from the participants that are subsumed within the body of literature around PDP and employability, and are a part of being a human being. The following chapter attempts to articulate a newly developed model for teaching in higher education institutions that embodies all of the key attributes applicable to the areas of PDP and employability whilst still focusing on the chosen degree programme.

Table 7-1 Emerging themes from all research participants

Emerging themes – From the Researcher	Emerging themes – From the student participants	Common themes developed from the case studies and the literature
<p><b>Superordinate theme 1: <u>Forms of self-doubt relating to a lack of awareness of self</u></b>  <b>Sub theme 1:</b> <i>Flawed infrastructure and lack of higher order intellect</i>  <b>Sub theme 2:</b> <i>Perception of self to others</i>  <b>Sub theme 3:</b> <i>Pupil is not mature enough to make decisions relating to self and becomes conditioned to allow others to make them for her.</i>  <b>Sub theme 4:</b> <i>Thinking that you know that it is time to 'stop' but you could be wrong about this.</i></p>	<p><b>Superordinate theme 1:</b> The lived experience of leaving home and coming to university.  <b>Sub themes:</b>                      Emotional dependence                      Family Support                      Peer support network                      Assisted decision making                      Fragility                      Distraction and deviation</p>	<p>Emotional development  <i>“When people learn to evaluate their thinking in a more realistic and adaptive way, they experience improvement in their emotional state and in their behaviour.”</i>                      (Beck, 2011 p3)</p>
<p><b>Superordinate theme 2: <u>Recognition of own skills and abilities</u></b>  <b>Sub theme 1:</b> <i>Do you really think I'm capable of that?</i>  <b>Sub theme 2:</b> <i>What credentials do I need to have in order to believe in myself just a bit.</i>  <b>Sub theme 3:</b> <i>Finding hidden depths</i></p>	<p><b>Superordinate theme 2:</b> Adapting to varying learning environments and cultures.  <b>Sub themes:</b>                      Infrastructure                      Tutor support                      Peer support network                      Independent learning                      Realisation of results                      Planning and organisation</p>	<p>Environmental Context and PDP  <i>“Effective pedagogy demands consistent policy frameworks with support for learning for diverse students as their main focus. [...] Policies should be designed to create effective and equitable learning environments for all students to benefit socially and economically.”</i>                      (TLRP, 2010)</p>
<p><b>Superordinate theme 3: <u>Planning the next steps and the way forward</u></b>  <b>Sub theme 1:</b> <i>No more goals established so not sure where to go now!</i></p>	<p><b>Superordinate theme 3:</b> Lack of understanding of the degree programme and no clear career aspirations.  <b>Sub themes:</b>                      Bureaucracy                      Unclear aspirations                      Determining expectations                      Integrity and work ethic</p>	<p>Teaching and Learning  <i>“Those who are assisting the educational growth of students should understand the basis of maximising and maintaining student motivation if classroom instructional practice is to be successful.”</i>                      (Curzon, 2003)</p>
<p><b>Emerging questions</b></p>	<p><b>Superordinate theme 4:</b></p>	<p>Growing maturity</p>

<p>What do I do now? Do I <i>really</i> want to do any more than this? Have I got <i>time</i>? What if <i>Dave</i> is not there? Could I do it on my own? How much practice should be done? What happens if this cannot be maintained? What music should form a repertoire that might impress people listening to Jackie play? I need to complete this in order to continue in my career. It has taken a long time to believe that I am actually doing a PhD, let alone having something interesting to research and write about. What do I want to do when I get my PhD? How can I alter the shape of my career? Do I want to? ...</p>	<p>Growing maturity as a result of the life experiences whilst at university.  <b>Sub themes:</b>  Maturity  Support network  Changing behaviour  Emotional development  Autonomy and maturity  Employability bridge</p>	<p><i>“Measure success in life by effort and doing your best, then it is always in your hands to succeed and be proud of yourself.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(Peters, 2012)</i></p>
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The mapped themes from all of the case studies (table 7.1) , and the findings from the literature have suggested a number of common themes that could prove to be useful for the HE sector, seeking to address the needs of their students. A discussion of each follows.

### Emotional development

A student leaving home and coming to university needs to find a level of emotional support to ensure their continued well-being. There are at least two perspectives that need to be considered at this point.

- 1 The ‘nurtured’ student who has a secure home life, good family support, friends and peers, receives lots of encouragement and motivation, and has a desire to succeed. When coming to a university, having left their home, there is an inevitable comparison in relation to lifestyle and adjustment. Quite often, situations and people can influence the settling in of the student into this new and exciting opportunity, but it may be reliant upon different people, unfamiliar infrastructures, more complex physiological circumstances relating to independent living.
- 2 The ‘disadvantaged’ student who has not experienced a secure home life and has very little support from either family or friends. The family may be dysfunctional in comparison to other student families, and the support network may be less vocal. This student has an innate desire to get out of their home situation and looks for a new way forward. However, this new experience could either be embraced as a new beginning, or due to some deep-seated

feelings there could still be some resistance or rejection to the experience not being as expected.

The institutional response has to ensure a well-defined and supportive infrastructure to welcome all different types of student, and to be able to respond to their needs with a degree of empathy, but still offer a firm steer. The responses to the students need to be made by professional staff, management, administrative and academic, who have some understanding of the lifestyle of students applying to the university, and who recognise the individual differences that exist between all humans, and staff should therefore seek to avoid a sweeping approach that may not suit all applicants and/or existing students.

The aims and objectives of this thesis suggest that all systems, including teaching and learning practices, are well supported and aim to maximise potential for all who are involved. However, in seeking to respond to the aims and objectives of this thesis, which naturally interrogate the strategic intent of the university, the findings from the data continue to emphasise the importance of the communication skills of the people with whom the student body, new and old, interact. Existing practices and IT systems may be intuitive to some, but perhaps those who need a little more time to understand the workings of a large bureaucratic organisation would benefit from tailored human interaction rather than feeling detached from the institution through a lack of familiarity with the systems therein. The advantages of contemplating such an interventionist approach to the emotional well-being of the student body, could strengthen the opportunities for all, and support the whole experience.

#### Environmental Context and PDP

The importance of the learning environment should not be understated. The student body has a pre-conceived vision of what to expect in a university. They anticipate lots of challenging study – lectures, seminars and workshops, etc. Lectures would be in large lecture halls, as is the perceived norm, seminars and workshops would be more interactive. This would be an expectation from the student view of the institution and be influential in relation to the transformative power of the learning experience (Bates, 2012). The view of the student from the institutional perspective, however, may be very different, as many students coming to university demonstrate low levels of engagement with autonomous study and are not always responsive to the anticipated behaviours that their tutors might expect.

On the contrary, the student view of university staff might be two dimensional. From one aspect it could be represented by unapproachable staff who are difficult to communicate with. They expect students to be able to get on with the job in hand, provide very little steer and direction from supporting notes and instructions. In general, staff who perhaps do not remember students' names and seem as if they do not want to get to know them as individual people and are therefore not responsive to their needs as individuals, but merely respond to the needs of the cohort. The other

anticipated view of university staff is one which they might be able to compare with previously known experiences from school or college. Some staff may seem to be more nurturing and sympathetic, take the time to get to know the individual circumstances of the students, and thus be more responsive when assistance is requested.

This element is, of course, compounded by the emotional development debate discussed previously, which includes the physiological infrastructure and lifestyle. Distortions in sleep patterns, excesses, activity sessions, time management may interfere with engagement within the environment, resulting in fraught interactions with staff as a result of inexcusable behaviour and disorganisation of the 'self' (student).

This then poses a number of elements for consideration by institutions but does not assume that all students will behave in this way. However, from an experiential perspective, this way of engaging does exist, and inevitably can result in a number of outcomes – ie failure, unhappiness, dissatisfaction, uncertainty, and disengagement. Some of these resultants need to be expected from students who may be described as disaffected, but equally they all need to be accommodated within a nurturing environment that offers support for well-being and encourages engagement regardless of circumstance.

### Growing maturity

The previous two aspects are an inevitable consideration of any understanding of some student lives and experiences. Simply growing up and getting older cannot be seen as a solution for students who might be classed as slightly dysfunctional although it does happen. The demonstrable actions of a first year undergraduate student might give an impression of a person who displays a lack of studiousness, respect, understanding, focus, and so on, yet by final year, that person may appear as a very different individual. Whilst there has been an inevitable maturation in their persona, the influences from within the infrastructure and the persons therein with whom that student has interacted cannot be discounted.

Institutions should therefore recognise these aspects of development from both the human being perspective, and the provision of a supportive infrastructure, and understanding some of the behaviours that are part of this overall process. Attempting to apply strict legislation and punishments may lead to more detachment and disengagement. An acceptance of this, not with compromise, but with a constructivist understanding, could possibly glean greater results and achievements and a better experience for the students.

### Learning and Teaching

An opinion relating to learning and teaching is quite bold, as this area is an incredibly complex one that has numerous interpretations from a body of experts. Providing a learning experience that is delivered by a competent professional with proven teaching



abilities and skills, would in many cases, be a minimal expectation that a student could expect from a university. Pressure on the sector to attract active researchers, with undisputable subject expertise, is widely known and there is opinion that suggests that there is a gap between a knowledge of the subject and a disposition to acknowledge the theoretical knowledge base of the teaching profession (Bainbridge, 2011). Where this works well, it is commendable. Where the student body is a little diverse, and in some cases disaffected, this can be less satisfactory. Underpinning the essence of good teaching and learning are the abilities to plan a curriculum, prepare teaching plans, and deliver those plans, meeting designated aims and objectives, evaluating the experience with robust assessment vehicles and timely feedback, and to incorporate employability and what that means today. These processes can be mechanised to some extent, but the individual differences of the students need to be considered so that a constructivist approach to teaching and learning can be developed.

The institutional response should acknowledge the expertise of their professional staff to this end. Staff who have under-developed skills relating to teaching and learning, but high levels of expertise in their own subject area need to be encouraged to embrace learning and teaching as an intrinsic part of their role and not disengage with the theory (Craft, 2001), and should dismiss their potential beliefs that because they know a lot about a subject, they can communicate this effectively to their students regardless, as in some cases this has not been found to be true (Bainbridge, 2011). In addition, the marking of student work, the quality and timeliness of feedback are a significant part of the role as a lecturer. Not only do the individuals who are employed as educators need to recognise this, but the infrastructure within the university should be supportive and not impose on the capacity of their academic staff through weakened administrative support systems. The focus should be balanced between the needs of scholarship of teaching and learning and research (Goss and Boyd, 2003). Students need the recognition from their efforts to encourage them towards the next defined goals, and ultimate achievements through certification and qualifications. Achieving success in all of these endeavours requires a shift in culture, that needs to be managed supportively by all persons involved.

### **7.3 Summarising thoughts**

The findings from this research are an interpretation that has been extrapolated from the data and the literature. Opinion from the research sample cites the importance of relationships with MKOs (more knowledgeable others), in this instance, lecturers. In addition, organisation and structure is clearly a requirement for an IS undergraduate student who is seeking to find ways of settling into a new experience at university, and a methodical approach that provides good information and quality feedback is part of this. Equally, responses to dialogue should be addressed (Appendix 11, Appendix 12) when discussion at meetings raises significant points.

A degree of uncertainty, however, exists across the sector when attempting to address issues that arise in relation to the students, staff, degree programmes, results and

expectations, opinions and supporting structures, and that uncertainty whilst alluding to a constructionist approach to 'manage' all of these variables, would not succeed without the recognition of their complexity. A university is not a dystopian organisation. It is a learning organisation that cannot be said to be fixed or stable as it in itself is fluid, responsive and reactive, and the people and systems therein are also subjected to influence and changed states in response to diverse needs and wants, and new challenges. Any solutions that are put forward to facilitate the continuation of this and similar learning organisations need to be implemented with a similar mind-set that recognises the complexity of the variables that also become part of the solutions, thus creating more variances on the initial state of being. Tools and techniques such as NLP should be considered carefully as possible mechanisms to enhance teaching approaches and develop some resilience amongst the staff (Craft, 2001) as this brings to the debate the benefits of a healthy mind and the ability to cope with life in general, all of which may improve the educational experience (Carew and Magsamen, 2009).

The findings from both the primary and secondary data have led to the development of a capability model for teaching and learning. The data identified the main areas for consideration across the teaching and learning landscape which broadly comprise meeting the personal needs of the students, their readiness for future employment opportunities, the planning and delivery of an effective constructively re-aligned curriculum, and the student engagement and/or commitment as a lifelong learner. The idea of a capability model that articulates these areas in more detail (Chapter 8) is a way for universities to iterate the desirable competencies and constructs that epitomise effective teaching learning and this can be evidenced from both teaching practice and evidence files or portfolios, and overall this may lead to improved NSS scores (National Student Survey).

The intent of this capability model is to provide support and substance for the implementation of intangibles such as employability skills, into an already demanding curriculum for those students, but taking cognisance of the skill set of the professional staff who are delivering it, and the supporting structures that underpin the organisation (Bates, 2012).

A discussion of the proposed model follows in the next chapter, together with other outputs and deliverables that have emerged from this research that can potentially be applied within teaching and learning.

## 8 Original Contribution to Knowledge: Building a capability model for teaching in higher education

### Introduction

Universities are now faced with an expectation to somehow embed Personal Development Planning (PDP) with an emphasis on employability into the curriculum across the majority of the programmes that are offered to a range of undergraduate students in order to give the students therein a better learning experience and to satisfy the needs of all of the stakeholders. There is no singular interpretation and/or approach to this as the understanding of the topic does not lend itself to one such approach, as it is less understood by many and intangible by nature. Definitive curriculum deliverables do not really exist in relation to this topic, and neither should they, as the measurement of the true success of these concepts is in relation to the outcomes and experiences of the individual students themselves and what they have gained from their university experience on a programme by programme basis. Attributes such as gradueness, employability, self-efficacy, self-awareness, can all be subsumed under the acronym PDP for discussion purposes and as suggested in the literature review its premise can be aligned with Maslow's notion of 'self-actualisation'.

The literature related to employability and PDP extensively discusses what is meant by each term, presents numerous interpretations, models and lists of attributes that need to be addressed if an HE curriculum is meeting the needs of today's graduates. Those lists of attributes have been discussed in previous chapters and are open to scrutiny by professionals both within the sector, and from the wider world – workplace and beyond. One of the difficulties for educators is to embed them into a context specific curriculum and to recognise whether the approach is successful or not. In essence, it is meeting the individual differences of the learners who access the curriculum, the employability agenda, and securing the well-being and even happiness of the student undergoing the experience which encompass the four lenses that are often associated with being a critically reflective teacher – teacher autobiography, student perspective, college perspective and theoretical literature on pedagogy (Brookfield, 1995 in Hutchings and Schulman, 1999). Three specific employability frameworks/models inform the substance of the teaching model being proposed here, but the focus of the research looks at a secure implementation approach within a specific context, but with the realisation that it has some generalizability across other subject areas. The three frameworks are the USEM model (Knight and Yorke, 2004), the CareerEDGE model (Dacre Pool and Sewell, 2007) and SOAR (Kumar, 2007) all of which provide an excellent overview of the characteristics and attributes that are required in order to produce employable graduates and thus lead the development of an appropriately enhanced model for teaching.

The PEDaLL model for teaching and learning has been developed from the empirical body of knowledge relating to teaching and learning, CBT and the subsequent experience of the researcher, from within the context of information systems. It draws

on the general literature around PDP and employability and can be adapted for wider application and use. The influence of CBT within the context of PEDaLL is evident from the teaching and learning approach, learning objects and interventions that would be developed at the implementation stage. This attempts to reinforce the significance of dialogue and relationships within the context of teaching and learning.

The utilisation of IPA as the most appropriate research approach has provided a way that the student voice can be heard clearly as a key component of this investigation. This in itself is an original contribution for the sector to contemplate and acknowledge. The process of IPA in this research has produced six constructivist case studies that are representative of both the students' and the lecturer's voices and opinions.

Subsequent findings from the literature affirm the relevance of a sound body of thinking around educational psychology. This rich knowledge has led to a number of emergent themes, further evidenced through primary data that accentuates the importance of good teaching, the value of effective relationships with university staff and peers, and the significance of the physical structure and infrastructure of a university. In addition, the synthesis of the literature relating to educational psychology, employability, and the essence of being a human being – in this case an Information Systems student in a university – have also contributed to the development of the proposed teaching model PEDaLL that captures those rich student voices that are often not heard and situates them within a secure theoretical framework for use within the sector.

The proposed teaching model attempts to map the characteristics and traits of each model construct and apply a sound basis of educational psychology and pedagogy to arrive at a useful aid for educators in HE, both now and in the future. PEDaLL looks at particular strategies and approaches that are influenced by the CBT empirical evidence in the development of a constructivist approach to curriculum delivery that enhances employability awareness and emotional development. This will acknowledge the concept of social constructionism that the students are responsible for creating their own lives and the subsequent reality for themselves as a direct result of their actions and associations (HECSU and AGCAS, 2013) and the integration of careers services' initiatives into the wider employability agenda (Colley, 2006). In addition, a number of other deliverables arising from the development of this module are presented that seek to inform CPD, HEAR and Employability as an embedded component of the curriculum.

## 8.1 The PEDaLL Model for teaching – a constructivist approach

As previously stated, the models that have informed the development of this new educational approach are the USEM model (Knight and Yorke, 2004) the CareerEDGE model (Dacre Pool and Sewell, 2007) and SOAR (Kumar, 2007). Illustrations are shown below to aid the discussion.

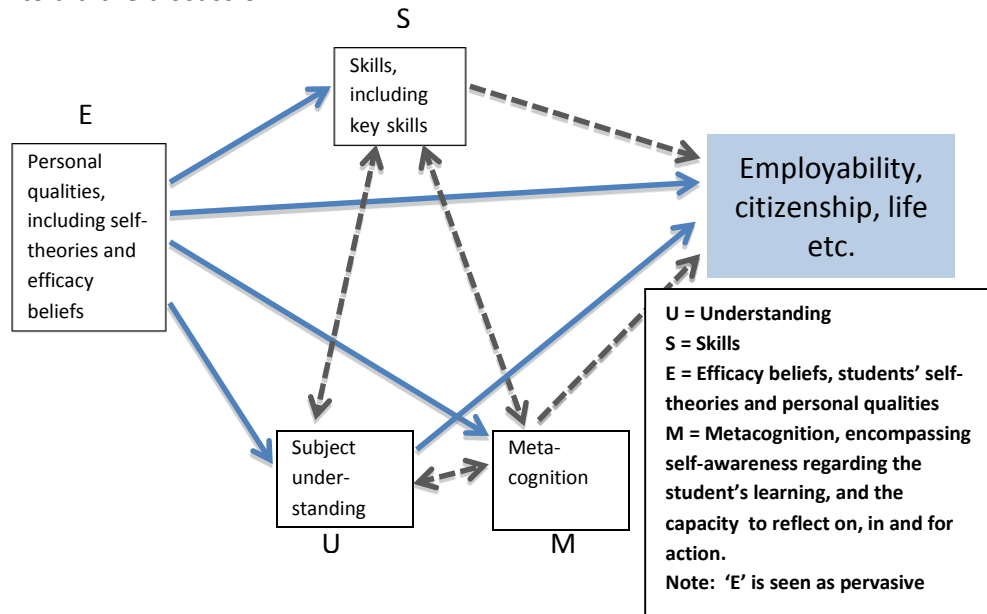


Figure 8.1 The USEM account of employability (Knight and Yorke, 2004)

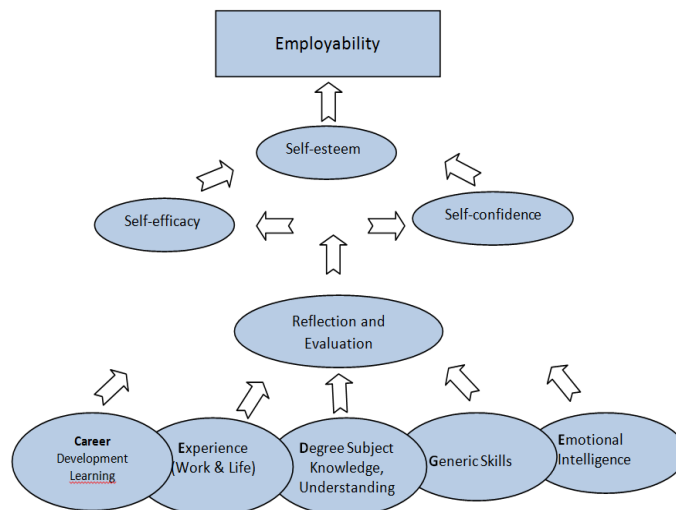


Figure 8.2 The CareerEDGE model (Dacre Pool and Sewell, 2007)



Figure 8.3 The SOAR Model for Success (Kumar, 2007)

The models, in this context, represent a view of employability, and have an element that recognises the degree programme being studied as the present 'opportunity'. The development of the PEDaLL model for teaching in the higher education sector represents Personal, Employability, Development (academic skills and literacy) and Lifelong Learning skills, but unlike the previously discussed models, it attempts to embed employability firmly into a context specific curriculum, led from a pedagogical perspective of an academic with responsibility for the delivery of the curriculum, utilising established educational psychology to identify and fulfil the needs of individual learners, both as students on a degree programme, and in preparation for their career choices after university. This includes the requirement to meet the needs of employers, as well as responding to the diversity of the students. PEDaLL embeds the four themes that were discussed in section 7.2, (summarised in Table 7.1), and are indicated by thought bubbles on Figure 8.4. This model (Figure 8.4) synthesises the findings from the the main areas of literature, specifically educational psychology, CBT and employability, including specifically USEM, CareerEDGE and SOAR (Knight and Yorke, 2004, Dacre Pool and Sewell, 2007, Kumar, 2007).

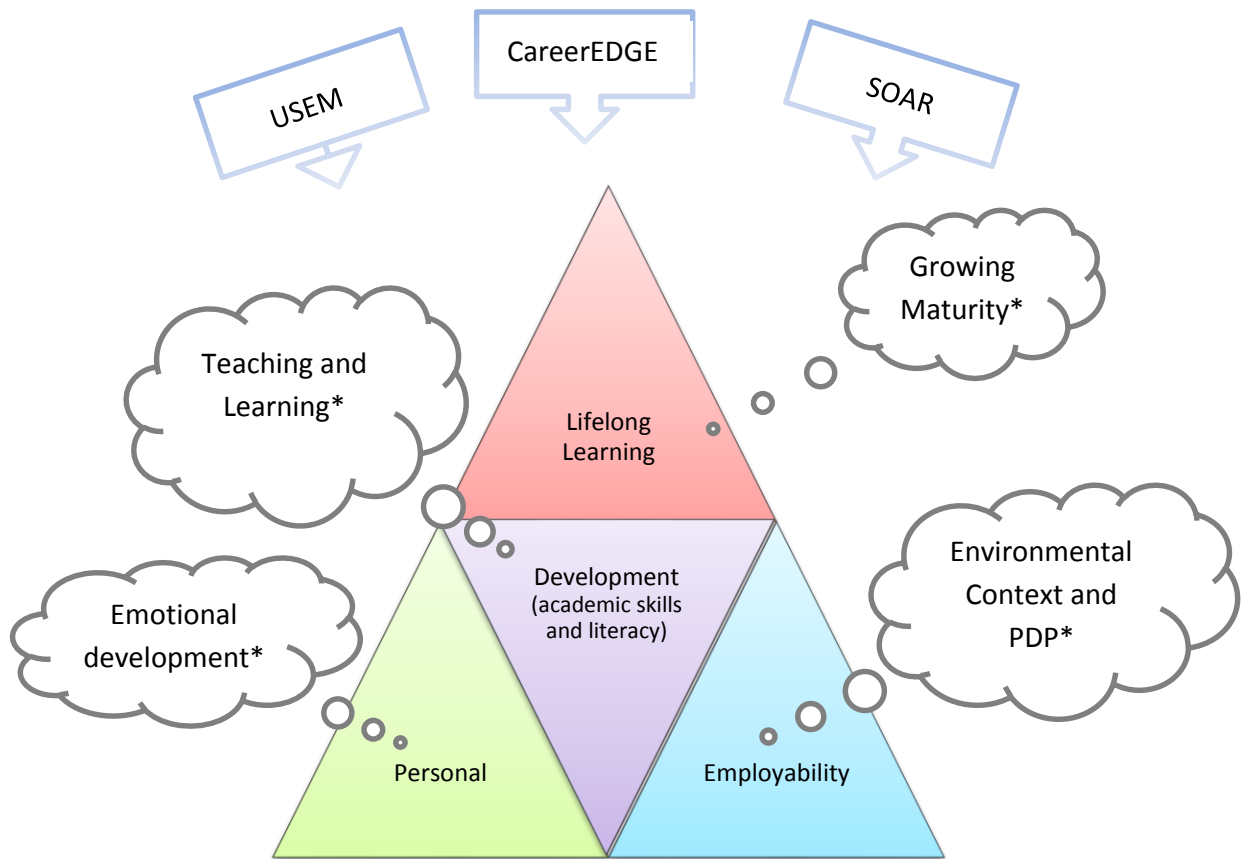


Figure 8.4 The PEDaLL model for teaching in Higher Education

\* Indicates themes that inform the model, taken from Table 7.1

The first stages in the development of the model, shown in Figure 8.4, stem from an analysis of the PDP and employability literature, mapping the common characteristics of each into a linear form from which the model can evolve, firstly through clustering the characteristics under each of the sections of the proposed model to evaluate its constructs. The characteristics that have been identified, also subsume the 39 aspects of employability (Knight and Yorke, 2004) and are illustrated below. Every attempt has been made not to over refine the characteristics for the purposes of this research, but simply to undertake an identification process that will facilitate implementation within a curriculum wherein further clarifications and definitions can be made as part of the teaching and learning activities within the specific context.

Table 8-1 Definitive characteristics within a developed curriculum as a result of clustering and literature mapping.

Model Construct	Literature mapping of characteristics	Definitive characteristics within a developed curriculum
<b>Personal</b>	Awareness of self Strengths and weaknesses Self-confidence Independence Sensitivity Adaptability Emotional Intelligence Ability to work under pressure Ability to use own initiative Desire to learn Engagement Reflection Skills	Awareness of self SWOT Self-confidence Independent learning Engagement Reflection Skills Meeting deadlines Adaptability
<b>Employability</b>	Team working Prioritising Commercial awareness Political sensitivity Problem solving Resolving conflict Decision making Negotiating	Working in teams Time Management Decision Making Problem Solving Resolving conflict Strategic awareness Argument and persuasion Negotiating
<b>Development (academic skills and literacy)</b>	Reading academic literature Academic writing Reflective writing Numeracy skills Critical analysis Synthesising Literature Creativity Oral and verbal skills/abilities Listening Communication Computer Literacy	Reading academic literature Processing academic literature Academic writing Critical thinking Critical analysis Synthesising Literature Creative thinking Presentation skills Communication skills IT skills and competencies Numeracy skills
<b>Lifelong Learning</b>  * Added as a result of peer feedback at the CRA 14 <sup>th</sup> Residential conference, November 2014	Self-management Ability to work cross-culturally Ethical sensitivity Goal setting Application of subject understanding Acting morally Coping with complexity	Research skills Management of self Goal setting and planning Ethics awareness Coping with complexity Application of subject understanding Resilience* Mindfulness*

Following on from this clustering, a further analysis looks at curriculum opportunities that invite the incorporation of those clusters. This incorporation must be seamless and should not feel contrived in any way so as not to discredit the validity of the model.



Then the selection and development of appropriate teaching objects, based on sound pedagogical practices, together with the suitability of the teaching approach, the teaching style and the learning environment ensure that the maximum benefits can be achieved from the experience. The development of the teaching objects will illustrate how PDP can utilise CBT techniques that can be successfully incorporated in a way that is fluid and yet invisible to the learner, yet explicit to the educator who has the ability to secure a good relationship with the student group. Students should subsequently be able to determine their own learning needs, reflect, and directly apply their learning to their own phenomenology. (AGCAS, 2013) eg Student Appraisal task as part of PDP.

The next essential element is about evaluating the success of the intervention through reflection and feedback. This not only recognises that the students have engaged and potentially been involved in the learning experiences, but it also illustrates those students who perhaps have not engaged at all, and have identified themselves as being 'disengaged' for whatever reason. This type of feedback is expected and should not be received by the teacher as negative, but as a signpost that more development type interventions are needed for those individuals.

The final consideration in this model is the feed-forward mechanism to inform the enrichment of both the curriculum and the transition on the part of the student from an undergraduate degree programme to their next step as lifelong learners (Broadfoot, 1998).

**Table 8-2 PEDaLL - A tabulation of the constructs**

Model Construct	Construct Elements	Curriculum Perspectives
<b>Personal</b>	P1 Assess the needs of the learner P2 Establish the learning environment P3 Setting personal goals and required learning outcomes	Orienting the Learners The Learning Environment The role of the Educator Constructing the Curriculum
<b>Employability</b>	E1 Identifying employability opportunities within a connected curriculum. E2 Developing learning objects to foster employability.	Mapping employability within a prescribed curriculum. Developing learning objects.
<b>Development</b>	D1 Planning steps for success D2 Assessment D3 Monitoring and evaluation D4 Realigning goals	Progressive learning and development Assessment for learning and development Taxonomies for development Links to new learning opportunities
<b>Lifelong Learning</b>	LL1 Relationships that facilitate behavioural changes, both explicitly and implicitly LL2 Working together LL3 Realising student potential and determining future aspirations	The importance of dialogue and engagement Managing relationships The autonomous learner

## **Personal**

### **P1 Assess the needs of the learner -**

#### Orienting the Learners

When working with any group of students, the first and perhaps most important stage is recognising their learning needs in relation to their studies. This is essential to establish the most effective ways of communicating with the students from that point onwards and steering their pathway towards success. Some early activities could include either 'ice-breaker' sessions to put the students at ease whilst at the same time presenting an opportunity to find out a little bit more about them. Also, diagnostic activities are useful in these early stages to assess their entry level in relation to the subject being studied. Thereafter the learning material can be suitably shaped to suit the learners, and the tutor is sufficiently aware of potential individual differences within the group. Thus this approach is largely a social constructionist one, but moving towards constructivist ideas in relation to the individual student.

### **P2 Establish the learning environment**

#### The Learning Environment

It is important to recognise the importance of the learning environment in relation to the learners therein. Students entering a university have a number of expectations about the experience that they are going to be having. They expect to be in a suitable environment for learning which will include basic physiological needs in relation to heating, lighting, comfort, etc., but also with a baseline expectation of appropriate equipment that suits the nature of the learning material being presented. Experiencing any difficulties with technology (includes eLearning, blended learning, etc) (Gomez, 2004) that interrupt the flow of the learning can be counter-productive for students, causing a number of negative feelings of disappointment at not receiving the experience that they thought they should have had. Whilst the reality of these provisions is often under the control of the institution, it is incumbent upon the tutor to manage these expectations in as positive a way as possible so as not to diminish the learning experience for their students.

### **P3 Setting personal goals and required learning outcomes**

#### The role of the Educator

Part of having a role as an educator is the expectation in planning a subsequent curriculum delivery that would realise the desired learning outcomes. The contemplation of the wording of learning outcomes can often be subject to different interpretations, but in relation to PEDaLL, it is important to have a

degree of control in the overall management of the learning experience and the realisation of desirable learning outcomes. Students entering a learning experience expect the 'educator' to have planned that experience in such a way that there is clear evidence of management and control of the activities that will be taking place. The timings for the session should be realistic and they should work, and the learning outcomes should be achievable. The subsequent planned activities should be suitable for the prescribed aims and objectives and should be within the reach of the students.

### Constructing the Curriculum

The curriculum itself should be suitably broken down into learning components, ideally with some links and connectivity in order to make the learning experiences meaningful. A robust analysis of the curriculum should be undertaken in order to identify all of the learning objects, and then a scheme of work should be prepared that shows all of the particular components of the curriculum and related learning objects in an organised, planned schedule that fits within the framework of the teaching calendar and that will cover all aspects related to the learning outcomes and subsequent assessment expectations. From the analysis presented through the Scheme of Work, actual lesson plans with defining aims and objectives should be determined in order to manage the learning experience. If the students experience doubt as to the integrity of the managed learning experience, there is a risk that this will have a detrimental effect on their ability to respond appropriately to the subsequent sessions.

**Key attributes:** Awareness of self, SWOT, Self-confidence, Independent learning, Engagement, Reflection Skills, Meeting deadlines, Adaptability

### **Employability**

E1 Identifying employability opportunities within a connected curriculum.

#### Mapping employability within a prescribed curriculum

As the employability agenda is something that all universities are looking at, attempting to embed the characteristics and attributes that relate to employability into any curriculum is not always an easy contemplation. Whilst from one dimension the elements and attributes should be embedded as part of the curriculum in an implicit way, there is also a belief suggesting that students should have an acute awareness of what employability is, how it relates to them, and how they can use the body of knowledge in relation to their own career expectations and thus become strategic in their approach to securing employment.

## E2 Developing learning objects to foster employability.

### Developing learning objects

The importance of the learning objects is a key component of securing success with this approach. There are a number of key attributes suggested in this instance of curriculum analysis that need to be embedded within the learning objects in a way that facilitates knowledge awareness, but also that have an inward looking focus into the individual students themselves. From these experiences, students will be able to assess their own level of skills and competencies in relation to those attributes, but to also have sufficient subject knowledge of their chosen degree programme.

**Key attributes:** Working in teams, Time Management, Decision Making, Problem Solving, Resolving conflict, Strategic awareness, Argument and persuasion, Negotiating

### **Development (academic skills and literacy)**

#### D1 Planning steps for success

##### Progressive learning and development

Every curriculum planner should have an awareness of how to break down a given subject area into manageable components. Established educational pedagogy identifies a number of stages –

- curriculum analysis,
- development of a scheme of work (overarching aims and objectives in relation to the programme)
- individual lesson plans (specific aims and objectives relating to each lesson).

This approach has a number of benefits for all parties involved in the learning process. In the first instance it secures the knowledge of the tutor in relation to analysing a curriculum and developing a scheme of work. From this the tutor can then produce lesson plans, with stated aims and objectives, which can be communicated to the individual students as they experience each lesson/session. This type of management approach enables the learners to understand what is expected of them from being a part of the session, and to be able to recognise their own degree of success within that particular session as they can measure this against the given aims and objectives.

## D2 Assessment

### Assessment for learning and development

The accumulation of knowledge and skills across most degree programmes is largely tested through assessment tasks that measure the performance of students in achieving the learning outcomes relating to their module. If this measure of success is quantified through one or two assignments, there could be a number of shortcomings that expose weaknesses on the part of both the module and the student performance. Therefore an approach that successfully integrates all of the previous learning into the composition of the assessment vehicle is one which is more loyal to the module aims and objectives. Undertaking all of the related learning activities that are progressing towards the assessment opportunity is preferable to producing an assessment assignment that a student could undertake without having attended or participated in any of the previous sessions.

## D3 Monitoring and evaluation

### Taxonomies for development

Students need to know all of the rules that they are monitored by within a study module. If developed taxonomies exist that comment on their level of competency in relation to each element, they can easily identify their own weaknesses. The wording of the various taxonomy statements needs to give careful feedback to students as to their progress, whilst attempting to identify weaker areas and improvement strategies.

## D4 Realigning goals

### Links to new learning opportunities

Developing any curriculum implementation needs to foster links between the learning opportunities in order to give greater insight into the subjects being studied. Students can then utilise their abilities to build mental models and bridges between the topics to facilitate greater understanding the concepts and related learning material.

**Key attributes:** Reading academic literature, processing academic literature, Academic writing, Critical thinking, Critical analysis, Synthesising Literature, Creative thinking, Presentation skills, Communication skills, IT skills and competencies, Numeracy skills

## **Lifelong Learning**

### **LL1 Relationships that facilitate behavioural changes, both explicitly and implicitly**

#### The importance of dialogue and engagement

The ability to communicate effectively with learners is an important one. Students should experience dialogue that is clear and articulate, logically structured, and that recognises the way that students receive what is being said to them. If there are instances where the students' expressions and body language indicate some level of confusion, then other dialogue needs to be utilised to give more clarity. The ultimate goal of any learning opportunity is that the experience is a successful one, and one in which the students actually learn something. This ideal should never go out of view, and if any sessions are not successful, alternative and more effective ways of communicating should be utilised. The importance of the dialogue will continually encourage and motivate the students to engage and self-develop, and lead them towards greater rewards from their experience.

### **LL2 Working together**

#### Managing relationships

There should be a desire on the part of the educator to have a relationship with students that benefits both parties. The tutor should be able to impart their subject knowledge to learners within a safe and secure framework that exists as part of a healthy relationship between them. There should be very little room for preferences between the two parties, and at all times professionalism should prevail. Establishing boundaries can become an issue, but within a complex educational framework that subsumes the concepts of PEDaLL, the notion of a healthy relationship should encourage and facilitate dialogue, whilst at the same time building autonomy on the part of the student.

### **LL3 Realising student potential and determining future aspirations**

#### The autonomous learner

The concept of the autonomous learner is one who can successfully work towards the achievement of his/her own learning expectations. The more that students become self-sufficient in relation to their own learning, and able to achieve their full potential within their chosen learning experience, then the more autonomous a learner they will be. Being able to identify what needs to be done as part of any learning experience is a great achievement, and the higher up the chosen education pathway then the more those independent skills are needed in order to succeed. Encouraging students to become autonomous is part of working with them in higher education.

**Key attributes:** Research skills, Management of self, Goal setting and planning, Ethics awareness, Coping with complexity, Application of subject understanding.

The construct elements of PEDaLL suggest a model for teaching in higher education that is social constructivist by nature, meeting the needs of the individual students, but planning the learning and teaching experience around a developed curriculum that fosters employability skills and lifelong learning. It seeks to provide a robust grounding of knowledge relating to the subject being studied, utilises eLearning and enhanced technology (Gonzalez, 2010) whilst inwardly looking at the individuals who can become more self-aware and autonomous learners. The aspects of the model that emphasise the role of the educator, not just for planning, developing and delivering the curriculum, also emphasise the importance of dialogue and communication. The inclusion of CBT techniques (Gerber and Solari, 2005) as part of this delivery process is in itself an empowering and explicit approach that seeks not just to develop the knowledge and skills of the individual, but also to develop the personal skills and attributes of the individual in relation to the world around them, striving to recognise the importance of having a 'positive attitude'. (CBI, 2007) Thus as the model becomes more exposed, the need for recognising the inclusion of some of these techniques is essential if it is to be regarded as a successful approach.

The final developed representation of PEDaLL is shown below (Figure 8.5), populated with the defined constructs.

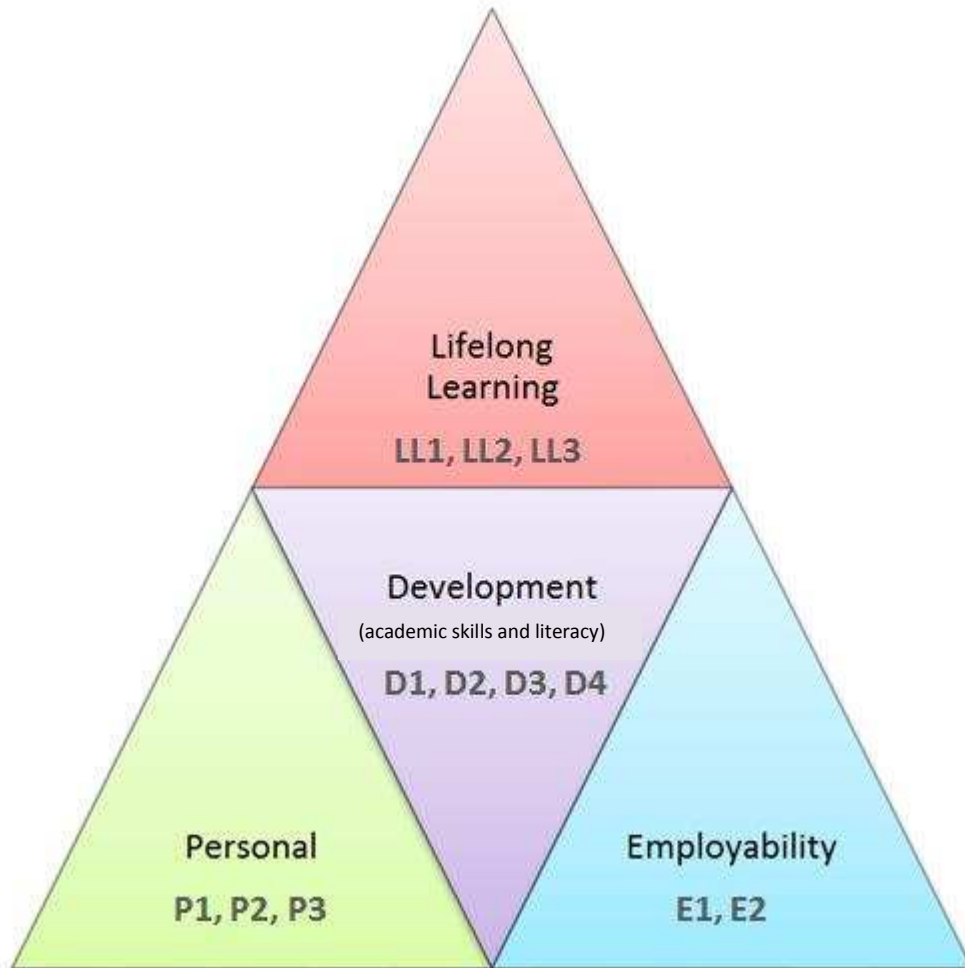


Figure 8.5 The PEDaLL Model for Teaching in Higher Education (Adamson, 2014)



## 8.2 The 'interventions' – Level 4, Level 5 and Level 6

The implementation of PEDaLL has been trialled as a chosen teaching model for an undergraduate degree programme, across a group of students from levels 4 to 6. The definitive characteristics (Table 8.1) that have emerged as part of the description of the model constructs form part of the teaching delivery, and are implicit within the teaching 'interventions' presently being used successfully by experienced lecturers but some of the interventions seek to make this tacit process an explicit one which has the potential to engage the students in taking up ownership of their own PDP and/or employability. (Knight and Yorke, 2003, Pegg et al 2012) Three examples from this teaching approach are offered below and offer insight across a number of perspectives that seek to validate the successful implementation of PEDaLL and its conceptual constructs. Those perspectives are as follows:

- to illustrate the identification and mapping of these characteristics as perceived within an example from the teaching materials.
- to iterate the desirable teaching attributes of an HE Lecturer
- and to acknowledge and seek to manage the individual differences across the student body pertaining to their university experience.

*Perspective 1: To illustrate the identification and mapping of the definitive characteristics (highlighted below) from PEDaLL to the teaching materials*

### **Level 4 task – Portfolio Self-Assessment Task (Appendix 1)**

This module is assessed by a portfolio that has a number of interjection points throughout the year where student work is checked and monitored by an academic. This task occurs at the beginning of semester 2 when students have experienced a full semester of teaching, have had to submit some work for assessment, and have had to get used to the way a university functions and the subsequent impact that this has on their own lives.

The aim of the session is to reflect back upon semester 1 and to look how they have progressed, and to articulate any problems that they may have encountered.

The learning objectives of this intervention are:

To engage in **reflective dialogue** facilitated through illustrations that are to be annotated.

To produce an **action plan** documenting their findings, that is to be uploaded into PebblePad portfolio.

To **read and understand** key articles in relation to this area.

#### Brief outline of Level 4 task

The student is presented with two diagrams – a representation of Maslow’s triangle, and ‘the stress bucket’. The student is asked to talk with a colleague for approximately 20 minutes, utilising the dialogue prompts to steer the activity and then to subsequently annotate the two diagrams with their analysis of themselves. After this period of time has lapsed, the student is then encouraged to fill out the Action Plan which is inwardly looking at their strengths and weaknesses to date, their own self-assessment of their work efforts and engagement to date, and their utilisation of people and resources so far.

#### **Level 5 task – ‘The 30 second CV’ (Appendix 1)**

This is a two part task that can either be done in ‘pairs’ or in a seminar room that facilitates a relaxed circular seating arrangement, but this would be largely dependent upon the group size in relation to the time that was available.

The students are timed for 30 seconds to give a representation of themselves to enlighten the audience about their employability skills and attributes. The students have to talk for the full 30 seconds and should hopefully reveal things about themselves that articulate well reasons as to why they are an ideal candidate for a job in this fictitious role-play exercise.

The aim of this shared experience is to foster an understanding of how to articulate an individualised employability skill set to an unfamiliar audience within a given time frame so as to identify and recognise employer needs whilst displaying a positive attitude at all times.

The learning objectives of this task are:

- to enable students to recognise the importance of being able to present themselves in different situations, drawing upon their **personal skills and attributes** as a result of **confident analysis of their lives** to date, and a heightened degree of **self-awareness**.
- To undertake a process of **self-analysis** in order to give a **verbal presentation** to an unknown audience within a specific period of **time** and to **receive feedback** from the passive participant/s.
- To identify and prioritise through **cognitive situational mapping** the desirable skills and attributes pertinent to the given scenario.

The links between the level 5 task and PEDaLL are explicit through E1 and E2, but not wholly exclusive from any of the other components that are implied throughout.

**E1 Identifying employability opportunities within a connected curriculum.** The level 5 task uses employability specific words such as CV, and presenting and selling yourself

via a presentation in order to give students the opportunity to try out this activity in a safe environment, whilst attempting to create the feelings of a future real life scenario.

**E2 Developing learning objects to foster employability.** The intent of the level 5 task is very specific in itself to show students different ways to articulate their skills to their audience, and to learn from each other different examples that are more or sometimes less effective than their own attempts.

#### Brief outline of level 5 task

The students each present individually for 30 seconds and then receive feedback from their audience. They would have already prepared a written CV and are encouraged to articulate the key details about themselves in order to receive some feedback about the process and what was said. They should be reliant on dialogue from within the PDP and employability literature that they have experienced, and are expected to iterate their own analysis of themselves within a pressurised time period. The opportunity to receive feedback from the audience would usually include comments about the dialogue, body language, mannerisms, and displayed behaviours that are usually communicated back in a 'critically friendly' way.

The second part of the task gives a specific skill set that the students should seek to rate themselves on, and then annotate their ratings with evidence and examples from their CVs. Whilst this inevitably exposes weaknesses and omissions, it does assist with future efforts for focusing and targeting themselves in given situations. The discussion of this task with a peer friend enables comparison, reassurance, and confidence building through strategic focus and intent.

#### Perspective 2: To iterate the desirable teaching attributes of an HE Lecturer

Managing tasks such as these can prove to be quite daunting as their nature is very personal to the individual student. In the first instance, the lecturer is attempting to facilitate dialogue between students who may or may not know each other. PEDaLL suggests a number of key pre-requisites that should be in place for tasks such as this to be successful.

**D1 Planning steps for success** – The lecturer should be well prepared in relation to the distribution of the task, and explaining the requirements to the students. Their previous expectations when doing similar activities (profiling, learning styles, CVs etc) should facilitate their acceptance of this type of seminar session, and should be evident from the teaching and learning schedules (See Table 8.5)

**D2 Assessment (for learning and development)** - assessment opportunities have already been provided, and their ability to equate their personal efforts with their

perceived rewards is useful to attune them to the complexities of university procedures and marking criteria. (eg taxonomies, assignments etc)

**LL1 Relationships that facilitate behavioural changes, both explicitly and implicitly** – establishing a good relationship with the students is essential to ensure that the students are comfortable and at ease with what they are being asked to do. Having good dialogue with the students is necessary, as well as being able to lead the group into the task, whilst at the same time monitoring their reactions to it and interactions with it. Should there be a need for the lecturer to intervene, it should not be missed, as sometimes it might be necessary to redirect and refocus the activity.

*Perspective 3: To acknowledge and seek to manage the individual differences across the student body pertaining to their university experience*

Participant observations and feedback over time suggest that whilst some students find these activities to be a useful 'prompt' for redirecting their focus, other students are less willing to take part in it in an honest way. Some students simply fill in the required 'blanks' in a mechanistic way, just to get the tasks over and done with, and see the dialogue as an opportunity to talk about things other than the task itself. Other students use the opportunity to look closely at themselves, evaluate their own performance and that of their peers, and decide to make some changes.

**Key evaluation point - Cautionary:** From a holistic perspective, whichever behaviour the student exhibits is relevant to their own life experience so far, and a little rejection to a task has a significance to the lecturer for not only displaying the reactions to the planned activities, but also draws attention to meeting the needs of the students in other ways, or even let them find their own way eventually. It would thus be desirable on the part of the lecturer to embrace the outcomes from both this first year task and the second year task, whatever they may be.

**Level 6 Task** – Undergraduate Project (Appendix 1)

The narrative around the Level 6 intervention focuses on the relationship between the student and their Project Supervisor, but subsumes the three perspectives that were discussed in relation to the Levels 4 and 5 tasks. The subsequent analysis of the intervention is based on the longitudinal immersion of the IPA researcher in this real life context, with overall responsibility for Undergraduate Projects and supervisors.

The three perspectives:

- to illustrate the identification and mapping of these characteristics as perceived within an example from the teaching materials.
- to iterate the desirable teaching attributes of an HE Lecturer
- and to acknowledge and seek to manage the individual differences across the student body pertaining to their university experience.

## Brief Overview of Level 6 Undergraduate Project

The Undergraduate Project in Business Information Systems is designed to provide an opportunity for the expression of individual energy and ability in completing a significant piece of work related to the aims and objectives of your chosen area of study. There is a pre-requisite taught Research Methods module prior to this undertaking, but the overall experience is that of an individual student working on a 'one-to-one' basis with a supervisor who is generally a person known to them as a lecturer from their degree programme.

There is a specific time frame attached to this project and the students must adhere to the submission requirements including the target length of 10,000 words, all of which are well documented within the project guide that is given to each student.

The responsibility for meeting with the supervisor is up to the student, and there is a specific time period allocated for this research. When meeting with supervisors, the dialogue should negotiate targets and milestones for the completion of this task and the implementation and execution of all composite activities therein.

### Level 6 task and PEDaLL – a discussion

In order to complete this task, students need to recognise almost all of the definitive characteristics illustrated by PEDaLL (Table 8.3) and demonstrate them in this one piece of work, but some of them pose a number of unexpected problems when attempting to reach that point of self actualisation through the research project. Towards the end of the discussion, the PEDaLL constructs relating to Lifelong Learning are assigned to the dialogue to illustrate their accomplishment as a result of this intervention, were it to be a success.

Table 8-3 'PEDaLL definitive characteristics'

Awareness of self, SWOT, Self-confidence, Independent learning, Engagement, Reflection Skills, Meeting deadlines, Adaptability, Working in teams, Time Management, Decision Making, Problem Solving, Resolving conflict, Strategic awareness, Argument and persuasion, Negotiating, Reading academic literature, Processing academic literature, Academic writing, Critical thinking, Critical analysis, Synthesising Literature, Creative thinking, Presentation skills, Communication skills, IT skills and competencies, Numeracy skills, Research skills, Management of self, Goal setting and planning, Ethics awareness, Coping with complexity, Application of subject understanding, Resilience, Mindfulness
--

It would generally be expected that students up to this point had experienced some success in engaging with their modules, the related content, and the teaching and learning opportunities thus far, and thus be comfortable with these characteristics, but inevitably the individuality of each student brings with it a number of different approaches and different experiences.

Anecdotal evidence from the student body and well debated in the literature (Biggs and Tang, 2011) suggests that there are two types of students who experience higher education in very different ways – Robert and Susan.

Susan has embraced all of the PEDaLL characteristics and is very focused on the task in hand, always meets deadlines, achieves milestones and successfully submits a research project to a very high standard. A supervisor working with Susan would inevitably find the experience to be rewarding and reassuring that the system within higher education was working well to the greater good of all parties concerned.

And then there is the rest of the student body – the Roberts - particularly from a post '92 university (Polytechnic College prior to being recognised as a university) who are still unsure about what they know, believe, think and can do. They experience a number of different emotions and subsequently exhibit variable behaviours when compared to Susan. They do not always engage with the process in a positive way, they do not make regular appointments, fail to meet deadlines, fail to deliver milestones, can sometimes be ill or distracted, never provide reliable drafts for discussion and feedback, turn up late, forget logbooks, pens, paper, and still do not know how to do Harvard referencing, and potentially never wish to know. They display doubt and uncertainty that sometimes exhibits itself as frustration and anger with the process, the lecturers and their supervisors. They always have a reason or excuse for their shortcomings, and expect the supervisor to be able to resolve all of their issues, including sometimes unburdening personal problems, illnesses, bereavements, disagreements and disputes as part of this mitigating dialogue.

Supervisors assigned to 'Roberts' do not always experience a rewarding relationship. They are expected to be patient, accommodating, motivating, reassuring, friendly, available, accessible, and so on. They should advise, counsel, guide, steer, direct, push, etc, their student towards that submission deadline, constantly regrouping along the way, depending upon the work that has been done at various intersection points by their student. Universities do not intentionally want to provide therapeutic and almost parent-like support, but with increased student numbers across a much wider and diverse group of entrants, there is an inevitability that the expectations from a university experience will have changed from what they once were (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2009), thus the influences from CBT can become a necessary skillset for a tutor. Increasingly add to this the employability and PDP agenda, and the deliverables are totally different and require staff and students who have greater self-awareness and analysis of need to cope with Roberts and Susans who now come to university.

Whilst this discussion has been generalised, the realisation of these different types of student are well documented but the re-positioning of the lecturer role is less flexible. A typical job description for a Lecturer/Senior Lecturer (Appendix 2) looks for an essential skill in the post holder as being judged to be able to supervise project students. This pre-requisite does not discuss the variations between the Robert and

Susan types discussed earlier, but puts the concept of a student into a largely constructionist view of Susan as being representative of a typical student. Subsequently, the demands that lecturers are sometimes faced with situate them in areas of uncertainty, particularly for those staff from different cultural backgrounds and who have little teaching experience of the individual differences that comprise a typical seminar/lecture or workshop group of 25 students. In order to alleviate some of these uncertainties, models such as PEDaLL, that have been designed around a rich background of literature relating to CBT and Educational Psychology, can become a useful tool.

Inevitably there are problems throughout that come from both students and supervisors, but despite the complexities that this level 6 task brings, there is almost always success for both parties, in relation to the undergraduate research project, despite the way in which it has been achieved (LL1, LL2).

Upon realising this success, students are usually empowered by their own achievements, (LL3) resilience, and sometimes at a stage of recognising their own abilities to get that much sought after 2:1 degree. They are not always mindful of the process that they have gone through to get there, but later reflections could result in greater awareness of themselves.

Table 8-4 Schematic showing the mapping of the interventions in relation (part) to PEDaLL

<b>Level 4 – IS0472</b>	<b>Level 5 – IS0523</b>	<b>Level 6 – IS0608</b>
<p><b>Portfolio Self-Assessment</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>Awareness of self (P) SWOT (P) Engagement (P) Reflection Skills (P)</p>	<p><b>30 second CV</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>Self-confidence (P) Time Management (E) Decision Making (E) Problem Solving (E) Argument and persuasion (E) Negotiating (E) Reflection Skills (P)</p>	<p><b>Research Project</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>Synthesising Literature (D) Critical Analysis (D) Research Skills (LL) Management of self (LL) Goal setting and planning (LL) Ethics awareness (LL) Application of subject understanding (LL)</p>
<b>Illustrative examples of PEDaLL Teaching and Learning Skills (part)</b>	<b>Illustrative examples of PEDaLL Teaching and Learning Skills (part)</b>	<b>Illustrative examples of PEDaLL Teaching and Learning Skills (part)</b>
<p>D1 Planning steps for success D2 Assessment (for learning and development) LL1 Relationships that facilitate behavioural changes, both explicitly and implicitly</p>	<p>E1 Identifying employability opportunities within a connected curriculum. E2 Developing learning objects to foster employability.</p>	<p>LL3 Realising student potential and determining future aspirations</p>
<b>Anticipated student individual differences</b>	<b>Anticipated student individual differences</b>	<b>Anticipated student individual differences</b>
<p>The interpretation of the data indicates that differences across the student body in this study range from doubt and non-engagement through to committed life-long learners. This occurs at all levels, at any (and many times) and can be attributed to the student’s lives and not their university experience.</p>		



### 8.3 PEDaLL and Continuing Professional Development

Another contribution arising from PEDaLL in relation to existing staff is a suggested CPD competency framework, Table 8.5 relating to staff for their overall improvement and enhancement of the existing provision, and expected deliverables. The suggested framework is built around the Seven Principles of Good Practice (Chickering and Gamson, 1987) and is in response to the HEA research (Gibbs, 2010, 2012) looking at what constitutes quality in undergraduate education, but also recognises the UKPSF. This documentation has been analysed as part of the literature review, and the findings are generalised and iterated as part of this framework, utilising an interpretation of those seven principles, previously mentioned. An inclusion of some strategic intentions from anonymised sample corporate strategy documentation (Appendix 3) has been interspersed to make a bold interpretation in relation to implementation constructs and measurement indicators. The highlighted statements are taken from the strategy intentions, and whilst the measurement indicators for success will largely be informed from NSS scores in a wider context, in this instance, the indicators have been largely developed from the research.

#### An implementation framework for CPD

Table 8-5 Principle One

Principle One	PEDaLL Construct	Institutional Response	Measurement Indicator/s
Student Faculty Contact  <b>Strategic Outcome</b> <i>“Strengthen operational efficiency and effectiveness and foster a culture of continuous improvement.”</i>  <b>Business Outcome</b> <i>“Deliver improved student centric systems and standards of customer service.”</i>	The first principle is an institutional response, acknowledging the pre-existing infrastructure.  It is believed that PEDaLL could not extrinsically influence this principle, <i>but</i> it would be affected by the institutional response.	Student support provision as a point of contact.  Identification of the processes*  Identification of the technology and business*  Up to date enrolment information*	Professional, self-motivated, customer focused people and teams.  Standardise and automate administrative processes  An integrated, seamless, technology enabled and effective business  Timely information in relation to the degree programme being studied from efficient operating systems.

Illustrative sample, relating to the area of study that has been discussed within the context of this research only. There would be inevitable differences from another context.

**Identification of the administrative processes:** Enrolment, retention, attendance, results, submission of assignments, queries, personal support

**Identification of the IT infrastructure (across the business):** Dynamic VLE, Gradebook, Portfolio tool, business technologies, and robust hardware and software, university web site

**Availability of enrolment information:** Module descriptors, reading lists, course booklets

Table 8-6 Principle Two

Principle Two	PEDaLL Construct	Institutional Response	Measurement Indicator/s
Cooperation among Students  <u><b>Strategic Outcome</b></u> <i>“Maximise student and stakeholder satisfaction.”</i>	P1 Assess the needs of the learner  P2 Establish the learning environment  P3 Setting personal goals and required learning outcomes	Dynamic VLE  Peer support system  Personal Tutor  Attendance monitoring  Timetabling system  Portfolio system	Fosters some collaborative tasks that require group working.  Activities that encourage students to get to know one another.  Monitoring of student progress and class relations, with staged interventions if and when required.  Teaching qualifications and desirable competencies of the teaching team  HEA membership and supported portfolio of evidence – UKPSF Aim 4*

\* Portfolio of evidence to support HEA membership application as part of the internal process.

In-house provision for delivery of teacher training activities relating to PEDaLL (P1, P2 and P3) to identify the desirable competencies- Appendix 16 - (MacLean and Scott, 2007, 2011). Creation of a CPD portfolio of evidence for assessment, comprising observations and examples of good practice (Biggs, 1997), and acknowledgement of appropriate learning styles for the student group (Johnson and McClure, 2004, Litzinger, Lee, Wise and Felder, 2007) taking cognisance of best practice and guidelines for good assessment (Appendix 15).

Table 8-7 Principle Three

Principle Three	PEDaLL Construct	Institutional Response	Measurement Indicator/s
Encourages Active Learning  <u><b>Business Outcome</b></u> <i>“Ensure all teaching is research informed.”</i>	D1 Planning steps for success	Dynamic VLE  Portfolio System	Use of Blackboard as a signpost for the different learning activities.  Clear, well-articulated tasks, across a range of learning styles, each with a defined purpose and rationale.  HEA membership and supported portfolio of evidence – UKPSF Aim 2*

\* Portfolio of evidence to support HEA membership application as part of the internal process.

In-house provision for delivery of teacher training activities relating to PEDaLL (D1). Development of guidance material that demonstrates a clear structure and clarity of the role requirements (Culley and Teten, 2008). Creation of portfolio of evidence, comprising observations and examples of good practice.

Table 8-8 Principle Four

Principle Four	PEDaLL Construct	Institutional Response	Measurement Indicator/s
<p>Gives Prompt Feedback</p> <p><b><u>Business Outcome</u></b>  <i>“Ensure all teaching is research informed.”</i></p>	D2 Assessment	<p>Dynamic VLE</p> <p>Provision of Gradebook</p> <p>Portfolio System</p> <p>Robust system of Admin Support for staff and students</p>	<p>Use of Gradebook for assignment setting, online marking and provision of feedback.</p> <p>Built-in time allocation for marking and the provision of feedback.</p> <p>Teaching team to identify level and type of feedback required as part of the degree programme being studied.</p> <p>Teaching qualifications of the teaching team.</p> <p>HEA membership and supported portfolio of evidence – UKPSF Aim 4*</p>

\* Portfolio of evidence to support HEA membership application as part of the internal process.

In-house provision for delivery of teacher training activities relating to PEDaLL (D2).  
 Creation of portfolio of evidence, comprising observations and examples of good practice.

Table 8-9 Principle Five

Principle Five	PEDaLL Construct	Institutional Response	Measurement Indicator/s
<p>Emphasises Time on Task</p> <p><b><u>Business Outcome</u></b>  <i>“Deliver high quality employment and enterprise support for students and graduates”</i></p>	<p>E1 Identifying employability opportunities within a connected curriculum.</p> <p>E2 Developing learning objects to foster employability.</p>	<p>Dynamic VLE</p> <p>Reading Lists</p> <p>Portfolio System</p>	<p>Evidence of curriculum planning from current documentation – up to date module descriptor, current reading lists, teaching scheme of work, individual lesson plans.</p> <p>Explicit integration of employability concepts as part of the delivery of the learning experience.</p> <p>Teaching qualifications of the teaching team.</p> <p>HEA membership and supported portfolio of evidence – UKPSF Aim 1*</p>

\* Portfolio of evidence to support HEA membership application as part of the internal process.

In-house provision for delivery of teacher training activities relating to PEDaLL (E1, E2 and E3). Creation of portfolio of evidence, comprising observations and examples of good practice.

Table 8-10 Principle Six

Principle Six	PEDaLL Construct	Institutional Response	Measurement Indicator/s
<p>Communicates High Expectations</p> <p><b><u>Strategic Outcome</u></b>  <i>“Grow high quality research and use it to drive excellence in all of the University’s activities.”</i></p>	<p>D3 Monitoring and evaluation</p> <p>D4 Realigning goals</p>	<p>Dynamic VLE</p> <p>Portfolio System</p>	<p>Defined aims and objectives for the learning experience.</p> <p>Evidence of achieving those aims and objectives</p> <p><b>Research is embedded in teaching and knowledge transfer to drive academic excellence.</b></p> <p>Teaching qualifications of the teaching team.</p> <p>HEA membership and supported portfolio of evidence – UKPSF Aim 3*</p>

\* Portfolio of evidence to support HEA membership application as part of the internal process.

In-house provision for delivery of teacher training activities relating to PEDaLL (D3 and D4). Creation of portfolio of evidence, comprising observations and examples of good practice.

Table 8-11 Principle Seven

Principle Seven	PEDaLL Construct	Institutional Response	Measurement Indicator/s
<p>Respects Diverse Talents and Ways of Learning</p> <p><b>Business Outcome</b>  <i>“Strengthen culture of improvement, development, performance, coaching and leadership.”</i></p>	<p>LL1 Relationships that facilitate behaviour changes, both explicitly and implicitly.</p> <p>LL2 Working together</p> <p>LL3 Realising student potential and determining future aspirations</p>	<p>Dynamic VLE</p> <p>Portfolio System</p> <p>Personal Tutor system</p>	<p>Have an awareness of the required pedagogical approach for managing the student group.</p> <p>Implement a pedagogical approach that integrates the acknowledgement and acquisition of the attributes and characteristics associated with employability.</p> <p>Acknowledgement and responsiveness to the individual differences evident within the group</p> <p>Teaching qualifications of the teaching team.</p> <p>HEA membership and supported portfolio of evidence – UKPSF Aim 2*</p>

\* Portfolio of evidence to support HEA membership application as part of the internal process.

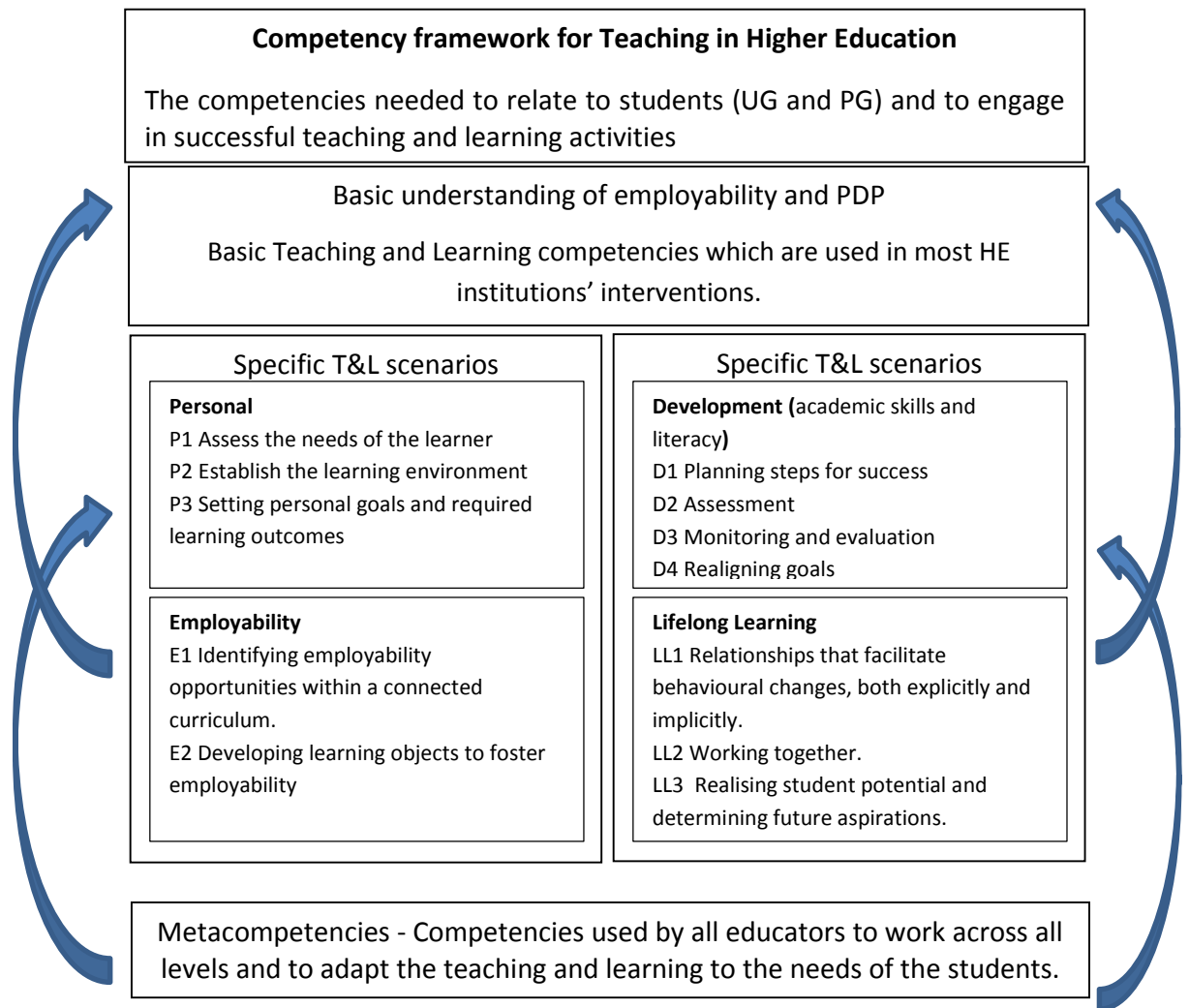
In-house provision for delivery of teacher training activities relating to PEDaLL (LL1, LL2 and LL3). Creation of portfolio of evidence, comprising observations and examples of good practice.



### Summary discussion and further research

An acceptance of this implementation framework for CPD would require the development of the PEDaLL constructs into a suitable format for training and development purposes. Once established, the opportunities for supporting new and existing staff, facilitating HEA fellowship application process, and the overall student experience could be maximised for greatest effect, managed through the incorporation of training documentation associated with establishing, recognising and rating competencies (James, Blackburn and Reichelt, 2001, James, Blackburn, Milne and Freeston, 2005). In addition, the reliance on portfolio use for CPD is suggested (Poole, 2010) but response and take-up is cautious as the literature largely supports facilitation, but there is evidence of a lack of engagement if not linked to reward or recognition. The application process for HEA fellowship recognition is an ideal driver for staff CPD and is reliant upon a reflective portfolio of evidence, which, as illustrated, can be mapped from a PEDaLL perspective. The interpretations of the strategic intentions are open to scrutiny and further debate in order to define due process, but at this initial stage they are useful indicators of the HE landscape.

A visual example of a suggested Competency Framework for Teaching in Higher Education is shown in Figure 8.6 and it indicates how the constructs of PEDaLL can be utilised for CPD purposes. A number of potential deliverables arising from the implementation of this framework are suggested in Appendix 16, and incorporate a number of issues arising from the literature relating to teaching and learning, including course design, pedagogy and assessment.



Adapted from Roth and Pilling's (2007) model of CBT

Figure 8.6 Competency Framework for Teaching in Higher Education

## 8.4 PEDaLL and HEAR – Higher Education Achievement Report

The importance of HEA recognition for staff, and the impact of the UKPSF, as discussed in the previous section, is further emphasised by an institutional commitment to HEAR, (Burgess, 2008) from the student perspective that verifies the additional information within section 6.1. This section (6.1) captures the relevant skills and achievements that have been accomplished by the student in relation to their own PDP. This research boldly suggests a strategic statement of this commitment for institutions to adopt, (Burgess Implementation Steering Group, 2011) together with a number of implementation and evaluation approaches that would need to be considered, if the endeavours were to be successful, yet the approaches across the sector are still uncertain and could be regarded as a ‘work in progress’ (Centre for Recording Achievement, 2014).

**Definition and premise of Intent:** The intent of this statement is to advise and inform on the inclusion of additional information relevant to section 6.1 of the HEAR. This will recognise verified student activities evidence a number of key employability and PDP skills and attributes that are well documented in the research literature. A representative grouping of those skills is presented as a leading part of this statement for illustrative purposes, based on two components of PEDaLL.

Table 8-12 PEDaLL and HEAR - Representative Skills

PERSONAL	EMPLOYABILITY
Awareness of self	Working in teams
SWOT	Time Management
Self-confidence	Decision Making
Independent learning	Problem Solving
Engagement	Resolving conflict
Reflection Skills	Strategic awareness
Meeting deadlines	Argument and persuasion
Adaptability	Negotiating
<b>EVIDENCE OF A POSITIVE ATTITUDE</b>	

**Purpose:** The purpose of this statement is to offer advice to Academic Staff, Management and Students (via the Student Union) to assist in a 3 stage approach with the **determination, implementation** and **verification** of the particular type of activities or achievements that can be deemed as being eligible for inclusion in Section 6.1 of the HEAR. The process of verification would need to be agreed, and this document is to be regarded as advisory only.

## **Stage 1 – Determination of what constitutes ‘Additional Information’**

All 5 of the following criteria must be fulfilled for inclusion in Section 6.1 Additional Information.

**1. Criterion 1 – Must correspond to one of the three categories identified below, in accordance with national HEAR implementation and guidance.**

**1.1. Additional Awards (accredited performance outside the academic curriculum)**

**Action required:** Produce a list that identifies the specific awards that accredit extra-curricular modules or activities or training programmes that are not part of the existing degree course, but may have been studied in addition to a programme of study.

**1.2. Additional recognised activities that are undertaken by the student but that have no acknowledgement in relation to academic credit**

**Action required:** Produce a list that identifies the specific roles that are available ie volunteering, representatives, ambassadors, specific training courses attendance, or verifiable representation at national level for a sporting activity or other participation in an event.

**Pre-requisites:** Must demonstrate sustained and regular commitment over a minimum period of one semester, or 10 hours interaction, or completion of an additional task to gain recognition (reflective journal in electronic portfolio) to ensure the appropriate level of student engagement.

**1.3. University, professional and departmental prizes (both for academic and non-academic achievement)**

**Action required:** Produce a list that identifies the criteria for nomination, together with the number of awards to be made, that is to be transparent for all existing academic staff and students.

**2. Criterion 2:** Must be supervised and verified by a member of staff prior to the completion of their academic degree programme.

**3. Criterion 3:** Must not be a part of the prescribed academic curriculum in relation to their academic degree programme.

**4. Criterion 4:** Be available to all students at the university and not by exception.

**5. Criterion 5:** Not be formal employment, with the exception of identified roles.

**Action required:** Produce a list of exception roles that are offered within the university – ie ambassadors, student support work, course/teaching/research-related, sports coaching, employment experience that is part of the University programme.

## **Stage 2 – Implementation for recognition and verification**

All students seeking to interact with their HEAR should develop a PDP electronic portfolio of evidence that should be submitted for verification purposes. A suggested technology for the development of this portfolio would be PebblePad, though there are other products available. A guiding exemplar could be provided, possibly via a student portal, linked to the key PDP and employability skills identified from PEDaLL, together with a phrase bank of reflective statements for supporting the process from portfolio to HEAR 6.1.

It should be noted that the application of an electronic portfolio should not be burdensome to the process – it should facilitate it.

Furthermore, university-wide communications sessions should take place to advise staff and students on what is represented by HEAR, and the subsequent duty to respond to this across the sector, but these communications should not just be a transfer of information, they should constitute a guided implementation process for each curriculum developer to undertake and be accountable for, but with suitable and realistic timings for development.

## **Stage 3 – Verification process**

A schedule of key dates should be prepared that set out agreed review points within the academic year, that should be attended by nominated members of a verification panel who will be charged with reviewing and verifying the evidence put before them. This review body should be independent, but part of regulatory procedures within the university so that there can be no dispute in relation to verification of submitted portfolios of evidence.

Once verified and agreed by all parties, including the student, the achievement should be transferred to HEAR 6.1.

## **Summary discussion**

Many universities have implemented various approaches to adoption of the student HEAR, some of which are process-driven through specifically designed software products such as Gradintel. However, the practice is variable, and in some instances whilst a process has been set up to ensure compliance, it does not always maximise the true intent of what it represents. This will inevitably surface in the future if the importance and relevance of the HEAR for employers and students alike grows. All students leaving university should be equipped with a known university award that documents their success in relation to the degree programme, and an additional document that lists their verifiable achievements in relation to the skills and attributes that might be regarded as indicators of their employability. This ideal would lend itself towards a potential fulfilment of many years of research related to Progress Files, Records of Achievement, PDP, Portfolios and Employability, and ultimately a student

HEAR which would be available as a paper document or an electronic asset, that could increasingly be shared across a wider number of interested parties as a validated document, through emerging technological initiatives such as 'Connect my HEAR' as well as many other related service opportunities (Gradintel, 2015), though it would be wrong to see this as a piece of technology only.

## 8.5 PEDaLL and Employability – Two approaches for Universities

Universities seeking to produce distinguishable graduates that are renowned for their employability readiness need to have an approach to implement theoretical frameworks that might exist to embed employability elements into an established curriculum. Emerging from this research are a range of recommendations that need to be addressed. There are two listings of recommendations postulated from a ‘top-down’ approach (in the case of the first one), that has been taken from a suggested employability framework from within a university, (anonymised), comments to which have been added to inform the debate and to validate the second alternative approach that has been nurtured from the learning and teaching perspective, outwards into the wider support areas within the university for a an arguably more successful approach to implementation.

The first approach that has been taken from a draft university employability framework exposes potential problems that can exist in the implementation of good ideas and opportunities that would improve the overall university experience for all parties concerned. Equally, this is the case in the second approach, that would be dependent upon the desires and abilities of selected staff in relation to the implementation of the written recommendations.

The document used in the first example describes ‘Cluster Leads’ as points of contact, but the pre-existing infrastructure may not recognise this role within its existing structure, and therefore there may be problems in appointing the right people on-task. In addition, HEAR is a dominant part of both of the examples, yet there may not be good practice and procedures in place. If, for instance, there was good evidence and procedural success with the implementation of HEAR, particularly in relation to 6.1, then that in itself may provide greater gains in relation to employability.

Also, the first example may be reliant upon other existing systems relating to Programme Design and Delivery frameworks and evaluation documents, and perhaps makes too many assumptions in relation to their ownership across academic faculties. This area may need to be evaluated prior to including it as a vehicle for measuring the success of the employability framework.

It is therefore with a degree of caution and trepidation that the two emerging approaches are made, and at this point, their intent is to inform rather than to dictate.

### Approach 1 - 'Top-down' recommendations

- 1 Foster a culture of collaboration across students, academics and professional support specialists that recognises the significance of employability as part of the curriculum and not as a separate component.

*Comment: A mapping of the curriculum would recognise areas of good practice that could inform weaker areas and bring about improvements.*

- 2 Establish initiatives that are embedded within faculties to work closely with Level 6 students from September each year and for 6 months beyond graduation.

*Comment: This is quite an idealistic recommendation at this point, that could be more realistic if it becomes part of HEAR implementation approach.*

- 3 Establish initiatives that focus on engaging with level 4 and 5 students.

*Comment: Some initiatives possibly already exist within a number of degree programmes, but a concern would be whether the skill-set of non-academic careers staff cross-over into learning and teaching?*

- 4 Develop an online platform for careers and employability to support students independently.

*Comment: This could be useful, but there may be suitable platforms already. It could be embedded within the curriculum as part of a 'redeveloped curriculum', recognising employability.*

- 5 Develop a HEAR PDP portfolio.

*Comment: This is a tangible recommendation that can be achieved through redevelopment of a curriculum.*

- 6 Introduce a temping agency on the campus.

*Comment: This is a tangible gain that would be well received by the students and could inform HEAR certification.*

- 7 Embed the employability framework in learning and teaching – a one university approach through the use of the employability framework.

*Comment: This is idealistic and needs considerable thought and development for a robust, staged implementation approach.*



## Approach 2 – Learning and Teaching recommendations

- 1 Establish a community of collaboration through the redevelopment of a constructively aligned curriculum that recognises the importance and significance of employability as part of the overall learning outcomes.

Example: Embed the characteristics identified explicitly into the curriculum for level 4 and 5 students, through a number of identified learning objects that are specific to the Personal and Employability constructs of PEDaLL.

- 2 Build in opportunities for careers and employability guidance as part of the curriculum that lead to visible outcomes and are part of an assessed component of the module.

Example: Level 5 student activity involves a simulated interview, based on prepared documentation (letter, CV, application, presentation). Invite careers and employability support with this activity.

- 3 Identify academic staff who have the necessary skills and aptitude for recognising the needs of the students and who understand the significance of employability.

Example: Selected academic staff to be involved with this area across a degree programme, not confined to expertise within one module. Training and communication sessions may be required that reinforce the most appropriate pedagogy to willing staff.

- 4 Review and refine the support structures that exist across the university for academic staff and students. Identify areas of weakness, without blame, and remedy with collaborative dialogue to alleviate burdensome and unnecessary pressures on staff and students.

Example: Separate out support structures that feed directly into learning and teaching from those that are administrative. Look at the divisions of labour and focus academic expertise on learning and teaching, and administrative skills in supporting learning and teaching through an improved infrastructure.

- 5 Actively promote HEAR from within the curriculum and via external opportunities – ie careers specialists, student union, etc.

Example: Streamline and establish processes for HEAR 6.1 Inclusion of Additional Information to ensure that the institution is committed to providing the best experience for its students and maximising their potential recording of achievements.

## 8.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented a number of key deliverables from this research area and proposes the PEDaLL model for teaching in Higher Education. The initial section outlines the model, its constructs and characteristics, and provides an interpretation of each component, and then in order to facilitate a greater understanding of the model, a number of interventions are presented and analysed using PEDaLL to explore successful implementation within the learning and teaching environment. The samples that were selected are not exclusive to the inclusion of CBT interventions and influences but are put forward to illustrate how they can be integrated as part of a constructivist approach to curriculum planning and development that fosters employability and PDP. This integration is not intended to be implicit, but to be sufficiently explicit to facilitate cognition on the part of each student in relation to his or her own PDP and employability needs.

Further extensions arising from PEDaLL can be recognised within the area of CPD and Teacher Training, whereby an institution can ensure that existing practices are informed by the ideology of PEDaLL, and have more relevance for the demands and requirements across the sector for their professional body of staff, particularly when many university staff are recruited from a research background as opposed to an educational one.

Other deliverables from this research are an advisory statement for institutions seeking to engage with HEAR, particularly in relation to Section 6.1 which is an opportunity to add additional student achievements to their outgoing certification transcript which is an iterative process that needs more debate and refinement for wider consensus across the sector.

The final chapter that follows revisits the aims and objectives, specifically seeking to respond to each one, offering a robust discussion that reaches some conclusions in relation to the overall research question.

## 9 Conclusions

### Introduction

This thesis has described in detail how an IPA methodology can be chosen and justified as an appropriate research methodology when attempting to understand the thoughts, feelings and emotions of a typical group of undergraduate students within the context of this research question.

The identified students' perception of their received teaching and learning experiences have been described in some detail through the IPA case studies, indicating what the key issues and influences are that shape their development through university, leading them progressively towards their point of exit and in a state of readiness for either employment or further study, or other.

Whilst the experiences of each student are clearly unique, through the very essence of being human, the resulting findings highlight a number of interrelated issues that influence their view of their degree experience. These issues are significant for validating elements of teaching and learning practice for future undergraduates, and in shaping a culture shift for the longer term and future sustainability of a recognisable representation of HE.

The view presented from the students in relation to their teaching and learning experiences was shown to have been informed, essentially, from a three-dimensional perspective. The first dimension was their view of themselves at the various points along the process. This related to how they felt, how they behaved, and how they performed, based on results, feedback and interactions. The second dimension was in relation to their lecturers and the subsequent teaching and learning approaches taken, perceived knowledge and skill-set as a 'more knowledgeable other', and the final dimension was firmly felt through a sense of belonging to an institution that was fit for the purpose and provision of a degree programme.

### 9.1 Answering the Research Question – or not?

“How does educational psychology inform the teaching and learning landscape for undergraduate students who need to acquire not only a good degree, but also desirable employability skills and a positive attitude?”

The research question looks for answers from the literature and the students themselves, who participated in this research, to redefine a teaching and learning landscape that is suited to present day expectations. PEDaLL, together with the other developed contributions relating to CPD, HEAR and Employability, are a way of changing that landscape in response to the demands being made on the HE sector, previously discussed as part of the literature review.

The evidence presented in this research has iterated the complexity of the related educational psychology across a number of well-established schools of thought, and has identified the social and situational aspects of learning through a constructivist approach as informing a model for success. Although the essence of a constructivist curriculum does in itself suggest that there is a need for the most appropriate approaches to be a constituent part of any newly reformed curriculum. The research paradigm highlighted psychological factors in relation to being a person, exploring in some detail the impact and effect of experiences, people, situations, etc and the recognition of these issues in relation to the receptiveness of the individual involved. A number of neurological findings were included, though not in any scientific detail, but as a known impact in relation to thinking and processing events. The essence of this understanding was further developed in the discussion around how students learn and receive knowledge and information in order to acquire an understanding (Ansari and Coch, 2006, Ansari, Coch and Smedt, 2011) – one that fits into their own lives and beliefs in relation to their self-efficacy. Notwithstanding external cultural influences from popular present day media that attempt to single out that one person that is better than any other. What is it that they are looking for? The best voice, the most accomplished talent, the most personable, the person who has overcome great adversity to get where they are now? How do they go about finding a winner – public preferences, votes, publicity, etc.

In many ways, university graduates seeking to obtain a job, who have applied for a position requiring an honours degree of 2.1 or above have to be able to ‘perform’ at an interview in much the same way as media representations. They have to understand the process of selling themselves via the interview and rehearse what they should do/say/present. They need to be confident of their own skill-set, potential, personality, attributes and suitability which are intangibles that cannot be measured through qualifications and certificates. They have to be able to convey that ‘positive attitude’ that is desired by many employers. In addition, they have to have the skills to be able to communicate this effectively, better than anyone else, when it is their ‘turn’ to be interviewed. Universities generally send graduates out into the world of work with their degree certificates and a sense of achievement, but these graduates have to know the rules and cope with the trials and tribulations of seeking employment in a very competitive arena. As well as being able to cope with the subsequent successes that may follow, graduates have to cope with potential rejection and loss of confidence in one’s self and self-esteem and sense of worth. Whilst PDP attempts to equip undergraduate students with the necessary skills and attributes in order to secure employment, its main intent is to empower those individuals to know who they are as people and be able to recognise in themselves those intangible qualities, attributes and personality traits, that whilst being so desirable to employers, also give them strength of character that define who they are as people.

The dilemma for the HE sector then becomes steeped in uncertainty and vagueness. The underlying aim of PDP is looking at areas of cognitive psychology that attempt to

contextualise it within a specific subject area that has relevance and attachment for the individual and that will lead to a sense of belonging, recognition and ultimately Maslow's 'self-actualisation'. The HEAR is one attempt at articulating the extended achievements of the outgoing students, but the implementation approaches in universities are not yet sufficiently developed.

Why though should universities seek to interfere with what is potentially a fairly experiential journey that will eventually lead individuals along their preferred path? The rationale behind this involvement has come through, as stated earlier, strategic drivers within institutions, government dictats, and employer needs. A university degree today should aim to provide students with far more than a degree certificate in a subject specialism (Andrews, 2013). They have more chances to secure employment with improved qualifications than without (CEDEFOP, 2012). This research has attempted to address a way of doing this in relation to the development of PEDaLL as a capability model for all concerned – staff, students, and institutional gain.

The alienation of the student experience in itself forces inevitable regrouping from within the institution to reframe the needs of their students. The 'disaffected' label is symbolic of this alienation and is characterised by a focus on performance and saleability within a commodity dependent social system - which is the institution, where creativity is potentially stymied, opposed to emancipation and truth. Within the institution, there are often prevailing linguistics that make knowledge assumptions about their students that lead to estrangement; they feel outside of it rather than feel like they belong. Learning outcomes are prescriptive and expected to be achieved as the only measures of success; they can feel disengaged from the learning process, as they have to meet the needs of the system as opposed to their own; the experience of assessment is diminishing and can lead to failure when others around seem to be more successful; and finally, sometimes the desire to not be part of this perceptibly chaotic learning experience is easier than to stay a part of it and have to cope with all it involves (Mann, 2001).

If these factors characterise the disaffected students, feeling alienated from their degree programme, then the institution needs to counteract those feelings with an alternative approach that can be effectively communicated. This approach needs to have some solidarity with the students through empathy and dialogue; it needs to show hospitality and help the students to feel comfortable; and they also need to feel safe through the provision of 'safe spaces' where they can feel accepted and able to express opinion in an unthreatened manner, and therein creativity can be nurtured; negotiation with the students should also be undertaken in an attempt to redistribute power and eliminate boundaries; finally, criticality in the ways of working which in essence is about becoming reflective in this context (Mann, 2001)

Factored into these ideals, are a number of paradoxes that exist within teaching and learning (McInnery, 2007)

- meeting the constructivist needs of the students yet delivery through direct instruction and clarity founded on a premise of behaviourism
- policy and practice – the chasm between the two seems to be increasingly populated with emerging trends – ie PDP, employability – yet there is a lack of guidance and steer re implementation and practice.
- cross-cultural dimensions – massive shift in research around cognition, learning and motivations that seems omitted from teacher training resources
- teaching time – students receive less than ever before.
- research training receives less time than ever, even though there is growing pressure to publish in top-rated journals.

## 9.2 Review of the Aims

There were two linked aims of this research. The first was to develop a capability model for HE teaching and learning for Information Systems undergraduate students (in the first instance), that embeds CBT tools and techniques into a modified constructivist curriculum studied by those students in order to successfully embed PDP and employability as an integral part.

In addition, the research then aims to identify the contextual factors influencing the successful implementation of this teaching model in relation to PDP and employability strategies within the Higher Education (HE) sector that encompasses CPD and HEAR.

The development of PEDaLL would affirm that both of these aims have successfully been achieved.

This thesis has investigated the interactions of a number of disaffected university students from a 'human sciences' perspective. The focus has been on the actual experiences of those students, bringing into the narrative their own individual lives and contexts, offering interpretations and explanations as to how they interacted with university life in the ways that they did, and subsequently came out of the other side. The ideas and concepts evolved from existential phenomenological thinking, which explicitly focused on the experiential aspects of the students being there, living the experience, as opposed to the intents and ideologies of the strategically evolved dialogue of the university itself.

Initially, attention was given to the underpinning schools of teaching and learning that present various insights into educational psychology, including the ways that students learn, that knowledge and curriculum can be best delivered, to engaging students, fair assessment, and so on. Subsequent analysis and disentanglement of these ideological schools was then developed and re-constructed through a discussion of well-established Cognitive Behavioural Theory, an approach that illustrates how psychology utilised 'talking therapies' to treat individuals, depending upon their needs, and

recognised the success of this type of approach. By interweaving educational psychology, CBT and developing a further discussion around Personal Development Planning and employability, topics that are firmly situated within the agendas of universities across the sector, the complexities of educators finding ways to meet such demands were explored, leading to the development of a different approach to teaching and learning that would seek to provide insight into ways that successfully fulfil these requirements, symbolised through PEDaLL – a capability model for teaching in higher education.

The two aims within the thesis were inextricably linked, one clearly being dependent upon the other. The development of PEDaLL was an optimistic endeavour, yet the makeup of the constructs emerged from the data, both empirically and from the student voice. The triangulation of the data suggested the importance of each construct and their subsequent interdependence on each other in order to meet the requirements of the participants and stakeholders. The recognition of the 'self' – the individuality of the student, the minimum expectations from the degree programme – subject areas had relevance and connections, and were delivered by a more knowledgeable other who could give timely feedback and assessment results. The influence of the employability agenda as an integral part of the re-developed curriculum that had to have context and relevance to the individual and the employer. Finally, a state of recognition as a lifelong learner and whatever that would mean to the individual – self-awareness, self-efficacy, self-actualisation, emotional development, and so on.

### 9.3 Review of the Objectives

The research framework identified five objectives, each of which was addressed throughout this thesis, providing a thorough understanding of the current influences on teaching and learning within the context of the identified student group and subject area. A brief review of these objectives follows, together with a summary response as to how each has been met within this thesis.

1. Establish the responses of students to known teaching approaches and interventions within the university, exploring their thoughts, feelings and beliefs about them in relation to their own learning.

*Response:* This objective identified how students coming to university respond and behave whilst studying for their degree. The evidenced responses came from the students themselves and gave them a voice to declare how they felt in relation to their own learning and the experience that they were having. Those feelings were also cognisant of the individual lives of the students themselves and how they were being supported. The responses highlighted the feelings of insecurity and uncertainty that tainted their experience, and their lacking in skills such as time management and independent learning. They were reliant on structured teaching and learning,

motivated by quality feedback and influenced by their relationships with their lecturers.

2. To introduce learning experiments that seek to integrate interpersonal and employer 'key skills' effectively and to quantify the success of those experiments through student and peer opinion and enhanced awareness

*Response:* This objective was achieved through validating a number of learning experiments that had been designed to develop student engagement with their own PDP. A constructivist approach was utilised to develop learning objects that required the students to reflect upon themselves in relation to desirable attributes in today's graduates. This was a significant change from a knowledge led approach to curriculum delivery. The findings from the observations and the case studies showed varying degrees of success at all stages, but over a longer period of times, the realisation of the benefits of these interventions was more secure and felt validated.

3. To design and explore CBT interventions that foster self-awareness, reflection and personal insight in undergraduate students.

*Response:* This objective was achieved and evidenced through the teaching and learning plans (Appendix 9) that reflect a greater emphasis on self-awareness, personal development planning, and employability. In addition, the discussion about the 3 example interventions (Appendix 1) in section 8.2 illustrated the importance of CBT dialogue as a requirement of their successful implementation, as do the case study extracts that highlight the significance of relationships and dialogue with professionals. The subsequent skillset of the educator would need to encompass effective communication skills and an awareness of the individual differences of the students within their group when evaluating whether the interventions had been successful or not.

4. To measure the 'graduateness' of students through the application of a suitable research methodology and the development of purposive assessment objects.

*Response:* This objective was achieved through assessing the impact of a number of assessment objects on the students' development. This was evidenced through the IPA interview transcripts and their subsequent analysis as the students remembered tasks and activities that they had done that were symbolic, in their view, of their personal development and growing maturity. In addition, Appendix 5 draws specific attention to some of the tasks and how the students felt about their significance and influence. In particular, when undertaking their final year undergraduate research project, the difference in the student approach was clearly visible from the participants involved in this research, and their 'graduateness' in relation to the prescriptive listing attached to PEDaLL was evident.



5. To provide empirical evidence for curriculum developers who choose to recognise the importance of PDP, self-efficacy and awareness of self for increasing and enhancing employability skills as an integral component of a desirable graduate study experience.

*Response:* An extensive review of the literature relating to PDP and educational psychology has been undertaken and situated within the HE agenda. The mapping of this literature, specifically in relation to PDP and employability has highlighted the significance for curriculum planners to integrate these areas within graduate study programmes rather than to offer peripheral services.

The student voices both informed and validated opinion and beliefs in the appropriateness of the approaches and interventions being taken. The identification of learning objects and interventions that reinforced the role of an educator as being more than a subject specialist were useful in relation to the given student views and subsequent development. The redevelopment of the curriculum successfully integrated elements of PDP and employability into the relevant degree programme, and the student body were visibly equipped with a language from which to articulate themselves in response to employment opportunities.

The data that was captured was informative both from the perspective of the student response to their degree experience and individual parts thereof, but also in illustrating the development of the 'self' through the situational context within a living institution, and the interactions with peers and all other persons over a long period of time.

Attempting to measure 'graduateness' in the student group was an ambitious undertaking, but the rich dialogue from the application of the IPA methodology was a testament to the success of this endeavour with a degree of caution from the perspective of the immersion of the researcher as a part of this process. However, the transcripts and subsequent analysis illustrated the student voice in this research process.

#### **9.4 Review of the Methodology**

The research question was exploratory and required considerable descriptive debate as a result of the disentanglement of the research literature, through participant observation and IPA. The determinants of this research as suggested by the literature focus around three main areas of research – Educational Psychology, Cognitive Behaviour Therapy and Personal Development Planning, the latter which subsumes the concept of employability through convergent thinking in this area. The literature revealed a number of knowledge gaps relating to pedagogy in higher education, and there was no clear identified model for HE practitioners to follow. The range of ideologies from the educational psychology schools was analysed, and evidence of the need for a multi-faceted approach was posited. This would then encompass the nature of 'talking therapies' being developed as part of the literature relating to cognitive behaviour therapy thinking and theory, which emphasised the needs of the 'patient'

who in the case of this study is in effect 'the student' who needed to experience meaningful dialogue from a trusted and knowledgeable lecturer who would be able to plan a successful course of education from which they could achieve not only a good degree, but also be able to be recognised for a greater body of knowledge, skills, attributes and experience related to the needs of future employers and life experiences.

The application of IPA invited a rich narrative to inform the wider debate and to lead to the development of the outcomes from this research. Cross-case analysis of the data led to the emergence of some expected themes and some unexpected ones that resulted in a rich narrative dialogue based on double hermeneutics and double-loop extrapolations of the findings, affirmed by the mature learning experiences of the researcher.

Each IPA case suggested the differences and similarities that exist from within the student body, and the complexities that arise within the teaching and learning environment at different stages. The expectations for managing the diversity of the student group from the lecturer perspective is vast, yet quite often not acknowledged in the greater understanding of the development of humans in different situations. Also, using a crystallised lens (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013a) enabled a greater degree of insight into the development of the students across the whole of the programme instead of at one point in time. Opinions and views change exponentially, and an overarching finding from this research suggests that this should be understood in a responsive way, rather than a reactionary one.

## **9.5 Contributions of the Research and dissemination**

This research journey started a number of years ago, but within the present HE sector, early publications focused around a number of key issues that have been developed as part of this research. Those key issues incorporate pedagogical practices for effective PDP and employability, the use of an electronic portfolio, developing an assessment taxonomy for an electronic portfolio, supporting lifelong learning and autonomy, working with disaffected students, the development of a reflective vocabulary, etc. A listing of author publications is included (Appendix 14) and areas of the research have been presented within the author's own institution as part of the annual research conference, and across a wider research audience. Those presentations have been both independent and collaborative, based locally, nationally and internationally.

The gains from this dissemination have been incremental. Peer feedback has been invaluable in informing the continuation of these research ideas into where they are today, and opinions, comments and criticisms have been well received.

By having a greater understanding of students, their approaches to learning, their receptiveness and responsiveness to the learning experiences enables institutions to provide better, more informed degree programmes. What is clear from the literature available across more than two decades is the institutional ability to not respond to

research findings, and thus find themselves in a quandary in being able to meet student and stakeholder needs. Identification and awareness of stakeholder needs is imperative for future-proofing universities in response to society's needs.

Findings from this thesis help to provide a clearer picture of what those needs are, and have a particular relevance to those institutions that care about their responsibilities to staff and students. Generalised statements from this include:

- Students value the smooth functioning of their learning environment and the appropriateness of the situational experience in relation to the subject
- Students need to have confidence in the teaching skills as well as the subject expertise of the lecturers
- The integration of employability and PDP into existing curricula can be achieved through a carefully planned, constructively aligned curriculum that allows for the individual needs of students to be met.
- Most lecturers and/or educators should have an understanding the pedagogy of teaching and learning in order to provide a good experience for students
- Administration processes should facilitate and not burden the provision of good teaching and learning
- Students need to be supported with regard to personal development
- The usefulness of IPA as a research approach for giving a voice to students in HE.

In recognising these findings and responding to them institutions could enhance their provision and produce graduates who have sufficient intellect and who are ready for either employment or further study.

## 9.6 Further research

The deliverables from this research are still underdeveloped. In order to implement them across the sector, there needs to be further work undertaken to establish due process, produce documentation, facilitate training and development and design evaluation procedures in order to measure the impact.

The constructs of PEDaLL have assumed discrete learning components that could be utilised to provide a consistent approach to constructivist teaching and learning in higher education. The anticipated gains from this could then be realised within the degree programmes that the students experience and the overall satisfaction rates.

It is also a potential opportunity to develop a shift in culture into one that can respond to the employability agenda as part of the provision of a degree programme, whatever the discipline.

Staff development needs to be encouraged to recognise that student expectations exceed the area of subject expertise and expect more in relation to life skills and employability.

The demands of HEAR are a consideration for institutions and their staff, and knowledge and understanding in relation to the facilitation of this is weak and ill-informed.

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## **Appendices**

Note: The student work that has been included here has been taken from their actual portfolios and any proof reading and/or grammatical errors remain in place.

## Appendix 1: Example Interventions – Levels 4, 5 and 6

Level 4 Seminar Activity, IS0472 Skills for Information Systems Professionals, 'Portfolio Health Assessment Check'.

### Portfolio Health Assessment Check

**Aim of session:** To review and reflect upon first semester experience at university, articulating personal development and progress to date, and identifying potential hazards and issues encountered.

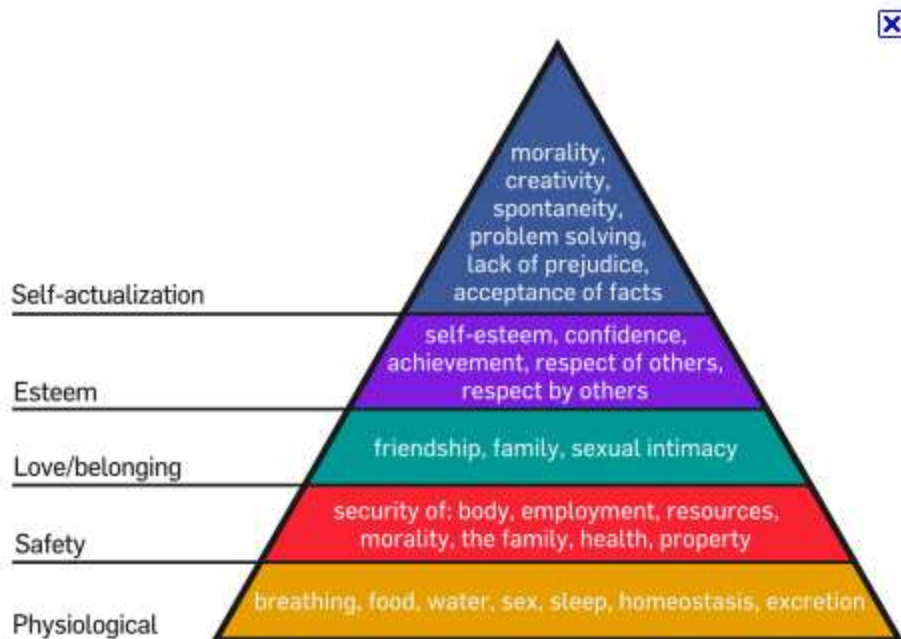
**Objectives:** *To engage in reflective dialogue facilitated through illustrations that are to be annotated.*

*To produce an action plan documenting findings which is to be uploaded into PebblePad portfolio.*

*To read and understand key articles in relation to this area.*

### First Task – 20 mins dialogue

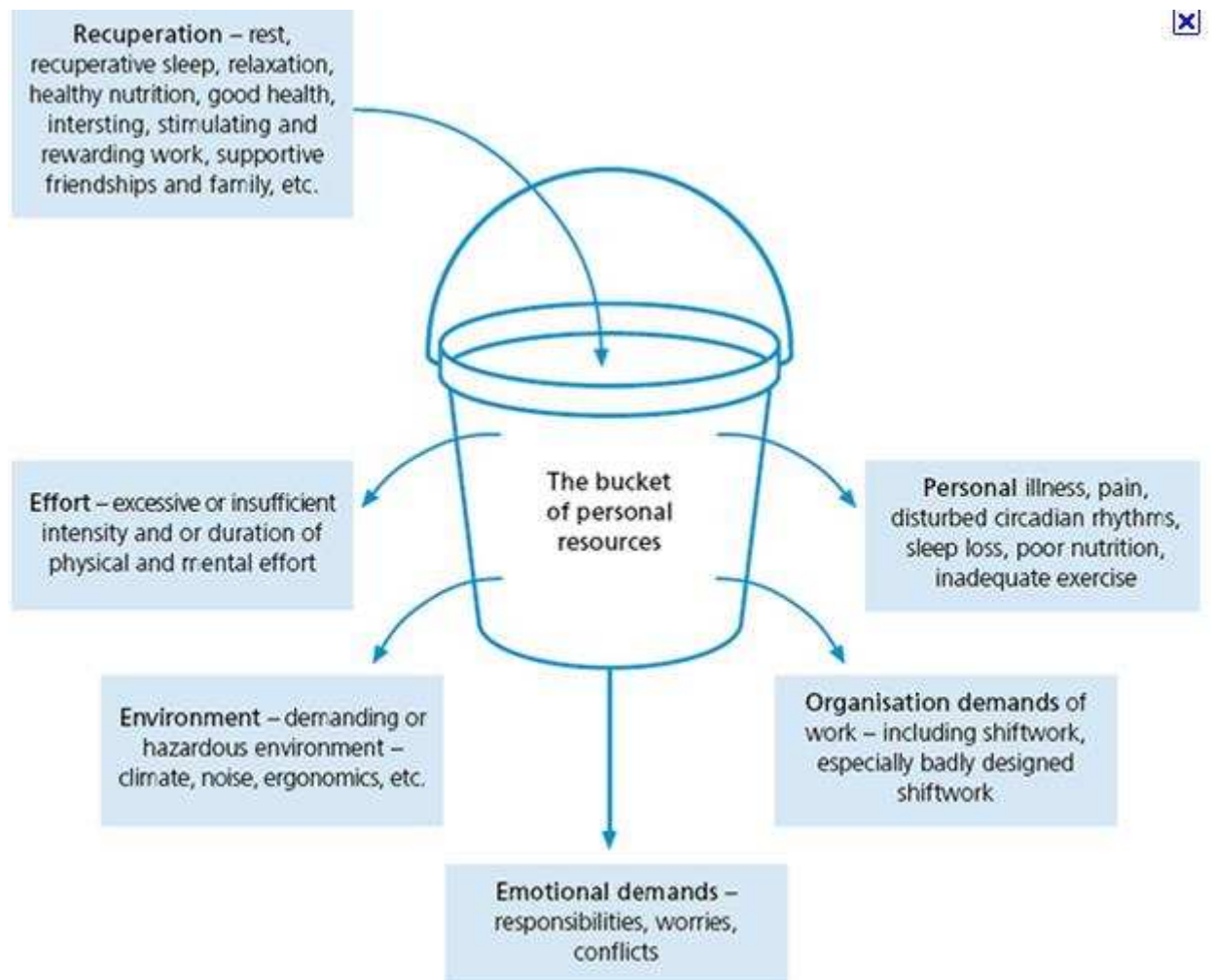
Collaborate with your one of your peers in respect of your 'stress bucket', and Maslow's 'triangle', reflecting back on your experiences at the university so far. Annotate the diagrams as your dialogue progresses.



## ACTION PLAN – your ‘stress bucket’

### Evaluation of progress to date

As the dialogue progresses, annotate your ‘stress bucket, with comments that indicate your progress so far, and highlight areas of potential stress. In particular, the **organisation demand** relate to your university work and the dialogue you have with your peers should focus around your ability to have met the module deadlines given for semester 1 and produced all required tasks and assignments to the best of your ability.



## 20 minute Dialogue Prompt Sheet

**Which of the following statements represent your own view of your performance at the start of semester 2? (If none of them apply, write your own statement).**

1. I settled into university life very easily, worked extremely hard to the best of my ability, and produced all of the required tasks and assignments in accordance with the prescribed criteria for module IS0472.
2. I did not settle well into the university and felt a little distracted by things around me. I found it hard to know what was expected of me and struggled to meet the module requirements for IS0472.
3. I have really enjoyed the social aspects of university life and undertaken very little work and am unsure as to what should be in my portfolio for IS0472.

**The assessment requirements for semester 1 required you to write a Personal Statement (750 words). Which of the following statements reflects your approach to this task? If neither apply, write your own statement representing your approach to this task.**

I produced this assignment in accordance with the given criteria, and met the deadline that was set for this task. My statement was, in my opinion, well written, and contained relevant information about me to reflect the type of person that I am. I would be comfortable to visit this statement again in the future, and would find it a useful basis for applying for jobs.

I did not really know what to write, and left it to the last minute, and could not produce the required number of words. My statement was badly written, with grammatical and spelling errors, and probably contains irrelevant information that may not be well received. When I had finished the statement, I did not know where to put it, as I was unsure about the instructions.

**How many marks do you think your efforts in relation to this module are worth so far?**

70%+

60-70%

50-60%

40-50%

Less than 40%

## **ACTION PLAN**

**Complete the following Action Plan and upload it into your ePortfolio.**

### **SWOT analysis –**

#### **Strengths**

List five positive things you are bringing with you from semester 1.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

#### **Weaknesses**

List five negative influences on your performance during semester 1.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

#### **Opportunities**

What are the perceived opportunities for you by the end of semester 2?

## Threats

What potential 'risks' do you envisage this semester?

## Supporting Resources

### People

Which new people have you met this semester - give the names and contexts in which you have met and continue to associate with these people.

### Training courses / workshops

How well do you know PebblePad? Write down what you know about it and what you are unsure about and more importantly, what you intend to do about it!

### Other

Have you researched the required key theories this semester? (tick, as appropriate)

Belbin	Honey and Mumford	Myers-Briggs	ELLI
Reflection	Research Skills	Harvard Referencing	PDP
Employability	Key Skills	Blackboard	PebblePad

**This completed Action Plan should be uploaded into your PebblePad ePortfolio .**

## **Level 5 Seminar Activity (Two tasks)**

### **Seminar Task 1**

#### ***The 30 Second CV***

By this point you should already have prepared a CV. The purpose of this exercise is to help you use it and the interview to “sell yourself”

Many interviews start with what is considered to be a simple question “tell me a little bit about yourself”. Like many things in life that appear “simple” at first glance, this takes some thought to do well.

Spend about 10 minutes writing down a CV of your main selling points, which you would deliver orally to an employer in no more than 30 seconds.

This will highlight:

- The need to sell yourself.
- The need to be brief.
- The need to prioritise.

Next... find a partner in the class and deliver your 30 second CV to them orally. Your partner must then give you some feedback/constructive criticism on what you have said. Reverse the roles and give them some feedback on their orally delivered 30 second CV.

## Seminar Task 2

**Self-Assessment** - Consider the abilities listed below. Rate yourself for each one as follows:

**1 = highly competent, 2 = fairly competent, 3 = can cope at a basic level, 4 = not competent**

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| communicating clearly in speech to others                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| perceiving/noticing inconsistencies                        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| being methodical and systematic with data                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| having sensitivity, insight, understanding of other people | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| understanding written material                             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| designing useful things                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| being tactful and diplomatic                               | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| writing clearly, concisely and cogently                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| researching and gathering data                             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| thinking quickly, adapting ideas readily                   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| leading or organising people                               | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| building up relationships with others                      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| analysing, reasoning, being logical                        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| organising or arranging information                        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| expressing feelings, conveying warmth or caring            | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| creating, originating, innovating new ideas                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| persuading, influencing, negotiating                       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| using numbers or statistics to draw conclusions            | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| explaining, teaching, instructing                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| contributing to a team effort                              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| working under pressure or to deadlines                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| developing or extending the ideas of others                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| getting others involved, drawing them out                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| understanding how things work                              | <input type="checkbox"/> |

(Ack: AGCAS workbook "Exploring Your Future".)

**Now go over your list. For anything marked 1 or 2 give some evidence of how you gained these skills and examples of where they have been used. For anything marked 3 or 4 give some examples of how you could improve your skills. Finally compare your "ability profile" with those of a partner in the class. Are the profiles very similar or very different?**



### **Level 6 Research Project (*Extract from Project Guide*)**

The Undergraduate Project in Business Information Systems is designed to provide an opportunity for the expression of individual energy and ability in completing a significant piece of work related to the aims and objectives of your programme.

The Project is a student led investigation into an applied business problem related to information systems or information technology. The project may be:

- empirical research;
- a problem-based project, set in a real setting;
- a theoretical based project involving a critical and systematic review and synthesis of the literature.

All approaches should be based on appropriate research methods.

The student must choose and refine the topic, search for information on the topic, produce a solid foundation of literature relevant to the topic in a particular context, undertake relevant research (primary and/or secondary), analyse the data collected, draw relevant conclusions, write up and submit the work in an approved format, with a target length of 10,000 words.

Topics for the project may be suggested by the student and perhaps may derive from work experience or past (or current) employment. Academic staff may also suggest suitable topics for selection by students.

The student will be provided with a supervisor for their project. This person will provide guidance during the project period on the progress of the work, the direction of the study and the quality of work carried out.

To help you prepare for undertaking a research based project, there is a Research Methods course in the first semester of the final year, contributing 25% towards the assessment of the module. This course will provide guidance on the nature of the project, help on identifying a topic area, and will cover aspects of the research process such as conducting literature reviews, research methodologies, data collection techniques and data analysis. Further information on the course will be provided separately.

#### **Aims**

The aim of the project is to allow students to undertake an investigation into an applied business problem related to information systems or information technology culminating in the production of a substantial research report.

## **Learning outcomes**

Students should be able to demonstrate academic abilities and skills and knowledge relevant to planning and undertaking a substantial piece of applied business research related to information systems or information technology, including:

1. Selection and refining of a topic;
2. Production of a proposal that justifies the topic area and seeks to plan, schedule, monitor and control the conduct of the project;
3. Assembly of a theoretical base appropriate to the topic, involving the critical analysis of the literature and proper use of citation within arguments;
4. Selection of appropriate research methods and associated research design;
5. Application of analytical skills;
6. Drawing appropriate inferences and conclusions
7. Production of a substantial report giving an honest account of the research undertaken;
8. Dissemination of complex findings to an expert and non-expert audience.

## Appendix 2: Job Description for a Senior Lecturer

### NORTHUMBRIA UNIVERSITY

#### JOB DESCRIPTION

<b>JOB TITLE:</b>	<b>Lecturer/Senior Lecturer in Information Systems</b>
<b>SCHOOL:</b>	<b>Computing and Mathematics</b>
<b>GRADE:</b>	<b>Lecturer/Senior Lecturer</b>
<b>CATEGORY:</b>	<b>Academic</b>

#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE POST**

To provide the School with further expertise in the area of Information Systems.

#### **2. RESPONSIBLE TO**

Head of Subject Division and Head of School.

#### **3. MAIN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- To plan, deliver and review units in IS. This will involve preparing lectures, seminars and practicals, supervising student projects, supporting students through personal tutorials, and associated activities such as reviewing teaching quality.
- To contribute similarly to other units where appropriate.
- To contribute to the development and operation of distance learning based courses.
- Any other duties and responsibilities as may reasonably be required from time to time by the Vice-Chancellor, Dean or Head of School.

#### **5. WORKING RELATIONSHIP**

The post holder will work with academic and support staff across the School. The post holder will be a member of a subject division and, as such, answerable to the Head of School through the Head of Subject Division.

#### **5. LOCATION**

Ellison Building, City Campus, Newcastle upon Tyne with possible teaching duties at Longhirst Campus (approximately 20 miles from city centre)

#### **6. HOURS OF ATTENDANCE**

As contract

## Person Specification

### Lecturer/Senior Lecturer in Information Systems

#### 1. Specific Knowledge

- Information Systems and management concepts, or computer technologies or modern developments in business information systems and strategies [E]
- IS Strategy and strategic alignment of IS with business competitive strategies [D]
- Management of sociological and technological change [D]
- IS development methods and their effect on organisations [D]
- E-Commerce strategies, applications, and development approaches [D]
- Knowledge Management [D]
- A good understanding of quality issues within HE and of effective QA measures in use [D]

#### 2. Skills and Abilities

- Effective communication skills and an ability or judged potential to teach on appropriate programmes and at all levels [E]
  - The ability to develop and deliver units in IS [E]
  - The ability to work independently and as a member of a team at unit and course level [E]
  - The ability to provide personal tutoring to students [E]
  - The ability or judged potential to supervise student projects [E]
  - The ability to apply their specialist knowledge to units on the School's teaching programmes [E]
  - Potential to initiate and carry out research or consultancy which will contribute directly to the School [D]
  - Ability to contribute to unit and course development [E]
  - Ability to contribute to distance learning development [D]
- 
- Ability to contribute to distance learning development [D]
  - Potential to collaborate with external organisations [D]

#### 3. Experience

- IS research activity and/or practitioner and/or professional experience. [E]
- Active involvement with appropriate professional bodies. [D]
- Experience in scholarship through, for example, papers or reports [D]
- Collaboration with external organisations, institutions and national bodies. [D]
- Consultancy for industry or recent industrial experience. [D]
- Teaching experience at least at tutorial level [E]
- Teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate level within a field of interest for the School. [D]

#### **4. Education / Professional Bodies**

---

- An honours degree [E]
- Either a good honours degree in Information Systems or relevant discipline, or a postgraduate qualification in Information Systems or relevant discipline, or a professionally equivalent qualification [E]
- A postgraduate qualification in Information Systems or relevant discipline [D]
- Membership of relevant professional body [D]

#### **5. Other Requirements**

- Willingness to carry out teaching work at the University's Longhirst campus [E]
- Willingness to carry out visits to students in work-based placements [E]
- Willingness to support distance learning based courses [E]
- Willingness to make visits overseas as part of the business of the School [D]

#### **6. Additionally a Senior Lecturer will:**

- Have at least four years professional experience and/or research experience in Information Systems [E]
- Have shown evidence of leadership [E]

[E] = Essential

[D] = Desirable

## **Appendix 3: Corporate Strategy 2013-2018 (Anon)**

### **Strategic Outcomes with selected explanatory statements and discussion**

S01 “Strengthen operational efficiency and effectiveness, and foster a culture of continuous improvement.”

- Professional, self-motivated, customer-focused people and teams  
... *‘we will invest in the right skills and in leadership, recruitment, retention and talent development’ ...*

S02 “Maximise student and stakeholder satisfaction.”

- Recognition as a high quality professional and business-focused university by students, partners and staff.  
... *‘a student centric approach that continually improves the student experience, drives satisfaction and is responsive to student needs, including the move into employment or further study when they leave’ ...*

S03 “Grow high quality research and use it to drive excellence in all of the University’s activities.”

- Research is embedded in teaching and knowledge transfer to drive academic excellence.  
... *‘continue to invest in the recruitment and retention of inspiring, research excellent and entrepreneurial staff.’ ...*

S04 “Build global reputation, market position and revenue streams.”

- A student body of increasingly high achievement and satisfaction.  
... *‘committed to academic excellence’, ... ‘ensure that our academic programmes are innovative, flexible and attractive in content and methods of delivery, making greater use of leading-edge technology’, ...*

### **Business Outcomes – How this will be achieved? (Selected, only)**

- Strengthen culture of improvement, development, performance, coaching and leadership
- Establish new academic employment framework
- Implement new approach to timetabling
- Standardise and automate administrative processes
- Deliver improved student-centric systems and standards of customer service
- Ensure all teaching is research informed
- Optimise technology enabled learning for on-campus students
- Improve support for student retention and progression
- Deliver high quality employment and enterprise support for students and graduates

## Appendix 4: The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (QAA) – 3 of the 19 Expectations, with indicators.

<b>Expectation B3 (Learning and Teaching)</b>
<p>Higher education providers, working with their staff, students and other stakeholders, articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, so that every student is enabled to develop as an independent learner, study their chosen subjects, in depth, and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking.</p>
<b>B3 Indicators of sound practice</b>
<b>Indicator 1</b> Higher education providers articulate and implement a strategic approach to learning and teaching and promote a shared understanding of this approach among their staff, students and other stakeholders.
<b>Indicator 2</b> Learning and teaching activities and associated resources provide every student with an equal and effective opportunity to achieve the intended learning outcomes.
<b>Indicator 3</b> Learning and teaching practices are informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and subject-specific and educational scholarship
<b>Indicator 4</b> Higher education providers assure themselves that everyone involved in teaching or supporting student learning is appropriately qualified, supported and developed.
<b>Indicator 5</b> Higher education providers collect and analyse appropriate information to ensure the continued effectiveness of their strategic approach to, and the enhancement of, learning opportunities and teaching practices.
<i>The learning environment</i>
<b>Indicator 6</b> Higher education providers maintain physical, virtual and social learning environments that are safe, accessible and reliable for every student, promoting dignity, courtesy and respect in their use.
<i>Student engagement in learning</i>
<b>Indicator 7</b> Every student is provided with clear and current information that specifies the learning opportunities and support available to them.
<b>Indicator 8</b> Higher education providers take deliberate steps to assist every student to understand their responsibility to engage with the learning opportunities provided and shape their learning experience.
<b>Indicator 9</b> Every student is enabled to monitor their progress and further their academic development through the provision of regular opportunities to reflect on feedback and engage in dialogue with staff.
<b>Expectation B4 (Enabling student development and achievement)</b>



Higher education providers have in place, monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

**B4 indicators of sound practice**

**Indicator 1**

Through strategic and operational planning, quality assurance and enhancement, higher education providers determine and evaluate how they enable student development and achievement.

**Indicator 2**

Higher education providers define, coordinate, monitor and evaluate roles and responsibilities for enabling student development and achievement both internally and in cooperation with other organisations.

**Indicator 3**

A commitment to equity guides higher education providers in enabling student development and achievement.

**Indicator 4**

Higher education providers inform students before and during their period of study of opportunities designed to enable their development and achievement.

**Indicator 5**

To enable student development and achievement, higher education providers put in place policies, practices and systems that facilitate successful transitions and academic progression.

**Indicator 6**

Higher education providers ensure all students have opportunities to develop skills that enable their academic, personal and professional progression.

**Indicator 7**

Higher education providers ensure staff who enable students to develop and achieve are appropriately qualified, competent, up to date and supported.

**Indicator 8**

Higher education providers make available appropriate learning resources and enable students to develop the skills to use them.

**Expectation B5 (Student engagement)**

Higher education providers take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.

**B5 Indicators of sound practice**

*Defining student engagement*

**Indicator 1**

Higher education providers, in partnership with their student body, define and promote the range of opportunities for any student to engage in education enhancement and quality



assurance.

*The environment*

**Indicator 2**

Higher education providers create and maintain an environment within which students and staff engage in discussions that aim to bring about demonstrable enhancement of the education experience.

*Representational structures*

**Indicator 3**

Arrangements exist for the effective representation of the collective student voice at all organisational levels, and these arrangements provide opportunities for all students to be heard.

*Training and ongoing support*

**Indicator 4**

Higher education providers ensure that student representatives and staff have access to training and ongoing support to equip them to fulfil their roles in educational enhancement and quality assurance effectively.

*Informed conversations*

**Indicator 5**

Students and staff engage in evidence-based discussions based on the mutual sharing of information.

*Valuing the student contribution*

**Indicator 6**

Staff and students disseminate and jointly recognise the enhancements made to the student educational experience, and the efforts of students in achieving these successes.

*Monitoring, review and continuous improvement*

**Indicator 7**

The effectiveness of student engagement is monitored and reviewed at least annually, using pre-defined key performance indicators, and policies and processes enhanced where required.

## Appendix 5: Pen Portraits of interview participants

### 3 tasks – (1) Personal Statement, (2) Reflective Commentary, (3) Reflective Cycle Exercise

#### Participant 1: Neina

##### 1 Personal Statement

I have always had a strong interest in Business Studies and Computing, as well as finding them both very important and practical subjects for use in the future. I can think of no walk of life, activity or sport that does not involve the use of technology or be business related. I have enjoyed studying these subjects for five years now at GCSE, A Level and a Foundation Degree at Northumbria University and I am developing a strong understanding of both subjects now and how they complement each other.

The skills I have developed are through my independent research online for example researching and interpreting data and information, to draw conclusions about the company and analysing case studies has helped me develop skills in making judgements and understanding the business. I have also personally found this out with my current and my previous job at a top French restaurant, where I worked my way to one of their best waiting staff. I had ever before realised the importance or a good knowledge of business when trying to run a high class restaurant, such as how brand perception is so important in contributing towards sales. The restaurant last year upgraded the EPOS system and I was able to compare and see the benefits of improved technology. What I saw was how just an upgrade in technology had made a great improvement in the quality and speed of service also resulting in less wastage which in turn will save money for the company in the future, this in turn made me appreciate how important technology is to the business world and how as time goes on the business world and technology is becoming more and more entwined, I find this incredibly interesting. From my part time job, I have gained a variety of skills which are easily transferable and I feel will be great for me to use at university, in the work place and when moving away from home. These skills include working under pressure, time management, being independent and people skills all of which I have spent time refining and improving.

I have now completed semester one on the ITMB course at Northumbria University where I have completed a number of tasks using ICT and software. Using a weekly planner I have divided and used my time well making sure my time management is efficient, throughout this exercise I have given myself the ability to understand concepts and develop arguments as well as taking an evaluative, analytical and critical approach towards my studies. From doing this, I also uploaded my timetable for the week into my university calendar which I feel has helped me plan out my days and use my time wisely. Using my knowledge of computers and software I then produced a help guide on Microsoft Word on 'How to add a table' this enabled me to use such skills as prioritising tasks and the use of clear, appropriate and accurate instructions for a user to follow. Doing a peer review with a classmate helped me to constructively criticize

others work and also get feedback from others. To find out what kind of person I am and how is best for myself to work, I used some personality and learning questionnaires – Belbin (1993) and Honey & Mumford (2004). According to the Belbin test, I am a shaper and monitor evaluator. When I read the strengths and weaknesses, they were true and all applied to me in some way. I am a Pragmatist Activist in the Honey & Mumford tests which is true in some cases, I do learn by doing and like involve myself in new experiences. However the Activist description I don't feel relates to me, I don't often learn by theories and techniques to see if they work, I like to get straight down to the task in hand.

A short term goal of mine is to pass this first year of university doing well and making sure I go into the second year having a good knowledge of all modules I have studied, and not lacking behind in anything. The third year I hope to be on placement which I have already been researching , I enjoy the Project Management side of business and think that my placement will really help me gain skills in the running of a business and also Project Management. Long term I want to strive for my love of business and ICT, and within two years of graduating Northumbria University be in a steady job and be earning an amount to live comfortably in my favorite city London.

I believe the skills I have learnt whilst doing my foundation degree and the skills I am yet to learn on my ITMB degree will help me reach my short and long term goals.

## **2 Reflective Commentary**

The aim of the module Skills for information system professionals is to prepare me for future employment and careers. The module introduces practical and technical skills to help me in the workplace for the future. The profiling and self-development tools help me develop into a "lifelong learner". The teaching in the module was from lectures, workshops, seminars and companies coming in to talk about what they want from me either in placement or even after we have finished this degree. The point of the module is to equip me as a student with an introduction to problem solving, decision making, teamwork and leadership skills required by modern companies.

The E-portfolio (pebble pad) is the way that I will be assessed throughout the year; it allows me to add whatever I have done in workshops, seminars and what I have learnt in lectures to be marked. Not only this but it helps me to self-monitor and reflect on what I have learnt previously. Therefore I can look back on what I have done throughout the year and see if I have improved in the self-monitoring tasks, or if I can improve on pieces of work.

Every skill I have learnt within this module are easily transferrable life skills to use in the future, such as the creating of a CV which I can now use as my basic template for every job I apply for, and my personal statement from semester 1. It's important that I am able to reflect on my past experiences throughout the module and able to learn lessons from them from the personal development strategies that are used

throughout. I feel using personal development planning helped develop my learning strategies, using 'Maslow's Hierarchy' and the 'Stress Bucket' helped me realise what was important in life and that getting this degree was at the moment the most important thing to me. The 'Stress Bucket' helped me to use my time well and do the things I needed to such as - pass this degree. I feel all of the PDP strategies were helpful to motivate me to do work and put my all into the pieces of work I was set.

The self-evaluation techniques I have used throughout the year of this module such as Belbin, Honey and Mumford learning styles have made me realise the way I learn. The Belbin test results said that I was a shaper and monitor evaluator, when I read the strengths and weakness of this all applied to myself in some way and were true. I then did the Myers Briggs online test which resulted in me being 67% Extraverted, Sensing 1%, Feeling 25% and Perceiving 11%. Some of the things described me well being an "ESFP" such as "ESFP's love to talk" which is one of my main traits. But on the other hand it also came up that "Perhaps it's the newness of life that attracts ESFP's to elementary education, especially to preschool and kinder garden" which doesn't apply to me at all.

New knowledge I have gained within this module had made me work harder I feel in the other five different modules I do within my course. I feel this module really makes you apply yourself and think about employability and where I could potentially go in the future after I graduate from this course. Not only this but when we have had guests speakers in about placements this excited me and I realised that I would love to do a placement, when I wasn't too sure about doing one before.

The tasks submitted as part of my e-portfolio (pebble pad) in my opinion are worth 26/27 marks all of the fourteen tasks submitted (and more) I marked them all individually and then divided by 14. For my Reflective Commentary I'm marking this as 28. I feel I included everything that was needed and I explained well in my "Individual Marks for each of the tasks in the e-portfolio" on my links below why I awarded myself these marks. And I hope you agree as I have spent a long time doing this subject and I am surprised how much this module has benefited me.

### **3 Reflective Cycle Exercise**

In September 2011, I came to university to do a foundation degree as I live so far down south I had to move into student accommodation. When I arrived at my halls, it was so busy but I loved the look of the halls - New Bridge Street Residence, which were completely brand new and I would be the first year to have moved into the residency.

Excited and nervous we started to unload my belongings with my mum and dad and I received my flat keys flat 5 room 70, I was on the bottom floor. As I walked into my new home I saw older women who politely said "Hello" and welcomed me when I came into the flat, straight away I unlocked my door and as soon as I got into my room was very upset the fact that I'd be living with a mature student. I was devastated; straight

away I thought that I wouldn't be able to party and do all of the 'studenty' things that students do. My dad reassured me and said I was being silly for getting upset. Eventually we got the last box out of the car, it was my kitchen utensils box as I made my way to the kitchen to unload the box and check it out; I realised that the 'mature student' that I thought I was going to be living with was just in fact one of the boys mothers. I had a sudden burst of relief.

I was greeted nicely by all of my housemates and they all introduced themselves, Eve, Chris and John. They had already been in the flat for a few hours and had got there rooms together already. I was so happy Eve immediately looked like a kind of girl that I'd be able to get on with well, and so did Chris.

As soon as I was introduced to my housemates I was keen to be left by my mum and dad, it wasn't that emotional saying goodbye as they were both staying in Newcastle that evening so I'd see them the following day.

I was so excited for the first evening and asked if my other housemates had brought the fresher's week band, they all said yes and we all walked to the student union to get the wrists bands we had brought.

Moving into my new house away from home was such a good experience and when I look back on it now it makes me smile. I feel I learnt a lot by moving away from home and I'm happy I came to a city so far away from home as I could have the advantage of growing up fast as there is no one to rely on near you. I'm very happy in Newcastle, and glad that I had some great housemates last year.

## **Participant 2: Eva**

### **Personal Statement**

I was introduced to ICT at a very young age of 5, I am now 19 and from then I have had the benefit to witness ICT develop tremendously, from beginning to use the internet via dial up connection and now using WIFI and Fibre Optic internet. Over the years this has broadened my knowledge of what technology is capable of. I have a very keen interest in this and I am fascinated in technology and the seemingly never ending possibilities. I believe that there is no end to technology advances, it will keep growing and I would like to be a part of this. I also have an interest in business, how businesses work and how information technology can develop a business. I have studied ICT and business at, GCSE and at an advance level which led me wanting to study ICT in much greater depth. This is why I applied and think ITMB (Information Technology Management for Business) is the best course for me.

I am strongly passionate about ICT because without it the environment we live in today would not be the same. Nearly every aspect of our daily lives, from commerce to leisure is dependent on IT. Technologies today play a vital role in our daily activities such as laptops, hand held's, tablets and mobile phones to contact friends and family via phone calls and SMS, instant messaging, social networking, email, use of the internet, used to watch TV programmes/films, read the news, play games etc.... ICT has made our society much easier to live in and has enhanced social interaction where people can communicate efficiently.

I have always had an interested in IT, myself three other girls entered a Jaguar competition at high school. This involved designing a car, making a clay model of the final concept, devising a presentation and creating a prototype using various types of technology and software. Not only was it fun to work in a team, be relied on and be truly motivated but it was an achievement to win the Ireland and UK competition.

I have come from Ireland to study at Northumbria University. Being independent I believe that moving away from home to university is taking a big step and change for my life. I enjoy meeting new people from different cultures with different views and opinions and I consider university is the perfect place for this. I am hard working in and outside of term time, during term I like to focus on my university studies as that is my main priority. Over the holidays I have a part time job back home in a Centra supermarket. I have worked in Centra now for nearly five years, over the years I have trained in each department in the store for example, till operator, deli/store assistant. The company has given me the responsibility to train new members of staff which I have done regularly.

During semester 1 studying ITMB, I have completed numerous tasks using different types of technology and software. I have developed my organisational and time management skills by managing my time into sections to ensure that my days are productive and this has given me the ability to concentrate and focus my attention on areas where it is needed. The Skills for Information Systems Professionals module has helped me progress my academic and professional skills by creating a help guide for a novice. Throughout this task I made use of clear, appropriate and accurate writing styles to ensure that the user would be able to understand and apply the information. I am able to adapt to new situations and

respond to feedback which this semester has proven as I have had to work in a group on a number of occasions. Semester one has thoroughly helped me develop a number of skills which adapt to ITMB however, it has also helped me understand more about myself. I completed a number of self evaluation tasks such as, Belbin personality questionnaire, Honey and Mumford learning questionnaire. I didn't agree on points the questionnaires developed, although the points I did agree on helped me put into perspective what type of learner and person I am, which will help me when working in a team and revising.

My priority to date is to pass my first year at university, to continue my course. Hopefully by my third year I will be on placement, where I want to return to Belfast which is nearer to home. I will then continue my final year at Northumbria University and hopefully graduate with a first or 2:1 degree. My long term goal is to strive to have stable job within the ITMB field after at least 2 years of graduating.

I will continue to work to achieve more and make full use of all the facilities university has to offer, to ensure I achieve my future goals.

### **Reflective Commentary**

The Skills for Information System Professionals' module is designed to develop my ability to learn and provide me with skills to be academically aware. The module is designed to prepare me in the career of being an information system professional. The module helped develop my skills in writing reports and provided support when writing a CV and personal statement which will be beneficial when I am searching for a job in the Information Technology industry. It has provided me with key skills and techniques that are necessary when pursuing a degree at university, which will be maintained and developed throughout my life when I hopefully become a professional in a business environment. The module has key aspects which are created to encourage me as a student to engage with learning and develop self-confidence and self-efficacy. The Skills for Information System Professionals was designed to prepare me to be an autonomous lifelong learner.

The Personal Development Planning (PDP) strategy was a useful tool in order to help my learning technique, capability and relate this to a wider context. We focused slightly on 'Maslow's Triangle' where I reflected back on my experiences at university so far. 'Maslow's Triangle' stressed to me the importance of not only the obviously aspects of my life but the not so obvious as well, for example, creativity, spontaneity and so forth. These aspects are never something I would normally focus on but after PDP I plan on adding these to my life. 'The Stress Bucket' taught me about various personal resources that I put in and the amount I need to give out. PDP has helped me articulate my personal goals and evaluate my progress towards my achievement and has encouraged me to monitor, review, plan and take responsibility for my learning.

E-portfolio (Pebble Pad) was developed to provide interactive learning for students and making it easier for them to hand in work load, which can be done within the university campus or at home. I was able to upload files which I completed throughout the year in

lectures, seminars and workshops. It allows me to self-monitor and look back on tasks which I have previously uploaded and improve them if necessary. The e-portfolio has facilitated me to generate records of learning and documents which will help me apply for employment in the computing (ITMB) industry. It has allowed me to communicate and collaborate with group members and allowed me to share files with trusted individuals. The e-portfolio has really set me up for the future and encouraged me to think about employability.

Throughout the year we completed a few self-evaluation and profiling questionnaires which was aimed to help us understand what nature of person we were and what type of learner we are. I found the Belbin test to be quite interesting as I had mixed thoughts on its outcome. According to the Belbin test I am a co-ordinator, meaning that I am calm, self-confident and controlled, which I agree that I have all of these characteristics. However, the Belbin test also stated that I have "No pretensions as regards intellectual or creative ability", which I disagree with as I believe I contribute good suggestions where necessary and I'm known to be quite creative amongst friends and family.

Overall, I think that my portfolio is worth 28 marks out of 30 due to the effort and time I put into every bit of work for my module. Throughout the year I have completed thorough research to ensure I had a wide range of knowledge and understanding of my modules. I have also been sure to attend both lectures and seminars regularly in order to be sure I did not miss anything important. I particularly found seminars effective as I built great relationships with my group and we have helped each other out with areas we found difficult. For this given module I have completed each set task, I have completed and created questionnaires, developed user guides, produced an industry standard CV and personal statement. Effectively, this is due to what I have learnt in this module during the year and the amount of work I have put into my studies both at university and in my own free time.



## Participant 4: Dan

### Personal Statement

This document is my personal statement that I am going to be submitting for module ISO472BNN01. For this piece of work I have completed many pieces of additional work to accompany my personal statement. Which include Eloise Evaluation Test, Honey and Mumford Test, Learning Style Test, Weekly Planner, Belbin's Role Test, Semester One Modules List, Humanmetrics Test, Help Guide on Inserting a Table in Microsoft Word and a Microsoft Outlook Timetable. These documents helped me to evaluate myself and analyse different aspects of my life.

When looking for employees businesses ensure that the potential member of staff is a rounded individual, which I believe I am. Employers want an employee that has things like hobbies and interests. I play rugby for Hartlepool Rovers Heughers, which is the second team at the club. I have played rugby since I started secondary school and I am now tipped to be playing first team rugby for my club in the near future which will be a great achievement. I am going to take the commitment that I have applied to playing rugby and apply it to my education at Northumbria University and this will hopefully ensure that I succeed.

The dedication that I have developed playing rugby for many years I now apply to many aspects of my life, including my work at university. I have set hours that I do work for my course each night so that I do not fall behind in what is being taught. I developed this method of doing things through working in the gym at certain times on certain days also training for rugby.

As I was brought up in an area of Hartlepool which traditionally has less income than other areas I have always had to work for anything that I wanted. From the age of thirteen I worked two paper rounds before I had to walk almost three miles to school. This gave me the grounding that I believe has helped me throughout life and taught me that hard work can be satisfying once you see the results.

I chose Northumbria University for many reasons one of which being the fact that there is a placement year that can be done there. This will give me the experience that I need to enter the workforce once I have graduated, as most employers currently say that experience is the most sought after credential when looking for new employees.

Northumbria University for me seemed like the best option for me because I had a business background I thought that a university with a prestigious business school such as Northumbria's would provide me with a sturdy learning platform. As business is a vast area to study I decided to narrow it down to studying the IT part of business because I have always found enjoyment when using computers.

I am currently studying Business Information Technology which I believe to be a great course for potential jobs as it takes aspects from the study of business combined with the use of IT (Module List). With the knowledge I gain from completing this degree course I believe that I would be suited for many jobs that focus either on the IT side of my course or the business. The world is becoming more IT dependant which means that a course that combines the aspects of IT and business would be a great for the future.

After I have completed my degree I am going to take a further year of study so that I can

qualify to become a teacher, this has been a goal of mine for many years. I have always had a thirst for learning and passing on the knowledge that I have gained to others ([Help Guide](#)). Becoming a teacher is not easy as the spaces on the courses are highly competitive so I will apply myself fully to my degree in Business Information Technology. As my degree combines both Business and I.T when I become a teacher I will be capable of teaching both subject areas, which opens up many more doors than focusing solely on one of the two areas.

I believe that I have great time management skills and this has helped me through my school and college life. I have always been a very punctual person, I believe that this was developed through having to travel long distances to school, I had to ensure that I started the journey early enough so that I made it on time. ([Outlook Timetable](#))

Whenever I have been in a team I have always filled in different roles in a team or group ([Belbin Role Test](#)). I found that I could be helpful to different teams or groups in different ways, when the team is lacking direction I am capable of taking the lead and taking the group forward. When someone in the team is doing a good job of leading the team I am capable of taking instructions and performing them to the best of my ability. This makes me a great addition to any team or group that is lacking a member or a leader.

Throughout my life I have always been able to learn in numerous different ways ([Learning Styles](#)), this has meant that if I found learning something difficult I can try different methods of learning. Through a variation of being told, performing and seeing someone perform a task I can learn new quickly which helps me to adapt to new situations and perform well. As well as the techniques listed above I have always used past experiences to help me learn new things, this means that if I can relate a new problem with a past problem then there is a greater chance of me being able to solve it. ([Eloise Test](#))

I find that new situations do not intimidate me but rather excite me, facing a new problem is just developing my mind. I feel that new problems bring entertainment and meeting the new people who are going to solve the problem with me is part of the fun. This means that I am great at meeting new people and fitting in to teams. I am always willing to give something a go because there is nothing wrong in trying but failing. Although a problem with this is I can often become bored with a task and wasn't to move on to new things before the last task is complete ([Honey and Mumford](#), [Humanmetrics](#))

I feel as though I can evaluate where I am spending time in a day what could be spent better in different areas of my life ([Weekly Planner](#)). I can realise that I spend too much time doing menial things where the time could be used to do things that will benefit me in the long run such as studying.

The start of my university life began four months ago and since that time I have been working hard and ensuring that I attend all lectures and seminars so that I can learn as much as possible and achieve the best possible results in my first year so that I can continue my study next year.

I am aiming for a 2:1 or better then I finish my course, I believe that I can achieve this if I continue to work at the same level that I am currently working at. I can achieve my target if I work more in my own time I am going to aim to work for an extra 4 hours a day out of lecture, seminar and workshop time, if I stick to this then I believe that I can achieve the target that I have set myself.

Overall I believe that hard work and dedication can help you achieve anything that you want and with this in my mind many would agree that along with my skills I'm capable of completing my goals and going on to further education so that I can one day help children develop their minds. With this new chapter in my life comes a whole new set of aims and objectives that I will set out to accomplish.

#### Reflective writing task

During my time in this module I have learnt how to use E-portfolio tools to set up a e-portfolio, whilst completing my portfolio I have had to do many tasks which included complete a action plan. My action plan needed to show how I planned to achieve what I aimed for in semester one. I set myself a target to gain a first at the end of the year in my opinion I am on track to reach this.

I also had to complete a reflective writing task analysing how I felt I had have done this year, I also had to complete another reflective writing task where I had to pick a time in my life where i had a experience that I found interesting or intrigued me, I then had to write about this in a reflective manner.

Another of the tasks was to create a CV for my e-portfolio; which I will use for applying for jobs and I can just update this regularly so I will not have to write a full new CV again. Curriculum vitae are a written description of my work experience, educational background, and skills and my hobbies. Also called a CV, it is more detailed than a résumé. A curriculum vita is also used by someone seeking employment.

I had to create a questionnaire for the university based on the communication between staff and students, I was given the questions that needed to be included but I was given the freedom to choose what layout I wanted to use. I had to create the questionnaire so that it could be filled in online. I used an online questionnaire maker so that I could gather the results and collaborate the information easily. Another option that I had was to use Microsoft software and e-mail the questionnaires but I found that this way was easier for all parties. My questionnaire has eight questions which are mostly multiple choice questions

The Denton dairies case study that I had to read and answer question was about a business that was having communication problems. They were being disrespectful to the mangers. The case study asked me to offer solutions to this problem. I thought that the lack of respect was causing rifts between staff members which was bad news for the business and this needed to be addressed.

The e-portfolio tool is very effective and efficient has it enables the students to create a catalogue of their work electronically which also saves using paper. Rather that carrying all their work around and giving it to their teachers to mark they can simply insert it to the desired gateway and then receive feedback as soon as the piece of work has been assessed. It also helps the tutors as they will not misplace any pieces of work as it stays in the gateway until viewed. Using the e-portfolio students are able to create action plans which would help them plan for the future and also help them achieve their goals, they are

able to create CV's which are helpful for the future as they can make a note of all their achievements and keep adding to it as they go.

## Participant 5: Phil

### Personal Statement

I chose to study Business Information Technology mainly because the world of business is becoming more and more dependent on the use of IT to achieve its aims, and ever since I first used a computer I have always had an interest and wanted to learn the intricate details of how one of man's greatest inventions works. I have always been interested in computers, but my other hobbies are revolved mainly about keeping fit. I've been heavily involved with rugby and Athletics since the age of 14, playing rugby for both my school and my hometown I have also had trials for England's under 18 Athletic squad for the 100m sprint.

Before university my previous IT experience includes my GNVQ IT and general computer use in all areas, I have also built my last two personal computers from the individual components which provided me with basic knowledge of computer hardware. I would say that I have fairly good general knowledge in both the software and hardware sides of IT and by the end of my four year programme I hope to increase both areas into more specialist knowledge as this will increase my chances of being employed in an IT occupation.

So far the work done in this module has taught me a number of valuable skills needed for the world of work, from time management to leadership skills; by the end of my course I predict that I will be fully equipped with the tools needed to be successful with an occupation in IT.

When it came to the time management exercise I found this particularly useful because it showed me how to plan my time more effectively and therefore reduce the amount I was wasting. Time management is a vital section because it is needed in every aspect of life not just occupational. The main change that I made when re-scheduling my day was to spread tasks out more evenly throughout the week rather than just focus on one activity at a time. This was because when you spent a lot of time on the same task, then you would often start becoming bored and lose concentration and this in turn affected your work. The main tool that we got familiar with was Microsoft Outlook express, this was also particularly useful since it give you a overlook of the week ahead and if you can see exactly what you have to achieve in that week then you are less likely to deviate from it.

I directly applied the skills I learned to my university lifestyle by adding my timetable onto outlook and also creating a study plan so that I had a detailed plan of when to work on assignments and reduce the risk that I would fail to meet deadlines. I also made a weekly planner, this meant that I made an estimate of the number of hours I spent on activities each day, I then categorised the activities in groups of how crucial they were. From there I could see where I was spending the majority of my time and if needed I could reduce the amount of time spent on less important tasks and add it to the more crucial ones. My study plan that I created was also a major help, as I chose the days that I would be working on my assignments and set specific times on those days that I would work on them. This meant that as long as I stuck to this particular plan, all of my work would be submitted on time to a high standard. The files that I used in the time management tasks are the following:

<http://pebblepad.northumbria.ac.uk/viewasset.aspx?oid=18189&type=file> – Outlook Calendar

<http://pebblepad.northumbria.ac.uk/viewasset.aspx?oid=50586&type=file> – Weekly plan

with evaluation

<http://pebblepad.northumbria.ac.uk/viewasset.aspx?oid=50665&type=file> – Study plan

In this module I also created a help guide aimed at helping someone who was non IT-literate in using a particular piece of software, I chose to create a guide on how to insert clipart onto a Microsoft word document. The main concern during this piece of work was to remember to not use jargon, or words that I would so easily use, because someone without my knowledge in IT would not understand it, the solution was to make a step by step guide that was very simple to understand but at the same time still detailed enough to cover everything. Once I had completed the help guides we then, emailed them to other students on the module for them to add feedback, I give feedback to ... as he did to me. I found the comments useful and if I had to make improvements to my help guide I would make it a little more detailed, just to reduce the risk that the user would be confused. My help guide with comments can be found at:

<http://pebblepad.northumbria.ac.uk/viewasset.aspx?oid=50582&type=file>

As part of the module I also took part in a number of questionnaires, the results of which told me; what type of learner I was, my role in a team and what type of person I was. Although I did agree with some parts of the results I was quite sceptical with certain aspects as some of the results conflicted, for example; one questionnaire scored me very highly as a “thinker” whilst one scored me very low. The questionnaires were useful in some areas, particularly the Learning Styles, as this showed that I was mainly a Kinaesthetic and Visual learner and less of an auditory learner. By knowing this I would be able to capitalise on my strengths, by making sure that when I am in lectures and seminars then I continue to take notes, rather than just sit and listen. When it came to the Honey and Mumford Learning Styles Questionnaire I was quite skeptical again as I scored quite high in all aspects, and although I scored the highest as a Pragmatist which I agree with it also says I have fairly strong preference and moderate preference as an activist, theorist and reflector. Those results are conflicting.

The results and my reflection on those results can be found here:

<http://pebblepad.northumbria.ac.uk/viewasset.aspx?oid=50601&type=file> – Team Roles Questionnaire

<http://pebblepad.northumbria.ac.uk/viewasset.aspx?oid=50602&type=file> – Learning Styles Questionnaire

<http://pebblepad.northumbria.ac.uk/viewasset.aspx?oid=50603&type=file> – Jung Typology Questionnaire

<http://pebblepad.northumbria.ac.uk/viewasset.aspx?oid=50607&type=file> – personal reflection

<http://pebblepad.northumbria.ac.uk/viewasset.aspx?oid=50873&type=file> - Honey and Mumford Learning Styles Questionnaire

We also did exercise on citation which I found particularly useful as it was essential in order for me to progress in my academic career. As students our personal opinions are irrelevant when it comes to Academic work, and instead we have to draw on theories and knowledge derived from scholars. Simply listing what you draw upon would be classed as plagiarism so citation is essential to show that you are using other people’s work and not passing it off as your own.

When it comes to evaluating my work I have an on going progress which involves team

work with other students, when I have finished my working asking another student to offer feedback is always invaluable, as me and Jordan Frazer learned proof reading can be a life saver. On top of that I always had the process to have multiple drafts, which were under constant review so I made sure that I was constantly improving my work. So far in this module and others I have scored mostly over 70%, which is exactly where I want to be.

My short term goals are to score at least 70% in all modules as I wouldn't be happy with anything less than a first class degree at the end of my four years, and if my grades are falling short now, even though I'm only in my first year then I would have to work even harder to achieve my desired grade later on.

My long term goals include leaving university with the highest grade possible and also with a Masters if possible, in order to increase my employability. I have always wanted a career within the RAF, mainly to see the world and experience the disciplined lifestyle that they have, but most of all I have always dreamt to be able to fly. The training is vigorous and the selection system is very harsh so I will need to work extremely hard in order to secure my place.

### **Reflective Commentary**

My year studying Business Information technology has provided me with many skills that I believe I will use in my professional life upon leaving university. The module "skills for information systems professions" has been the main module responsible.

I believe that one of the most important things we learned this year was how to write a "good" CV since it is the first thing that a potential employer is going to see of you and therefore if you do not have a very impressive CV then you are never going to get any further than them reading it and as potential post graduates it is expected that we will be the ones looking for very competitive jobs, where the employers are going to be looking for ways to sift through the candidate pool.

I enjoyed the report writing task as this gave me the chance to look at a problem, analyse it and then write to the company explaining how I would fix it. I think the reason I enjoyed this was because when you completed the task you got an idea of real life situation in which you could put these new found skills to use, rather than just learn them and be left thinking "when am I ever going to use that".

The help guide was also a particularly trick scenario for me at first, since I have always grown up with computers and therefore assumed that everyone had the same knowledge of computer systems as I do, but in this exercise we had to make a step by step instruction guide for someone with limited experience with a computer and the goal was to get them to complete a simple task using one. I chose how to insert clip art and found the best way was to pretend that I had never used a computer and then thought about what I would need to read in order to do it. Finally by taking regular screenshots I believe I created a guide that anyone could follow.

The personal development planning structure I thought was inconsistent, because everyone is different and therefore they have their own style of learning so a single learning system that works for everyone is simply impossible. The PDP was effective sometimes because you know your own strengths and weaknesses and therefore you can focus on the areas that need improving, rather than wasting time on the ones that don't, so your plan becomes more personal and accurate for yourself. On other occasions however I

deviated from my path and found it difficult to re-plan everything. This left me completely scrapping my old plan and coming up with an entirely new one which I found very time consuming, instead of wasting time doing this I could've simply just been getting on with my work.

I did enjoy having the new found independence with my own study and I believe it will be excellent in the long run, since being told where to put your study time in will not develop independent research and learning skills. I would like to say that I was unsure whether I had written the correct thing for the semester 1 and 2 action plans because if I'm perfectly honest they took hardly any time to write because I didn't go into much detail with them. If I went into lots of detail I may as well have just done the work in the time I used planning, however the things I did write I may as well have not wrote because they were so obvious.

A piece of work that I thought linked closely with the theme of personal development was my "flying the nest" experience piece. In this I mention that I have made a lot of mistakes this year however its only by making these that I now know I will not make them again, the same can be said with my work this year. Things like leaving work till the last minute will not be repeated again next year, as I know the consequences of doing so.

I found the e-portfolio particularly useful, since we got to insert the piece of work as soon as it was completed all throughout the year, and then simply assemble them at the end into a very neat and easy to read online document. The layout is not unlike an index, where the main page has links to all the other pieces so you simply click the page you want. In addition the facilities such as the step by step wizard are a great help because it gives you a great layout and an easier understanding for pieces of work such as CV's and action plans. The address for Pebblepad is <http://pebblepad.northumbria.ac.uk/pebblepad.aspx>.

I think that the Pebblepad could be used in all courses at university and with better application these could be the future of interviews with companies asking you to bring your E-portfolio rather than your CV since, it has all your information as well as examples of your work.

The questionnaires that we took in semester 2 were quite useful to those who had never done them before since they took very detailed information on what we found useful using our learning experiences and then used the results to calculate what kind of learner we were. From these results we could then use the information to change our learning routine to see if it improved. I must admit though I was disappointed to learn about this again as it seems to be a very common in every educational establishment I've been to since I was sixteen, and upon seeing them again and speaking to alot of my peers we all came to the decision that it was a waste of time at this point in our education. Afterall if you didn't know how to study then it is very unlikely that you would've made it to university.

I believe that I was particularly strong in this module when it came to the skills and knowledge; I have had jobs since I was sixteen that have taught me most of the skills I have learned this year, so most of the year I found was simply honing existing skills, such as communication, observation, presentation and business practise. Some of the skills that I was taught I didn't view as a "skill" but more "common sense", an example of this would be the writing styles exercise where we were told how changing font and the size of our writing makes work look better, I thought this was a very obvious and didn't need teaching.

My weakest point by far had to be more discipline when sticking to the times I had planned, far too often I found myself getting distracted from doing the work and deviating



from my plan, as I planned to do most of the work within the three week Easter holiday, this backfired however since I had to have an operation which meant that I had to go home and spend most of that recovering. The work load in my final weeks was incredibly high when it should've been finished.

Although you only need 40% in all modules to progress onto year 2, I would be very disappointed if I achieved only 40%. I'm aiming for at least 60% to get my 2:1 because it's my understanding that potential employers for third year placement look at your first year grade and I want and need a good third year placement to ensure that I get a year of real business experience.

In conclusion I thought the rationale behind that course was very effective, it made us focus and hone our skills that we got in life rather than just the ones we were learning at University, also it made it quite clear the situations in which we would use these, the report writing task, the meeting case study are all examples of where we would use these skills.

### **My "flying the nest" experience**

This last year has been unlike any other in my life, up until I was 18 years old I had always lived at home, where I had everything bought for me. Even then when I finally left home I went into my first year accommodation at university, which did give me a little responsibility but not much considering that everything was paid with single payment every term which came from my loan.

This year however I found myself moving into privately owned accommodation that had nothing to do with my university. In this new house I was responsible for council tax, Fuel bills, internet and phone, weekly shopping, water rates and countless other little things that until very recently I had never even thought about.

The sheer jump between my old comfortable lifestyle to this new one where I was responsible for my whole life was quite shocking at first; it was quite a wakeup call. I was lucky enough to live with three of my friends from my hometown who were also quite responsible. I always remember my parents saying "you'll get a shock when you start living in the real world" and I did, losing £355 a month like clockwork every month and then getting ridiculous bills in winter meant that you soon get a real grasp of the value of money and stop taking all the little things for granted. If you didn't then you would soon find yourself slipping further and further into your already deep overdraft and ringing home asking for money.

The novelty factor of living by yourself with no rules and restrictions soon wears off when you look at how much it actually costs to "own" this freedom and it's not long before you start wishing that you were back at home without a care in the world.

I was lucky enough to receive back payments from the student loan company; if I hadn't then I would've probably had to drop out of university because I had already exhausted every other option. This year although I have made quite a few mistakes I can honestly say that I have learned from them. Next year I will be more careful with my spending, I will take more time looking around houses for little things such as better insulation, I will look for the cheapest gas suppliers and many other little things, that all in all will make my next year much more productive than the last. At the end of the day the sooner you admit you made a mistake the sooner you can look at it, learn from it and make sure that it never happens again.

That is what I can take away from my flying the nest experience.

## Appendix 6: Final tables of themes for Participants – ‘The Researcher’

### Participant 1 – ‘The Researcher’

Note: No line numbers inserted here as all of the text is included as part of the actual IPA Case 6.1

#### Superordinate theme 1: Forms of self-doubt relating to a lack of awareness of self

##### Sub theme 1: Flawed infrastructure and lack of higher order intellect

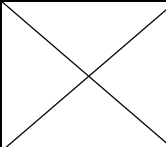
Music	<i>“I can remember from a very early age, 5 onwards, going to piano lessons with an old lady who lived in a very messy house. My dad used to ask me every day if I had done some practice. My dad was lovely and was always pleased when I had done my practice every day.”</i>	
Education / Career Choices	<i>“I got 8 ‘O levels’ and thought I was very clever. I failed all of my ‘A’ levels but it was alright because I managed to get a good job in a Personnel Department in a factory.”</i>	

##### Sub theme 2: Perception of self to others

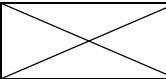
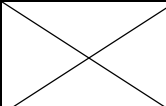
Music	<i>“I’m not very good really. He is much better than me. Everybody always comments on his playing. Do you really want to listen to me play?”</i>	
Education/ Career Choices	<i>‘The teacher training qualifications were tested by examination, and Jackie failed the first one. She recognised that she had not prepared for it through distractions and lack of focus, and immediately re-sat it giving full attention where needed and was successful a second time. This was the wake up call that was needed to show the attainment of success through hard work and application, and deviations through negligence and lack of attention needed to be eliminated. ‘</i>	

Sub theme 3: Pupil is not mature enough to make decisions relating to self and becomes conditioned to allow others to make them for her.

Music	<i>“I’ve been going to piano lessons since I was 5. Now I’m fed up with it but I know my dad will be disappointed if I stop. I’d rather go out with my friends.”</i>	
Education/	<i>‘Looking back, this was a failing in the family support</i>	

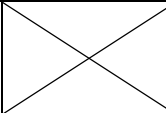
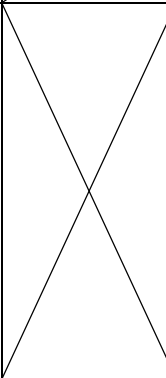
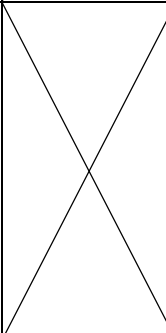
Career Choices	<i>network to provide guidance and advice on the next steps to be taken. Jackie was clearly not making her own decisions, and was in some way trying to evaluate options within a very immature mind-set at the time. '</i>	
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*Sub theme 4: Thinking that you know that it is time to 'stop' but you could be wrong about this.*

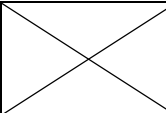
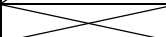
Music	<i>"I've got Grade 5 now and can play most songs, so it's enough for me. I can read music."</i>	
Education/ Career Choices	<i>'With a secure full-time job and part-time teaching experience, new job opportunities within the teaching profession started to become options for Jackie.'</i>	

### **Superordinate theme 2: Recognition of own skills and abilities**

*Sub theme 1: Do you really think I'm capable of that?*

Music	<i>"Are you really putting me in for Grade 7 and not Grade 6? I was thinking Grade 6 might be enough for me at my age".</i>	
Education	<i>"I can remember when I went to my Masters' congregation that was held at Durham University on the Palace Green, and my parents came with me. I walked through Palace Green in my black gown, trimmed with purple and gold. When I was talking to my parents, who were very proud of my achievements, my father said to me 'you would look good in red' – which was the PhD gown colours. At that moment, even though I thought I was 'finished', he opened up sufficient curiosity for me to pursue a PhD."</i>	
Career Choices	<i>'<b>Career Gestalt moment:</b> Jackie had always wanted to be a teacher but not going to university was limiting this option. However, through being able to experience commercial subjects such as shorthand and typewriting at 6<sup>th</sup> form, and being one of the best in the class, she decided that teaching was still an option that was available as conversations with the teachers provided Jackie with relevant career information in the business administration area.'</i>	

*Sub theme 2: What credentials do I need to have in order to believe in myself just a bit.*

Music	<i>"Not many people seem to do piano now to Grades 7 and 8 so there is nobody about who can play and read music the way we require."</i>	
Education/	<i>'Whilst working in the college, further self-study was</i>	

Career Choices	<i>undertaken and a Certificate in Education was achieved (one that previous university attendance could have resulted in), and then a Masters' in Education was acquired.'</i>	
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*Sub theme 3: Finding hidden depths*

Music	<i>"Sometimes when I play the piano I seem to go somewhere else in my head and it's like it's not me playing any more and I probably feel that I can play anything in the world at that point and I feel very strong and confident and never want to stop playing but then I'm back to being me again."</i>	
Education	<i>"It has taken a long time to believe that I am actually doing a PhD, let alone having something interesting to research and write about."</i>	
Career Choices	<i>'A full time job was secured in the college where Jackie had acquired the teaching qualifications. This position was as a Lecturer that eventually led to a Senior Lecturer role and a Course Leader role that was a managerial position. '</i>	

**Superordinate theme 3: Planning the next steps and the way forward**

*Sub theme 1: No more goals established so not sure where to go now!*

Music	<b><i>Emerging questions (from within Jackie's head)</i></b> <i>What do I do now? Do I really want to do any more than this [theatre]? Have I got time? What if Dave is not there? Could I do it on my own? How much practise should be done? What happens if this cannot be maintained? What music should form a repertoire that might impress people listening to Jackie play?</i>	
Education/ Career Choices	<b><i>Emerging questions (from within Jackie's head)</i></b> <i>What do I want to do when I get my PhD? How can I alter the shape of my career? Do I want to? "I need to complete this in order to continue in my career."</i>	

Participant 2 – *Neina*

**Superordinate theme 1:** *“I wanted to come to Northumbria because I was born here and all my family live here and my mum and dad are based ... “*

Description: The lived experience of leaving home and coming to university.

Emotional dependence	“I did A level and GCSE. I had an amazing teacher who was Irish and he was amazing. He persuaded me to do it [business] at college as well so I did it then and Newcastle I wanted to come to Northumbria because I was born here and all my family live here and my mum and dad are based as such.”	26
Family support	“Yea, amazing family.”	98
Peer support network	“Yea, definitely, my girls [support group of friends] are amazing.”	102
Assisted decision making	“I don’t know he [the teacher] was just, he’d go into class and you’d think aw class, aw going to be a good hour because he would always make it good. Just a nice guy.”	38
Fragility	“Yea that was stressful, I don’t like not planning in that like future I find finding a placement stressful because I want to stay in the house that I’m in now with my best friend Eve but if I don’t get a placement for like you know January I er don’t know if I can renew that contract on the house. Things like that stress me out. (Laughs) “	305
Distraction and deviation	“Probably not actually and I always find myself looking at that book we got at the start saying what you do in year one, year two and it was only this summer that I realised oh god I’m on placement next September and it means I’m stressing out big time. But I think that I look at stuff online, my resources enough to know what I’m doing, like the structure and stuff”	170

**Superordinate theme 2:** *“I went off the rails“*

Description: Adapting to varying learning environments and cultures.

Infrastructure	“When I came in the first year to university in the foundation year I didn’t feel like I was at university because the classes were quite small so it was like being in a classroom and from college to being in foundation year it was nice because you as teachers were pushing us along a bit and it felt like being back in high school but this year feels more like university having big lecture halls and big groups. “	67
	“Yea. You are relating better to what your idea of university is. Big lectures where you have to be there whether you understand anything or not, it’s irrelevant you have to be there.	74
Tutor support	“I didn’t do well. I did 42 and that’s why I’ve just had an interview with her [Tutor].”	197

Peer support network	"Yea (laughs) [I am likeable]"	160
Independent learning	"Yea, I would. I'm not rushing. I've bought all my books this year and I'm going to try and do a chapter a night like it's telling us to do after our lectures and stuff and I'm going to get my head down. (Laughing)"	216
Realisation of results	"Yes I was at my high school, and then I went to college and my grades dropped a bit and that's when I had to do a foundation year."	43
Planning and organisation	"So I just really rushed my last piece of work that I had to do with her [Tutor] erm and all the citations and stuff were wrong."	200

**Superordinate theme 3:** *"I got a big sheet with the individual grades but I don't think I worked out the actual percentage"*

Description: Lack of understanding of the degree programme and no clear career aspirations

Bureaucracy	"I got a big sheet with individual grades but I don't think I worked out the actual percentage."	189
Unclear aspirations	"Well, I'm not going to lie. Some of the things we did last year then we had, one of them was I think Wendy took it, and it was edit this piece of writing or something because it's not got the right grammar or spelling in. And I sat there and I was like 'What?' It's like I'm at uni, I shouldn't have to do this. However just an hour ago we had a CV talk and we were talking about CVs and getting spelling and grammar right and I thought 'Oh' I understand why they did those kinds of activities and stuff so (trails off)"	385
Determining expectations	"I want a 2:1 realistically."	252
Integrity and work ethic	"Definitely like the grades from last year as well, a massive thing, the fact that the I'm not in foundation year anymore I'm in first year. Then its second year so you've got to get your head down. I dunno I'm really excited about getting to placement and getting properly into this course coz last year's it's a bit coz I did foundation year it's kind of samey, not the coding module and stuff like that but it was quite similar and things. So now I'm going into like more project management things and it's getting more exciting. I think that's also why I'm raring to go. (Laughs)"	349

**Superordinate theme 4: N. “(Laughs) probably just growing up. I think.”**

Description: Growing maturity as a result of the life experiences whilst at university.

Maturity	“(Laughs) probably just growing up. I think. I wasn’t so nervous because I’d met most of my tutors before in foundation year; I know a few of them anyway.”	371
Support network	“...and I spoke to, I’ve been having like an intense summer with my dad chatting all the time about university and he’s like you need to get your head down. No I definitely am more motivated now.”	437
Changing behaviour	“ I’m determined now, yea, Definitely after this summer I spent a lot of time last year with my boyfriend at the time, and I spent too much time with him and I wasn’t going to do a placement year because I wanted to just get out of uni and stuff like that ..” and I spoke to, I’ve been having like an intense summer with my dad chatting all the time about university and he’s like you need to get your head down. No I definitely am more motivated now.”	435
Emotional development	“I don’t know how realistic [getting a 2:1] that is. I do think though erm if I do work hard this year I will get a 2:1 because last year I didn’t do as much work as I should have.”	256
Autonomy	“I did realise that things that you were doing, like the skills and stuff we were learning, were rubbing off on me.”	290
Employability bridge	“I wasn’t going to do a placement year.” [but changed mind]	436



Participant 3 – Eva

**Superordinate theme 1:** *“I actually had people from home whom I didn’t realise had applied for Northumbria ...”*

Description: The lived experience of leaving home and coming to university.

Emotional dependence		
Family support	“Em well my mum and dad came over with me on the plane so they all took a suitcase, I took a suitcase, so that was kind of extreme packing everything up, like 3 suitcases, 3 hand luggage just for me to come over and my accommodation was one and they were like very helpful put me in the room had a student rep. That was good	11
Peer support network	“I actually had people from home whom I didn’t realise had applied for Northumbria as well but they were in different secondary schools from me so I didn’t realise they had applied as well so I was contented they were there if I needed them so before I started class obviously I came a week earlier and spent my time with them. We all got our bearings together and then I started class so I was quite confident where I was going and what I was doing, where the town was and where everything was around me, the local shop.”	14
Assisted decision making	“We had students that were here [in Newcastle] that were second years back home and would have told about the university.”	59
Fragility	“I think I was a bit nervous about it [challenging the validity of the COPE UCAS points] because I was uneasy that I didn’t get onto the ITMB straight away so I was but I was just glad that I had a course to get onto that could be a passport to maybe doing my degree.”	33
Distraction and deviation	“Em I thought that the first year was a lot more laid back. Obviously I tried my best to get the work done ...”	67

**Superordinate theme 2:** *“I think I was a bit nervous about it because I was uneasy that I didn’t get onto the ITMB straight away so I was but I was just glad that I had a course to get onto that could be a passport to maybe doing my degree”*

Description: Adapting to varying learning environments and cultures.

Infrastructure		
Tutor support		
Peer support network	“On the ITM at the start of the year I was kind of I was on with people I don’t know on my course where when I went on the ITMB I knew everybody like the people that was on the course last year I was still kind of getting to grips with Blackboard, Pebble Pad ...”	70
Independent learning	“This year I read up my first year. I wouldn’t have read briefs and seminars but now I read the briefs before – that’s good	99

	help, you provide the work faster.”	
Realisation of results	“I really wanted to be on the ITMB then because I was doing the foundation degree so then once I got on there I was kind of happy and content and wanted to do well then.”	68
Planning and organisation	“My overall grades, em I think I focused my attention too much on subjects that I found were harder so I focused I’d say about 80% trying to get my head around like say programming was one of them. I tried to like get my head around it. I should have focused obviously half of the time on other ones, maybe 50% on programming and then 50% on the other subjects but I did quite well in them but then group work kind of brought me down then. Because in a group, I think I was in groups that were kind of laid back and we wanted to get the work done but they were kind of well we’ll do that and then they were so laid back that when it came to the time they were so rushed at the end yea, so I would definitely do that differently this year. “	80

**Superordinate theme 3: “I think I would be about (pause) 6.”**

Description: Lack of understanding of the degree programme and no clear career aspirations

Bureaucracy	“I thought, it was only when I got here I found out, and I don’t know how that came about; it was something to do with UCAS.” [finding out that she had to do the ITM and not ITMB programme]	25
Unclear aspirations	“Well we have companies in Derry where I’m from but no I don’t want to go back. I wouldn’t want to go back and live in Derry, not that there is anything wrong with it Int: (no,) I like where I’m from but I kinda like being outside of it and seeing different things. Em I’d like to, I would like to travel as well but I don’t know how I would fit it in as I would have my placement this year which is obviously over the summer and stuff but I’d get like an everyday job then I’ll be on my final year so I’ll have no time for travelling at all. So I don’t know where I would fit it in. Em after my final year after hoping I graduate with a 2:1 at least and then I would I think I would go straight into looking for a job and then maybe in a the fourth or fifth year maybe try go some travelling. Maybe once a year somewhere different. “	250
Determining expectations	“..if there is a laid back group just to take the lead, be a bit bossy because I’m not bossy at all.”	93
Integrity and work ethic	“I think I would be about (pause) 6.”	231



**Superordinate theme 4:** *“I was treated as if em, that I wasn’t just there, I was always there and in the meetings they were giving me input and there was an older man, not that it’s harder for older people they like grasp IT but he er maybe he wasn’t in the IT kind of mind frame. So I convinced him that it was going to be better, so I thought that was an achievement. Like he jumped on board then.”*

Description: Growing maturity as a result of the life experiences whilst at university.

Maturity	“I’d just like to end up with a good career.”	124
Support network	“ I do, I do, I have a big, I have a wide friend group of Irish people and English.”	177
Changing behaviour	“I think it’s obviously going to give me knowledge on it anyway that I’m going to need and if it comes up that I need to think you could actively fill your own head with lots of knowledge irrespective you don’t teach knowledge, you acquire knowledge so you get an understanding of things I kind of learn from the mistakes that I’ve made for example last year for programming I would have looked at the example and changed the example punctuation everything in it, temperamental and it gave me an idea of what I wanted to do and I could work through that.”	106
Emotional development	“I think my grades last year kinda give me a kick if you know what I mean? Coz some of them were lower and others where higher and kinda like half-and-half. I had 3 in 70s and a couple in 50s so it kinda so it was like a big jump in between. So that kinda gave me a kick to motivate myself more and I done a few weeks placement over the summer as a, I was set digitalising a family business. Kinda they were looking for a digitalise [of the system] because it was all paper documents they had and they wanted to obviously put it all on computer. So I looked up a scanner that would, I’ve never looked up so many scanners in my life but researched what they needed, what they were looking for and got a scanner and software that was suitable for them and then scanned documents and sped up the whole digitalisation process then. “	128
Autonomy	“I was treated as if em, that I wasn’t just there, I was always there and in the meetings they were giving me input and there was an older man , not that it’s harder for older people they like grasp IT but he er maybe he wasn’t in the IT kinda of mind frame. So I convinced him that it was going to be better, so I thought that was an achievement. Like he jumped on board then.”	140
Employability bridge	“The fact that I want to do placement is giving me more drive to do well back in Belfast but where I’m thinking is maybe IBM I know that I’ll have to fit so much work into it er but I’m also thinking, I know they’re all big companies but Sage in Belfast as well but I was thinking that there is branches here as well so I could ask them maybe could I do it in Belfast but if not but then I’m flexible to stay here in Newcastle so I’ve been thinking of places like that. Erm where else was I thinking? Well I looked at Proctor and Gamble but there, we’ve been talking about them	116

	and they seem to be really difficult.”	
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Participant 4 – Kenny

**Superordinate theme 1:** *“I done very well for my final 6 months of my GCSEs I really put my head down I think it was largely to do with my mother on my back most of the time.”*

Description: The lived experience of leaving home and coming to university.

Emotional dependence	<i>“I told my parents at Christmas that I was really struggling with the computer science course and I was thinking about maybe getting through to the end of the year and then maybe thinking about something else that would be more beneficial to me.”</i>	47
Family support	<i>“And then I got to Newcastle and absolutely loved it, came over with my mum and she moved me in and all it was very emotional.”</i>	30
Peer support network	<i>“I don’t know if I’m sold on this coding crack and my housemate he was doing the same course and every night he was really getting his head stuck into it and I couldn’t really understand it and I didn’t want to push myself to understand it because I was very bored by it.”</i>	33
Assisted decision making	<i>“They were happy as long as I was happy and they knew that they would rather me start and waste a year, well not waste a year but have a year at uni where I have thought about what I wanted to do and was like right OK I don’t want to do this.”</i>	50
Fragility	<i>“So I went to see P. and told her that I am really interested in business and computers but what I’m doing at the minute I’m struggling and don’t like the coding and I’m not going to sit at a computer for the rest of my life. So I started fresh.”</i>	40
Distraction and deviation	<i>“I can’t remember much about my first year BIS bar at the end of the course I was really happy. I felt it was not easy, but I got to grasp with everything in the course maybe to have done very very well in all my modules. In fact I failed your module because I forgot to upload all my stuff through PebblePad? Remember that?”</i>	55

**Superordinate theme 2:** *“Yea I think my technique was wrong because I hadn’t tried, I hadn’t really done much reading of academic papers, and towards the end of the year when we were doing our ethical reports on our subject that’s when I really practiced my writing the most.”*

Description: Adapting to varying learning environments and cultures.

Infrastructure	<i>“And I phoned my mother and my mother has written papers for schools before, she used to be an English assistant teacher in a school. So she looked at the paper and she was appalled and she made a bit of an earache about the standard of my writing saying I should make a bit more of an effort to write in an academic way.”</i>	85
Tutor support	<i>“After our class on Friday I’d mentioned that I wanted to go</i>	135

	<i>down the information systems, clubs and hospitality route, I was thinking about what you had said how am I going to break that down so maybe the smaller pubs against larger pubs, what aspects of their information systems and how is it going to help them? Do they already know that it's going to benefit them? And I was thinking that there is so much to do, and I don't know really where I had a bit of a brainwave that the job I'm in at the minute, I can use so much of what I have learned over the summer."</i>	
Peer support network	<i>"She's older as well, so she's a wee bit more mature which has maybe rubbed off on me. By association I've got more mature."</i>	187
Independent learning	<i>"Yea, when I, in my second year course whenever we would start doing research into our pdp learning and we were doing some of the testing about the sort of people that we were that sort of made me think what we were, and some of the other reading we were doing about behavioural types and I was very interested by that and how different people act in teams and I can't remember what test that was?"</i>	69
Realisation of results	<i>"Because I submitted a paper again for personal development and planning, a reflective piece that I had thought I had done very well and when the marks came back I actually hadn't. I'd just managed to pass."</i>	82
Planning and organisation	<i>"So I'm sort of assessing the work that I have done and I'm assessing what I have learned as well. So does that make sense?"</i>	143

**Superordinate theme 3:** *"So from the age of maybe 11 I was already in a higher group of education, everyone was looking at it like that at home."*

Description: Lack of understanding of the degree programme and no clear career aspirations

Bureaucracy	<i>"So I failed that and I had to resit that while I was on holiday but I had all the work done so it was just a case of resubmitting it so it was a bit of a bummer I suppose."</i>	60
Unclear aspirations	<i>"Because when I was 15 I was dead set on being an architect"</i>	52
Determining expectations	<i>"yea definitely I think, I was never dedicated at all to the first course but I so really want to leave with a really good degree and I just want a good job to be honest."</i>	148
Integrity and work ethic	<i>"I had this discussion with my parents over the summer, that if I didn't finish with a good result or a good grade this year, or get to a high enough honour, my aim is to finish with a first as I was so close to getting it last year, and I know that if I just applied myself to the dissertation because it's 40 credits and a large bulk of the year, if I'm going to do that then I'm going to get my writing style good for it, and I usually don't have a problem as all the other assessments have been group work ..."</i>	116

**Superordinate theme 4:** *“I think that year of not doing much work and getting all of the madness out of my system is ...”*

Description: Growing maturity as a result of the life experiences whilst at university.

Maturity	<i>“And they have let me come up with my own business title and all so I’ve called myself an “Independent IT Consultant”.”</i>	
Support network	<i>“Yea em because I’m the oldest my mother and father were dying for me to go to university, they really pushed me with my three younger brothers one of them has dropped out of school to be an electrician but that’s always what he wanted to do so my parents are supportive of him as well. It’s just that I think from maybe young I’ve always been in a higher tier class and my parent teacher meeting they would always tell mum and dad well if he could just apply himself – he’s always been the class clown. I’ve always had that problem.”</i>	166
Changing behaviour	<i>“I think I needed it, I think it really helped me put my head around the second year and last year.”</i>	228
Emotional development	<i>“Yea because I’m enjoying what I’m doing, I’m enjoying what I’m learning.”</i>	248
Autonomy	<i>“And if possible I would do a Masters you know. If I do well this year and this dissertation doesn’t make me pull all my hair out, I figure I’d like to do a Masters. And specialise in something totally new here and study something different.”</i>	257
Employability bridge	<i>“No yea I want to get my qualifications first yea. I’ve always wanted, I’ve always got ideas, thinking about what I might do, I just don’t know for certain where I’m going to be in 5 years. I think only time will tell in 5 years as long as I’m happy. As long as I’m happy I’ll be grand.”</i>	273

Participant 5 – Dan

**Superordinate theme 1:** *“Erm my mother didn’t really look after me growing up she kinda just left it to my gran ...”*

Description: The lived experience of leaving home and coming to university.

Emotional dependence	<i>“I’ve basically supported myself financially since I was 14 years old. I come from a really poor family.”</i>	15
Family support	<i>“my family is quite a strange one. It’s quite broken up and people don’t like each other and people fight, people argue and people who are together still fight and argue because they don’t actually like each other.”</i>	6
Peer support network	<i>“I had an apprenticeship lined up and just one of my friends convinced me to go to college as I could always do that after.”</i>	27
Assisted decision making	<i>“I went to a Catholic college and the next step was to go to university, no other options if you get your A levels there is no other option but to go to university. And that was the next logical step.”</i>	28
Fragility	<i>“my dad’s dead. He died when I was three years old. He hung himself.”</i>	10
Distraction and deviation	<i>“I was quite lucky because in school and stuff I wasn’t really bothered. I was a bit of an idiot in school to be honest. I got banned out of a lot of subjects and basically I had to do some of these lessons on my own in isolation.”</i>	23

**Superordinate theme 2:** *“I felt absolutely totally fine, because one of the reasons I chose this university was because I knew a lot of people that were in Newcastle already”*

Description: Adapting to varying learning environments and cultures.

Infrastructure	<i>“I think lecturers are absolutely pointless, and I don’t remember anything from them at all. For about the first 2 years I didn’t go to any.”</i> <i>“I find that 20 minutes is too long for me and I couldn’t concentrate for 20 minutes with someone talking at me.”</i>	308
Tutor support	<i>“Random through clearing and I saw the word business and applied. I think I actually applied for the Business Information Systems one and Colin actually phoned me up and said that there is a space on the Business IT, so I decided to do that.”</i>	220
Peer support network	<i>“Yea I’d probably say I was [popular], yea, em, I always had plenty of friends, I always have had plenty of friends.”</i>	107
Independent learning	<i>“I learn by doing something rather than being told something.”</i>	310
Realisation of results	<i>“I got 3 A levels: 2 were in business and one was in product design. I did business at GCSE when you chose your options so I just decided to stick with what I had already done. I did woodwork at GCSE so I just stuck with woodwork.”</i>	88
Planning and organisation	<i>“I think ... it’s more about independent learning, really I need to go and do it off my own back.”</i>	316



**Superordinate theme 3:** *“Yea I didn’t really care, like I said when I was at my college it was the seen thing to do, you go from school, college, university.”*

Description: Lack of understanding of the degree programme and no clear career aspirations

Bureaucracy	<i>“Before I came to university even for the first half of the year I didn’t understand what the grade boundaries were. I didn’t understand that a 1<sup>st</sup> was like an A, a 2:1 was like a B, I didn’t understand what that was.”</i>	265
Unclear aspirations	<i>“Well the way I see it is if I don’t do a Masters now I’ll never do one, I mean I know you can do it part-time but realistically working full time I don’t really think I’d bother.”</i>	744
Determining expectations	<i>“I think it was when I got my placement at Nissan. I got my place and was told I needed a 2:1.”</i>	245
Integrity and work ethic	<i>“I think if I really wanted something I can put the effort in. I mean but I’m not, I do really want a good degree but I didn’t feel as though I had to put as much effort in to get a good mark.”</i>	627

**Superordinate theme 4:** *“I think it’s down to if that’s the case its more about independent learning, really I need to go and do it off my own back.”*

Description: Growing maturity as a result of the life experiences whilst at university.

Maturity	<i>“But hopefully I’ll be earning enough money to be able to counteract that and be able to pay for it myself.”</i>	680
Support network	<i>“I won’t be going back [home town] ever.”</i>	288
Changing behaviour	<i>“But that’s what I do, I’ve got quite an addictive nature I’d say, where if I want something then I’ll just apply everything to that and forget about everything else. Like when I was into my rugby erm I played for North of England, that was erm I was only 19 years old, so I just forgot about everything else and just concentrated on rugby for a bit. I was at university but I wanted that achievement in life so I just forgot about everything else.”</i>	633
Emotional development	<i>“Based on my skillset I would say I’m a quick learner. I mean if you give me something I would be able to do it, I’ll learn how to do it. I’m self-motivated.”</i>	546
Autonomy	<i>“I’ve looked at the modules, the further reading and I figure if I could do something on that then I’m going to understand it well for the module.”</i>	699
Employability bridge	<i>“Well first year I thought I might as well just finish now and finish the year and switch courses or something like that, and then second year I just though I’m half way through now I might as well just finish it off there is no point wasting 2 years of my life.”</i>	729

Participant 6 – Phil

**Superordinate theme 1:** *“they both said to me you want to go to university – don’t get a job with your hands ... ”*

Description: The lived experience of leaving home and coming to university.

Emotional dependence	“Er, Yea kind of, I don’t really speak to my mum much but erm, that was really essentially I didn’t really get on with my step dad and I literally moved out and I haven’t really gone back to see my mum since 18.”	86
Family support	“Em yes it was always kind of drilled into me by my parents really er my mum was kind of a waitress er for years and years and years and my dad was a fork lift driver they were all like tradesmen as well but they both said to me you want to go to university don’t get a job with your hands.”	17
Peer support network	“He is one of my best friends we went to school together. ... He was on BIT and I was looking at some of the work he was doing and ...”	57
Assisted decision making	“I thought I think I’d be good at that and I think it would be far more useful for getting a job cause I didn’t know what I’d be doing so just finished my English Language and at the end of year one came on to BIT which is not a bad thing I don’t think because you’ve still got the environment I definitely think I needed to do it more late in maturing.”	58
Fragility	“I never really learned my lesson from being kicked out of school because despite that I had this mentality that you were clever – got A stars (GCSE) did not even need to be there. Did quite badly in my A levels because I thought I was already clever.”	42
Distraction and deviation	“Wake up call! My mum who did it really said that if you didn’t pass the GCSEs you’ll end up working in McDonalds.”	36

**Superordinate theme 2:** *“I got kicked out of school though, was a bit of a jack the lad and a class clown.”*

Description: Adapting to varying learning environments and cultures.

Infrastructure	“I think what it was is kind of the environment that I was in, I had kinda gone from for me personally, a town where it was very industrialised, like Billingham you know, very small town nothing there, bored pretty much every day really and then you come to university. It’s in the centre of Newcastle and you have your own house for the first time you are out of the jurisdiction of all parents and things like that. And I really didn’t think about the university establishment I just thought ‘this is my new life.’ You know the studying took a secondary kind of aspect, because I was more interested in the new life that I was leading the lifestyle.”	290
Tutor support	“..a teacher called Mr Jelly, Head of Year and Mr Swanson	32

	my English Teacher and they kind we kind of got on and they said look what you doing and they game me all my textbooks to study from home.”	
Peer support network	“ ..yea the ones that I did very well in where the ones with presentations em the consultancy one em I did I should have done a lot higher on that and I got really annoyed about that cause erm I’m going off on a tangent, that was due to peer assessment I think that’s off on a tangent but strategically overall it was the ones that I had an interest in that I did fairly well. Those are the ones that I had the least kind of trouble with.”	199
Independent learning	“Yea because then it would have been closer to 90 but em I think sorry going off on another tangent there. Er no I think the that module there it was by far the weakest I was never really good at programming and I kinda identified that if I didn’t fix that problem it was going to end badly. And as I did it I found out I got really into it as you said I immersed into it and em its probably been one of the most enjoyable modules that. “	220
Realisation of results	“.. we always knew about the 60/40 rule so we were like well how do we stand with second year and I honestly had no clue “	160
Planning and organisation	“The module descriptions and ‘oh god’ like, it’s a bit of a dry subject and I’m not looking forward to that. And I didn’t do particularly well on it but I think I thought it was going to be a lot easier because I was interested in it I thought I was going to be, that essay was going to be a lot easier than it was. Erm and I just put my time into the other modules which I shouldn’t have done, but that doesn’t take anything away from saying that I wasn’t interested in it because I really was.”	347

**Superordinate theme 3:** *“I discovered I had 58 and I was just like I could very easily mess this up and that for me it was just like er that was the big realisation this year and erm because I only got 58 and I needed at least 69 to score throughout the year em otherwise what have I come here for? I just keep on thinking that the amount of money that I have invested and what I think I’m capable of if I did get less than a 2:1 erm I would have just wasted almost 5 years essentially, like £30,000, like half a decade of my life em so that kind of really spurred me on to work harder.”*

Description: Lack of understanding of the degree programme and no clear career aspirations

Bureaucracy	“(sigh and pause) If we are being completely honest I think erm, I would flunk it during my first year because its obviously, this is me being very honest here, where it doesn’t count towards your grades, I would just go out and have a blast first year, and work my socks off in second year and same again this year. “	372
Unclear aspirations	“I need a 2:1 essentially to get onto a grad scheme.”	159
Determining expectations	yea erm it’s my attention to detail that lost me the marks as	209

	well erm I kind of built this entire website and it was, I was really proud of it actually you know it was really hard and really rewarding module because you'll sit there for hours and typing in code and you've got a second monitor there and reload the web page and it won't work and its not doing what you do and then you kinda like come away from it and you sit and have a think and just give that a try type of thing. And when it works you are just like 'yes!' The thing that lost me the marks on that was em essentially I'd built all the website and it was really good and I'd forgot to show em, you know student names the module we are on and the mark they've got and stuff like that. It was a system that we'd built em I just didn't put in the student ID and I didn't do that all the way through so I lost about 10 marks or something like that.	
Integrity and work ethic	"My C.V.'s gradually got better each year."	264

**Superordinate theme 4:** *"To see the change."*

Description: Growing maturity as a result of the life experiences whilst at university.

Maturity	"The interview and the er those were paramount because I think that one is a big one because you can have all the academic knowledge you know all all all (stutters) sorry, you could have all the knowledge about a particular subject as possible if you are lacking in the simplest of basic skills to secure that job then that knowledge doesn't get put to use."	246
Support network	"Yea 100% like, it's difficult to say to kind of measure exactly what impact they [the teaching experience on the modules] have because there is so many different kind of you know factors coming in that will change your perception like almost I would say an unlimited amount."	177
Changing behaviour	"I was kinda just turning up erm kinda turning up and doing the assignments as and when they appeared, although I was here I wasn't. If you get what I mean? I wasn't kind of fully engaged my mind was on other things but this year I was giving it my all em, whether or not that will have a positive impact because I've started to, for the first time in my life I've really cared. Em and I think that at first that was kind of a bad thing, erm not bad all the way through but for the first time in my life I've honestly got really really stressed about work like very stressed. Because I've never engaged with something."	308
Emotional development	"It only became (mumble) in final year when I realised 'hang on a second' at the end of this year I'm leaving and if I don't get, if I get anything less than a 2:1 and I've got to go back to that place that I don't really want to be you know. These last 5 years have been the best years of my life and they are	296

	going to come to an end and I don't want to go back to the lifestyle that I had before. And then I was just like I was like a really need to study you know, it kind of it made me engage more with university. "	
Autonomy	erm, I would say I think my general, if I'm being honest my general interaction skills, I can talk with anyone. That, and it doesn't sound much of a strength but I think now it's you know you can be as clever as you want and your grades can be as high as you want but unless you actually know how to interact then you are not going to get the job. And I think my friend at home, M., er he's kinda like testament to that as he's got a very very high first but he still can't secure that job. Erm because he doesn't know how to act, he's shy.	475
Employability bridge	"(long pause and rustling) I dunno I kinda like the idea of a job for life but I don't think it exists anymore now so yea I think I'll definitely be in a different line of work then. I think the graduate schemes by the sound of it they kinda are additional learning essentially you know they acquisition of new skills while you are paid, from what I have kinda researched into it people just complete the graduate schemes, get the skills you know the qualifications through there and then just either move on or use them ..."	402

## Appendix 7: Table of theorists

ASPECT	BEHAVIOURIST	COGNITIVIST	HUMANIST	SOCIAL AND SITUATIONAL
Learning theorists	Thorndike, Pavlov, Watson, Hobbes, Comte, Le Mettrie, Guthrie, Hull, Tolman, Skinner	Kant, Koffka, Kohler, Lewin, Piaget, Ausubel, Bruner, Gagne, Lewin, Wetheimer, Dewey, Schon	Maslow, Rogers	Bandura, Lave and Wenger, Salomon, Vygotsky, Kolb, Candy, Smith, Biggs
View of the learning process	Change in behaviour	Internal mental process, (including insight, information processing, memory, perception)	A personal act to fulfil potential	Interaction/observation in social contexts. Movement from the periphery to the centre of a community of practice. Learners construct meaning from what they do to learn
Locus of learning	Stimuli in external environment	Internal cognitive structuring	Affective and cognitive needs	Learning is in relationship between people and environment. Alignment between the planned learning activities and the LOs
Purpose in education	Produce behavioural change in desired direction.	Develop capacity and skills to learn better.	Become self-actualised, autonomous	Full participation in communities of practice and utilisation of resources. Alignment for outcomes based teaching
Educator's role	Arranges environment to elicit desired response	Structures content of learning activity	Facilitates development of the whole person	Works to establish communities of practice in which conversation and participation can occur.
Manifestations in adult learning	Behavioural objectives Competency-based education Skill development and training	Cognitive development Intelligence, learning and memory as function of age Learning how to learn	Andragogy Self-directed learning	Socialisation, Social participation Associationalism, Conversation Zone of Proximal Development MKO SOLO Taxonomy, Structure of the Observed LO's Threshold concepts

Adapted from 'Four orientations to learning' (infed, 2013)

## Appendix 8: Generic IPA Questions

- Q Can you tell me a little about coming to university? How did it feel once you got here? What did you think it would be like?
- Q Did you understand the degree structure when you got here? How many credits you needed each year, how many modules you were studying, what the significance of the marks were in relation to your potential classification degree/award?
- Q How did you feel about the work you did at university?
- Q What degree of independence did you apply to your own learning, and subsequent responsibility for that learning?
- Q How responsive were you to support and feedback that you received from both tutors and peers?
- Q Did you recognise cohesion of everything you were doing, together with the people you were meeting/working with, and being in the institution as being part of your 'journey'?
- Q Have you any thoughts on the university's employability agenda?
- Q Employers interact with universities constantly and the term 'graduateness' is often used. What are your thoughts with regard to what employers are looking for from graduates?
- Q Do you think that your experience at Northumbria has made you fit for employment? If so, what do you see as the contributory factors?
- Q If you had to do it all again, would you do anything differently?
- Q How would you rate your own personal performance with regard to what you have achieved whilst being at university?
- Q Where do you see yourself in 5 years' /10 years' time?

## Appendix 9: Teaching and Learning Plans – IS0472 and IS0523

### IS0472 – Skills for Information Systems Professionals Semester 1

Week	Lecture	Seminar	Workshop	Directed Learning	Portfolio Requirements
w/c 22 Sep	Introduction to the Module		Introduction to network, Student email, Blackboard – Desktop Anywhere	Reading: Week 1	<b>Student task:</b> Enter own timetable information and portfolio requirements into calendar. (T1)
w/c 29 Sep		Time Management Case Study/self-evaluation exercises	Set up eportfolio using PebblePad. Add option for self-assessment.	Time Management – self-evaluation exercises	<b>Student task:</b> Time Management – case study and self-evaluation exercises. (Schematic format – table)(T2)
w/c 6 Oct	Time Management		Eportfolio – submission guidelines, gateway checking and trouble shooting	Reading: Week 3	<b>Student task:</b> Record of semester 1 modules. (T3)
w/c 13 Oct		'Quality' and professional standards. Peer assessment and evaluation	Create a 'Help guide' for PebblePad..	Help guide	<b>Student task:</b> Progress check started. (T4)
w/c 20 Oct	Learning styles and personal profiling		Share Help guide with 'friend' via PebblePad – assess and comment.	Reading: Week 5	<b>Student task:</b> Upload Help guide plus peer comments. (T5)
w/c 27 Oct		Learning styles – implications for personal development (Honey and Mumford)	Learning styles and personal profiling online research week: Honey and Mumford, Kolb, Handy, and Belbin.	Reading: Week 6	<b>Student task:</b> Upload relevant links to your PebblePad bibliography. (T6)
w/c 3 Nov	<b>INDEPENDENT LEARNING WEEK</b> - Students to work on ePortfolio. Make sure seminar/workshop work is complete and <b>student tasks</b> to date have been added to your portfolio.				
w/c 10 Nov		Writing your personal statement – structure and format.	Profiling Tools	Reading: Week 8	<b>Student task:</b> Commentary about profiling tools (T7)
w/c 17 Nov	Research Skills, Harvard Referencing and Plagiarism		Plagiarism and Referencing – citations and bibliographies.		
w/c 24 Nov 10		Report Writing Case Study	Report Writing templates		<b>Student task:</b> Business Report (T8)
w/c 1 Dec	How to write a Business Report		<b>Personal Statement in Class</b>		<b>Student task:</b> Personal Statement (T9)
w/c 8 Dec	Final completion of ePortfolio. Tutorials by appointment. - GATEWAY WILL BE LOCKED ON FRIDAY OF THIS WEEK.				



### Semester 1 – portfolio requirements

You should self-assess your tasks in accordance with a mark out of 30 for each. This total should then be divided by 8 .

Notes: 3 tasks to be marked first semester, all of which should use referencing where appropriate. Formative tasks must be present to maximise available marks.

<b>Task Number and Description</b>	<b>Mark out of 30</b>
T1 Student Timetable entered into outlook	
<b>T2 Time Management Case Study – Submitted as a table representing a Schematic Analysis of the scenario</b>	
T3 Record of Semester 1 Modules studied	
T4 Progress Check	
<b>T5 Help Guide (peer reviewed)</b>	
T6 Research links – bibliography format	
T7 Commentary about profiling tools	
<b>T8 Business Report</b>	
<i>Average self-assessed mark (total divided by 8)</i>	

In addition to the above tasks, the most significant percentage of the marks in semester 1 are awarded to your (T9) Personal Statement (30%) which should be written as a reflective piece of writing, with academic referencing, as appropriate.

Student Signature .....

**IS472 – Skills for information systems professionals Semester 2**

Week	Lecture Topic	Seminar	Workshop	Directed learning	Portfolio evidence
w/c 19 Jan	You and your PDP	Portfolio Health Assessment Checklist		Devise Action Plan <b>Reading:</b> PDP	<b>Student Task 1:</b> Action Plan
w/c 26 Jan		Independent learning – Reflective Cycle – writing exercise	Questionnaire design – tables and form toolbar	Buddy comments on questionnaire from workshop	<b>Student Task 2:</b> Questionnaire, amended after feedback + comment
w/c 2 Feb	Meetings	Review of Reflective Cycle exercise		Complete Reflective Cycle exercise	<b>Student Task 3:</b> Reflective cycle exercise
w/c 9 Feb		Meetings case study	Harvard referencing Compile reading list	Reading: Meetings	<b>Student Task 4:</b> Meeting Case study – Business Report
w/c 16 Feb	INDEPENDENT STUDY WEEK – NO FORMAL CLASSES See below for work to be completed during the week.				
<b>Student Task:</b> Record of modules studied during Semester 2. Complete form and upload to your ePortfolio. In addition, visit the Careers Service, now located in the library. They provide a 'drop-in' service to assist you with CV writing and preparation, and also will assist you in finding employment. Collect the following documents 'Writing your CV' and their 'CV Checklist' together with any other useful documentation they may have available.					
w/c 23 Feb		Personal Profiling seminar – self analysis and targeting!	Styles in Word; Outlining; automatic table of contents	Reading: Successful Report Writing	
w/c 2 Mar Feb	Decision Making	Analysing CVs and gathering information		Reading: Analysis Skills	<b>Student Task 5:</b> Your own CV
w/c 9 Mar		Independent work on own CV preparation – Pebblepad and Word.	PebblePad and the CV Builder	Reading: CV preparation	
w/c 16 Mar	How to write a CV (P&G)	Decision Making Case Study – incorporates report writing structure		Related reading and research	<b>Student Task 6:</b> Decision Making Case Study
w/c 23 March		Review of Portfolio	In course assessment: Reflective Commentary (750 words)	Portfolio completion	<b>Student Task 7:</b> Reflective Commentary (750 words)
<b>SPRING BREAK – 3 WEEKS</b>					
w/c 20 Apr	PebblePad and PDP	Tutorials – by appointment			<b>Student Task 8:</b> Upload completed reading list to your webfolio
w/c 27 Apr	<b>Independent work on ePortfolio.</b>				

Portfolio completion date - 8 May 2015

## Semester 2 – portfolio requirements

You should self-assess your tasks in accordance with a mark out of 30 for each. This total should then be divided by 7 .

Notes: 3 tasks to be marked second semester, all of which should use referencing where appropriate. Additional evidence would attract more marks.

<b>Task Number and Description</b>	<b>Mark out of 30</b>
T1 Action Plan	
<b>T2 Questionnaire</b>	
T3 Reflective Cycle	
T4 Meetings: Case Study Report	
<b>T5 CV</b>	
T6 Decision Making Case Study	
<b>T8 Harvard Referencing: Reading List</b>	
<i>Average self-assessed mark (total divided by 7)</i>	

In addition to the above tasks, the most significant percentage of the marks in semester 1 are awarded to your (T7) Reflective Commentary (30%) which should be written as a reflective piece of writing, with academic referencing, as appropriate.

Student Signature .....

# **IS0523 – Personal Development Planning for IS/IT Professionals**

## **Proposed Teaching Schedule (subject to change as required)**

### ***SEMESTER 1 - September – December 2014***

<b>Week</b>	<b>Lecture</b>	<b>Seminar/Workshop</b>	<b>Directed Learning</b>	<b>Portfolio content</b>
1 22 Sept	Introduction to module; explanation of assignment	Introductory exercises  Discussion of online job application / CV advice sites	Online research into job application / CV advice sites	
2 29 Sept	What are employers looking for	The 30 second CV – ideas for updating and improving 1 <sup>st</sup> year CV and personal statement	Review last year's CV.	Choose job to apply for
3 6 Oct	CV Do's and Don'ts	Portfolio setup and best practice  (PebblePad)	Work on covering letter & Supporting Statement CV	
4 13 Oct	Interview skills, & Job and Career research	Interview Preparation and  Company Research	Submit hard copies of applications by 14 October; Portfolio to contain all Application documents (other documentation to be submitted later);  Interview times allocated	
5 20 Oct	Visit Newcastle JobFest and Faculty Employers Fair			Commentaries and reflection on interview and interviewing
6 27 Oct				Evidence of skills/competencies in support of job application
7 3 Nov				Evidence of research carried out into job market and particular companies – web links, documents, etc
8 10 Nov	Individual interviews as per schedule	Individual interviews as per schedule	See Blackboard	Refine documentation and reflect after feedback
9 17 Nov				
10 24 Nov				
11 1 Dec	Recruitment Tests & Introduction to the Careers and Employment Centre	Psychometric Testing.	Complete Psychometric Testing	Reflection on Psychometric testing process and results
12 8 Dec	Assignment and portfolio support as necessary (by appointment)		Complete final reflection  Independent work loaded to Pebblepad gateway – to be complete by 11 December	

**SEMESTER 2 – January – May 2015 (subject to change as required)**

Week	Lecture	Seminar/Workshop	Directed Learning	Portfolio content
1 19 Jan	Introduction to SLPE <sup>1</sup> issues	Legal, Social, Professional and Ethical Awareness	Review Semester 2 assignment	
2 26 Jan	Framework for Ethical Analysis	Discussion and selection of topic for investigation. Register		
3 2 Feb	Critical Thinking & structuring an argument	Ethical Analysis Case Study (logical fallacies)	Information search for chosen topic  See blackboard for	Group allocation
4 9 Feb	Sources of Information	Set up of group portfolios within PebblePad / review of previous portfolios	Referencing tutorial on Blackboard	Expression of “ethical dilemma”  List of legal issues and ethical
5 16 Feb	IT Law	Assignment Support Sessions		List of potential harm/benefits to society/industry  List of participants / stakeholders and their
6 23 Feb	Corporate Ethics	Assignment Support Sessions		Develop and justify recommendation
7 2 Mar	Academic Ethics – “Plagiarism and how to avoid it.”	Assignment Support sessions	Completion of portfolio. and rehearsal of Presentation	Complete group portfolio including summary.
8 9 Mar	Presentations			
9 16 Mar				
10 23 Mar				
11 20 Apr	Professional bodies & Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA)	Assignment and portfolio support as necessary (by appointment)	Review alternate portfolios  Reflection and peer assessment for portfolio	
12 27 Apr	CPD / Module Review	Assignment and portfolio support as necessary (by	Review alternate portfolios  Reflection and peer	Independent work on eportfolio – to be complete by 1 May 2014

<sup>1</sup> SLPE = Social, Legal, Professional and Ethical

## Appendix 10: MCRFs for Research Participants



Name	<b>Neina</b>	Date of Birth	
Student ID		HESA ID	
Date of Admission		Mode of Attendance	FULL TIME
Awarding Institution	Northumbria University		
Institution Administering Studies	As Awarding Institution		
Awarded	( )		
Classification			
Programme	BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (HONOURS) IT MANAGEMENT FOR BUSINESS		
Date Awarded			

<b>Level 4</b>		<b>Mark</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Credit</b>	<b>ECTS</b>
CM0429	Relational Databases	50 P	4	20	10
IS0472	Skills For Information Systems Professionals	77 P	4	20	10
IS0487	FUNDAMENTALS OF SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT	64 P	4	20	10
IS0489	The Business Environment, Organisations and Management Information Systems	63 P	4	20	10
IS0491	Managing IT Projects for Business	53 P	4	20	10
IS0492	Principles of Business Information Systems	42 P	4	20	10
<b>Level 5</b>		<b>Mark</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Credit</b>	<b>ECTS</b>
IS0502	Communications and Networks for Commerce	68 P	5	20	10
IS0503	Integrative Consultancy Project	74 P	5	20	10
IS0516	Application Design & Development	62 P	5	20	10
IS0517	Enterprise IT Project Management	57 P	5	20	10
IS0523	Personal Development Planning for IT/IS Professionals	76 P	5	20	10
IS0524	Integrated Enterprise Systems	68 P	5	20	10

Name	<b>Eva</b>	Date of Birth	
Student ID		HESA ID	
Date of Admission		Mode of Attendance	FULL TIME
Awarding Institution	Northumbria University		
Institution Administering Studies	As Awarding Institution		
Awarded	()		
Classification			
Programme	BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (HONOURS) IT MANAGEMENT FOR BUSINESS		
Date Awarded			

<b>Level 4</b>		<b>Mark</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Credit</b>	<b>ECTS</b>
CM0429	Relational Databases	55 P	4	20	10
IS0472	Skills For Information Systems Professionals	76 P	4	20	10
IS0487	FUNDAMENTALS OF SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT	70 P	4	20	10
IS0489	The Business Environment, Organisations and Management Information Systems	75 P	4	20	10
IS0491	Managing IT Projects for Business	55 P	4	20	10
IS0492	Principles of Business Information Systems	43 P	4	20	10
<b>Level 5</b>		<b>Mark</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Credit</b>	<b>ECTS</b>
IS0502	Communications and Networks for Commerce	53 P	5	20	10
IS0503	Integrative Consultancy Project	80 P	5	20	10
IS0516	Application Design & Development	60 P	5	20	10
IS0517	Enterprise IT Project Management	52 P	5	20	10
IS0523	Personal Development Planning for IT/IS Professionals	65 P	5	20	10
IS0524	Integrated Enterprise Systems	65 P	5	20	10

Name	<b>Kenny</b>	Date of Birth	
Student ID		HESA ID	
Date of Admission		Mode of Attendance	FULL TIME
Awarding Institution	Northumbria University		
Institution Administering Studies	As Awarding Institution		

Awarded	BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (HONOURS) (BSC (HONS)) BUSINESS INFORMATION SYSTEMS
Classification	with SECOND CLASS HONOURS (Upper Division)
Programme	BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (HONOURS) BUSINESS INFORMATION SYSTEMS
Date Awarded	24/06/2014

<b>Level 4</b>		<b>Mark</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Credit</b>	<b>ECTS</b>
CM0429	Relational Databases	47 P	4	20	10
IS0472	Skills For Information Systems Professionals	40 P	4	20	10
IS0473	Fundamentals of Business Information Systems	70 P	4	20	10
IS0487	FUNDAMENTALS OF SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT	46 P	4	20	10
IS0489	The Business Environment, Organisations and Management Information Systems	67 P	4	20	10
IS0491	Managing IT Projects for Business	57 P	4	20	10
<b>Level 5</b>		<b>Mark</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Credit</b>	<b>ECTS</b>
IS0503	Integrative Consultancy Project	76 P	5	20	10
IS0514	Business Systems Development Tools and Techniques	66 P	5	20	10
IS0517	Enterprise IT Project Management	43 P	5	20	10
IS0523	Personal Development Planning for IT/IS Professionals	60 P	5	20	10
IS0524	Integrated Enterprise Systems	71 P	5	20	10
IS0525	Entrepreneurship & Creativity	75 P	5	20	10
<b>Level 6</b>		<b>Mark</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Credit</b>	<b>ECTS</b>
IS0608	Undergraduate Project in Business Information Systems	63 P	6	40	20
IS0619	Graduate Enterprise for CEIS	46 P	6	20	10
IS0622	Information Systems, Strategy and Organisation	52 P	6	20	10
IS0626	Business Intelligence Applications and Technology	62 P	6	20	10
IS0627	Training and Change Management	55 P	6	20	10



Name	<b>Dan</b>	Date of Birth	
Student ID		HESA ID	
Date of Admission		Mode of Attendance	FULL TIME
Awarding Institution	Northumbria University		

Awarded	BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (HONOURS) (BSC (HONS)) BUSINESS INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
Classification	with SECOND CLASS HONOURS (Upper Division)

Institution Administering Studies      As Awarding Institution

		Mark	Level	Credit	ECTS
<b>Level 4</b>					
CM0429	Relational Databases	68 P	4	20	10
IS0472	Skills For Information Systems Professionals	56 P	4	20	10
IS0473	Fundamentals of Business Information Systems	70 P	4	20	10
IS0478	Introduction to IT Project Management	71 P	4	10	5
IS0487	FUNDAMENTALS OF SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT	80 P	4	20	10
IS0489	The Business Environment, Organisations and Management Information Systems	71 P	4	20	10
IS0490	Fundamentals of Finance	61 P	4	10	5
<b>Level 5</b>					
CM0567	CEIS Professional Placement	P	5	0	0
IS0502	Communications and Networks for Commerce	66 P	5	20	10
IS0503	Integrative Consultancy Project	80 P	5	20	10
IS0511	Security, Contingency and Legal Issues in IT	65 P	5	10	5
IS0514	Business Systems Development Tools and Techniques	55 P	5	20	10
IS0516	Application Design & Development	58 P	5	20	10
IS0522	IS/IT Training: Development & Practice	70 P	5	10	5
IS0523	Personal Development Planning for IT/IS Professionals	70 P	5	20	10
<b>Level 6</b>					
IS0601	Information and the Web in Business: Theory & Practice	70 P	6	20	10
IS0605	Organisations in the Information Age	65 P	6	20	10
IS0608	Undergraduate Project in Business Information Systems	66 P	6	40	20
IS0619	Graduate Enterprise for CEIS	62 P	6	20	10
IS0628	E-Business	73 P	6	20	10

Name	<b>Phil</b>	Date of Birth	
Student ID		HESA ID	
Date of Admission		Mode of Attendance	FULL TIME
Awarding Institution	Northumbria University		

Awarded	BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (HONOURS) (BSC (HONS)) BUSINESS INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
Classification	with FIRST CLASS HONOURS

Institution Administering Studies As Awarding Institution

<b>Level 4</b>		<b>Mark</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Credit</b>	<b>ECTS</b>
CM0429	Relational Databases	63 P	4	20	10
IS0472	Skills For Information Systems Professionals	61 P	4	20	10
IS0473	Fundamentals of Business Information Systems	74 P	4	20	10
IS0478	Introduction to IT Project Management	65 P	4	10	5
IS0487	FUNDAMENTALS OF SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT	54 P	4	20	10
IS0489	The Business Environment, Organisations and Management Information Systems	67 P	4	20	10
IS0490	Fundamentals of Finance	53 P	4	10	5
<b>Level 5</b>		<b>Mark</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Credit</b>	<b>ECTS</b>
CM0567	CEIS Professional Placement	P	5	0	0
IS0502	Communications and Networks for Commerce	47 P	5	20	10
IS0503	Integrative Consultancy Project	50 P	5	20	10
IS0511	Security, Contingency and Legal Issues in IT	64 P	5	10	5
IS0514	Business Systems Development Tools and Techniques	67 P	5	20	10
IS0516	Application Design & Development	62 P	5	20	10
IS0522	IS/IT Training: Development & Practice	62 P	5	10	5
IS0523	Personal Development Planning for IT/IS Professionals	57 P	5	20	10
<b>Level 6</b>		<b>Mark</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Credit</b>	<b>ECTS</b>
IS0601	Information and the Web in Business: Theory & Practice	73 P	6	20	10
IS0605	Organisations in the Information Age	76 P	6	20	10
IS0608	Undergraduate Project in Business Information Systems	70 P	6	40	20
IS0619	Graduate Enterprise for CEIS	71 P	6	20	10
IS0628	E-Business	76 P	6	20	10

## Appendix 11: Comments – from students

### General Sample of Student Comments taken from portfolios (anonymised)

I don't think that the way I learn can be so easily defined by an online multi-choice test and that a person's way of learning is not the kind of thing that can be so easily engineered to make them a better lifelong learner.

One of the important lessons I have learnt from studying this module is the importance of organisation. I only have a finite amount of time at my disposal to complete work and learning how to use the various tools at my disposal to manage my time effectively. Another important thing I can take away is the importance of storing my work in a neat fashion in order that I can easily retrieve it later if necessary which prevents me from relapsing into the habit of not bothering to keep track of my finished work.

This module has also improved my knowledge in the business world and has made me realize that I need to start preparing myself so that when I finish university I can offer employers more than a degree.

If I had to sum up into one word the philosophy of the Skills For Information System Professionals module, it would have to be "Reflection". The entire module has been designed to provide every last opportunity to reflect on what skills I have and what skills I don't.

The module has been of immense help to me, as mentioned it has provided a stable list of adaptable skills that I can apply to any field of work life. They have provided the basis for a new learning structure through new skills which as John Charlton would agree "The realization that work demands self-discipline, a willingness to change, punctuality, and the ability to put up with boredom is far more useful over time than being able to take a phone message."

The Skills For Information Systems Professional is a brilliant module, which allows the students to further their skills and use it not only in the IT industry but wherever they get a career.

In conclusion, this module has provided a learning experience based upon the Personal Development Planning Strategy. I believe the skills attained from such a module are very much transferable and improve the quality of learning in all aspects. The significance of the E-Portfolio Tool has provided structure for development, whilst regular assessment via profiling tools has helped to identify different learning styles suited to certain characters. In a quest to become a lifelong learner I have realised how important it is to reflect upon, and not forget about previous learning, otherwise knowledge decreases and skills become disregarded. The experience attained from the module has improved understanding which will be impacting both in an academic and non-academic environment.

This module holds a strong philosophy towards the aspects of business/professionalism and attaining a job. It surprised me at the start of the year when we were asked to create both a CV and personal statement. This is not something I would have expected however I have changed views about this and think it is definitely something worth including, especially as it is getting much harder to find a job these days, these skills will be necessary.

The idea of using this tool as an everyday part of university work is something that would appeal to me. Following my initial thoughts I would be happy to use something similar across all of the modules

I believe that the personal development planning is useful to students as they will become more effective, independent and confident self-directed learners understand the different contexts for learning, understand how they are learning and how they prove what they have learnt, to improve their general skills for study and career management and also to help students to understand the importance of being able to learn in new situations and to transfer and apply their learning in different contexts. Although the personal development planning can be intended for students who are studying, it can be useful for a wider context of life in general as it encourages a positive attitude to learning in future life and helps identify possible directions and opportunities, also to relate their learning to employer skills.

Initially Module IS0472 did not seem the type of module I expected to see on a degree in Information Systems. The learning outcomes and the curriculum laid out for the module I initially didn't expect to be a part of the course as I imagined it. However after studying the module for a year I think it is safe to say that it is an important module and one that has provided a learning experience that I did not expect to get and one that I feel has really improved me as a person, from a personal, academic and a professional point of view.

One of my only disappointments was my discovery that after two years of key skills in college and untold years of basically the same thing in sixth form and high school I would be essentially doing the exact same thing for a final year. I predicted the workload to be unnecessarily heavy and exacting, as it was in college, which would disrupt my study of the field I have chosen for myself and ultimately demoralise me in a way that could be fatal to my progression through university. All in all, I was not too impressed when I first heard about its inclusion.

However, I quickly discovered that my preconceptions of the module were completely unfounded. In contrast to what I had to endure in college, the module was very well paced, and mostly interesting. Seeing how the skills we would learn could be related to the business world really helped me to embrace the work as useful rather than a huge waste of my time.

Given the positive difference in the ELLI results and the accuracy of the team roles result I certainly think that the profiling tools are a useful source of self-evaluation as they show which areas have been improved and which areas need improvement.

This module has improved my capacity to learn and has taught me valuable techniques such as Harvard referencing and report writing. I have applied these new skills in many other modules within university.

## **Appendix 12: Comments – from Staff and Programme Committee Meetings**

PhD Feedback from MIS Away day meeting, 13 May 2014

Present: Andrew Turnbull, Jackie Urwin, Mandy Lewis, Paula Brumby, Jackie Adamson

### **Module Review of IS0472**

#### **General Comments noted**

Students prepared for interviews and presentations and have good communication skills.

Evidence of a secure level of transferable skills.

Confident and impressive utilisation of Blackboard ensure students take ownership of their commitments to the module.



### Reference

Both items were discussed.

### Notes of last meeting

Agreed as a correct record. Actions from the previous PCM have been addressed.

### Matters arising

The feedback across the MIS undergraduate programmes has been very positive. There has been a good engagement from students on the whole however attendance is a cause for concern.

Some staff and student meetings have already been held to address any issues prior to the meeting.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

14.02

### Feedback from Student Representatives

#### *Year One*

#### *Foundation Year Information Technology Management*

No Student Reps were in attendance.

#### *Year One*

#### *BSc (Hons) Business Information Systems*

Reported: All students are enjoying the programme.  
Nothing further to report.

#### *Year One*

#### *BSc (Hons) IT Management for Business*

Reported: There has been a drop in attendance for CM0429 (Relational Databases), a suggestion was made to swap the lecture for an additional seminar to make the sessions more practical.

Noted: The Programme Leader commented there was a Timetabling issue due to resource, this will change for next semester and the sessions will move back to the Labs.

The student scale will become more manageable due to the timetabling of larger rooms.  
Agreed: A different delivery pattern is to be considered.

JW/AT

#### Module Tutor Report

Reported: There is an opportunity for students to practice their academic writing by submitting a piece of work to gain feedback on style and structure in preparation for their Final Year Project. No students have taken the module tutor up on the offer.

*Year Two*

*BSc (Hons) Business Information Systems*

Reported: Attendance is an issue on some modules across level 5. It was suggested this could be due to students working on their assignment at home once they have been provided the assignment brief in class.

Noted: Students also stop attending classes when the attendance monitoring scanning device is not used.

*Year Two*

*BSc (Hons) IT Management for Business*

Reported: Everything on the programme is going well. There has been an issue with downloading the software for 1S0516 (Application Design and Development) and IS0502 (Communications and Networks for Commerce).

JW

Noted: The Chair advised using a different version of Citrix. The correct version is to be confirmed following the meeting.

Reported: Students find IS0502 (Communications and Networks for Commerce) very useful to their studies.

Noted: There has been a lot of group work involved for semester one, students have found it hard to arrange team meetings because of the differences between ITMB and BIS timetables.

Reported: Students are enjoying IS0516 (Application Design and Development). They like that the lecture is following by the seminar in a two hour slot.

*Final Year*

*BSc (Hons) Business Information Systems*



Reported: Students are finding the feedback useful on IS0627 (Training and Change Management) but suggested students could benefit from receiving it sooner.

JW

Noted: A section of the assignment 'Communication and Motivation' is not due to be covered until a short time before the work is due to be submitted. Agreed: The module tutor will upload links and course materials to the ELP on the relevant section and the Chair will look into the possibility of an extension and discuss the issue with the module tutor outside of the meeting.

Reported: Some students do not find the teaching content engaging for IS0627 (Training and Change Management). The attendance remains low on IS0622 (Information Systems, Strategy and Organisation) it was suggested this could be due to the teaching content also as students would like to see more examples on case studies

Agreed: The module tutor is happy to look over annotations for frameworks and upload further examples.

JA

Reported: Students would like additional sessions to be held on how to write academically, especially students who have returned from a placement year.

Agreed: The module tutor and Chair will look into it following the meeting and provide sessions within week 2 or 3 of semester two.

Reported: Students would like further clarification on the assignment for IS0626 (Business Intelligence Applications and Technology).

Agreed: The module tutor advised they are focusing on the quality of information but will reiterate in the lecture.

Reported: The students would like to receive the programme handbooks earlier for IS0608 (Undergraduate Project in Business Information Systems).

JW

Noted: The module handbooks are not usually distributed until students have been allocated a supervisor.

Reported: Students have found they are now unable to lock their PC's.

Noted: It was suggested the IT Helpline may be able to activate a timer.

Agreed: The Chair will investigate further.

*Final Year*  
*BSc (Hons) IT Management for Business*

Reported: Some students are not receiving replies to their emails from their first and second markers on CM0645 (Individual Project).

Noted: The students were encouraged to raise the issue with the Final Year Tutor or the Chair if it occurred again.

Reported: Students would like their presentations for IS0626 (Business Intelligence Applications and Technology) to be focused on the same company which their assignment is for. Feedback has not been on their seminar work.

Noted: Karen George has agreed the change and the module tutor commented there is right way but she can check students are heading in the correct direction.

Students were reminded of the open door policy.

Reported: Students are enjoying IS0605 (Organisations in the Information Age). The one to one feedback sessions held with the module tutor are useful.

Noted: There is a difference in learning styles and a cultural barrier between some students for the group work task.

Agreed: Students will be able to select their own groups in the future.

Reported: Students would like more notice when they are due to produce and present a presentation for IS0622 (Information Systems, Strategy and Organisation). Some students are finding it difficult to arrange team meetings due to commitments outside of the University.

Agreed: One week's notice would be provided in the future.

Reported: Students are enjoying IS0627 (Training and Change Management). Good feedback was received on the Guest Lecturers.

Reported: Students suggested they would like to complete two modules in semester one and two modules in semester two with their project focused across both semesters.

14.03

## Programme Leader's Reports

### *Foundation Year Information Technology Management*

Reported: Everything is running well on the programme.  
Noted: Excellent attendance on IS0358 (Business Information Systems)

### *BSc (Hons) Business Information Systems*

Reported: Attendance is a cause for concern across for students across all three years of the programme.  
Noted: Students are doing well at this stage. First years are settling in, but would like to see an improvement in engagement.

### Module Tutor Report (First Year)

Reported: Attendance for the first year students is a cause for concern and there are varying inconsistencies across modules. The Module Tutor encouraged students to discuss their issues and advised of help and support available within the Faculty and within the University Services.

### Module Tutor Report (Second Year)

Reported: There has been a lot of Placement activity this semester organised by the Placement Team. The sessions held on Guest Speakers have seen varying student attendance, interesting to see Northumbria Graduates returning.  
Noted: There are a lot of students applying for Placements.

### *BSc (Hons) IT Management for Business*

Reported: The Learning Outcomes have been reviewed. A five year endorsement of the programme will take place in the summer. The Programme Leader is preparing the paperwork.  
Noted: There has been a good engagement from students in the field study visit to Manchester. There has been an increase in students taking a placement year.

For the second year running the ITMB has gained a student satisfaction of 100% in the NSS.

*BSc (Hons) Librarianship (DL)*

Reported: The Programme took on more students at level 6 for the 14/15 intake. Running out Level 5

Noted: Desktop Anywhere is not a stable platform for Distance Learning students, causing a lot of frustration amongst the group due to the system's accessibility.

The Programme Leader received good feedback from one of her students for the structure of the assignment.

*BSc (Hons) Business Information Management*

Reported: Students cannot see a link between the lectures and seminars for IS0621 (Systems Thinking and Organisational Learning).

Noted: As the programme is a one year top up the students require further support and feedback.

Module Tutor Report

Reported: The students are hardworking and well engaged on the programme. They are a small cohort and their attendance is very good.

Module Tutor Report

14.04

Reported: Students need to respect the protocol and behavioural expectations of the University when attending lectures and seminars.

Noted: Students should ask if they wish to leave.

External Examiners' Reports & Actions

14.05

Reported: The meaning of External Examiners was explained to the students and their role within the University.

Noted: The External Examiner reports will be available for the students to view by the end of the Summer. A comment was raised by one of the externals to ensure peer assessment is fair. The Chair confirmed peer assessment and its guidelines have been looked into.

### Library Report

Reported: 'Northumbria Skills Programme' has been introduced by the Library and training sessions are now available to book onto.

Agreed: The Chair encouraged attendance.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

Nothing to report

*L Smith/ K Wadhawan  
November 2014*

## Informal Notes taken by the researcher at the same meeting

### Programme Committee Meeting, held on 19 November, 2014 in EBA110, from 2.00 pm

#### Discussion items

- 1 General (raised by Programme Leader) – issues with attendance across all modules. To be fed back to the student group through the reps.
- 2 External Examiners' reports – outlined their function to the student group that were present. One thing that had been raised was peer assessment and group work. Looking for fairness relating to assessment.
- 3 ITM (CG) – Fine
- 4 BIS (RS) – Attendance a problem across all 3 years. First year's need to 'up their game'.
- 5 ITMB (AT) – LO's reviewed every 3 years by employers. Last done in Easter, this year. No substantial changes, but confirmed from the employers that we are still delivering the skills and abilities that they are looking for. In May next year, will be 10 years for the programme. Need to do another 5 year forecast from there. Trip to Manchester mentioned. 70% of last year's 2<sup>nd</sup> years on placement. Boasted of 100% student satisfaction.
- 6 First year tutor (me) – Asked if ITM could go on trip? No, closed event. Mentioned poor attendance. Then asked the reps to report back to those non-attenders asking them to get in touch if they wanted to have a chat about any programme issues.
- 7 Second year tutor (SB) – talked about the placement sessions. Encouraged participation as previous students came along to talk to the group and suggested that this was a good experience.
- 8 Final Year (Ed) – Students been to see him about the difference in the workload this year but in his opinion, they are hopefully on track.
- 9 Librarianship (Susannah) – DL – DTA not a stable platform. Been raised as a concern. Adding in the ELP but not sure about the specifics.
- 10 Honglei (Information mgmt.) Some students confused about systems thinking (Petia). Advised to talk to Petia. Top up students need a little bit more (said Petia).
- 11 ITM – No reps present, no comments.

#### Level 4 – BIS

- 1 Drop in attendance on relational database (CM0429). People not digesting in lecture. Pattern of delivery not working, in their opinion. Sitting in a lecture for databases does not seem right. AT said that this was a timetabling issue. Seems to be sheer number

that puts it in a lecture slot. Potentially looking at the delivery pattern. Been discussed before.

- 2 Fundamentals of software development – too fast paced. Don't seem to get it.
- 3 Skills for IS Professionals is fine.

#### **Level 4 – ITMB**

- 1 Fundamentals – have a student in the group who always asks questions and this seems to work for the whole group as all of their problems then get explained to them.
- 2 CM0429 – similar for other module, but have a way to communicate with EJP that works.
- 3 Skills for IS Professionals is fine, but ITMB did say that some students are not attending because they are looking at the sessions and deciding that they can do this for themselves. They also felt that the lectures did not relate to the seminars directly. A second year student then interjected saying that everything they did here was relevant – they will realise this. JA said that the lectures and seminars did not always have to have a visible link up.

#### **Level 5 – BIS**

- 1 No issues.
- 2 Think that if get the assignment then maybe lectures are an option?
- 3 Nothing positive to say.

#### **ITMB Level 5**

- 1 DTA main issue.
- 2 Microsoft Visio not on DTA. Need consistency.
- 3 Enjoy the consultancy module with Ed.
- 4 Group work can be difficult.
- 5 Also there was a room issue – temperature was too hot and not enough seating. People sitting on the steps. Week after, the room was freezing.
- 6 Like the lectorial – 2 hours!

## **Level 6 – BIS and ITMB**

- 1 Opportunity for feedback in the session is useful. Issue with module planning and scheduling with regard to the delivery of lecture material and assessment hand in dates. Ie Given a lecture topic that conflicts with the hand in. (Individual section gets a lot of marks). Student wanted us to look at this for another year. (Mainly because she had already done the work, without the lecture material and did not want other students to possibly be advantaged as a result of this change).
- 2 IS0622 – attendance is an issue but going to meet to talk about this separately. Student suggested that it would be a good idea to have an extra skills session, possibly mid semester, to look at analysing literature. Need processing, schematics, etc to help.
- 3 BI – Susannah’s – Now have some clarification on this re the assessment. Looking at the quality of information and the presentation (not software). People are panicking.
- 4 E-Business – good opportunities to receive feedback on presentation skills.
- 5 Project Enterprise – going well.
- 6 Systems thinking – nothing to pass on.
- 7 Dissertation Module – Initial attendance was an issue, but seems to have been resolved with the timetable change (lecture before the seminar). Possible idea to get the booklets earlier but meeting discussion agreed that this was not necessary. Issue with locking the PCs if you need to go to the toilet. Not convenient to log out and log in for students who need a short break. Too long a time to get back in. Reasonable amount of group work.

### **ITMB 0645**

Stressful. People have problems with first and second markers being in touch. Eg taking a long time for one tutor to get back to the student. Fact that there was no reply was the problem.

Response: staff should reply but not instantly. Onus on the student. Staff do get overloaded with emails. Could go to final year tutor – Ed – quite happy to help. Sometimes, though, the student doesn’t get in touch.

### **Business Intelligence (Susannah)**

Students raised issue re not having a briefing on the assignment. Possibly move it forward? Seminar company different to the assignment company. Can they work on their own company? That has been changed now and they have been aligned. Group had to ask for feedback. Were not given it. Student said they got nothing. Wanted to know if it was correct and are they on the right lines?

Comments taken on board, not always a right answer.



### **Org and Inf Age (605)**

Good module. Enjoying it. Guest speakers good. Language barrier in the class (groups). Could allow students to create their own groups? Ed said not just a language barrier but a cultural barrier also.

### **IS0622**

Work given on a Tuesday for a Thursday. Problem with preparation for presentation. Week would be fine for preparation. Could we use the APP, email or Text service or put it on the schedule for future.

Me: only reading and annotation practice.

### **Training and Change**

Good – seminars, lectures, good.

### **eComms and eBusiness**

Really good teaching. Good

Overall comments from ITMB – splits the semester with 2 modules per semester

BB notifications.

Mentoring email mentioned – final years been asked to do some mentoring. Would be good for their CV.

Meeting closed after 1.5 hours.

## Appendix 13 Employability Publications (Not all)

Confederation EU Rectors Conference <i>The Bologna Declaration (1999)</i>	Commitment to establish a European area of higher education by 2010.
HEFCW <i>Work Experience and Employability Plans (2000)</i>	Welsh HEIs required to draw up strategic plans to promote work experience and employability covering 2000-2003.
HEFC Introduction of Employability Performance Indicators (2000)	Provided quantitative expectations for graduate outcomes taking into account the economic and social profile of the institutions' student intake.
UK Research Councils <i>Joint Statement of Skills Training Requirements of Research Postgraduates (2001)</i>	Identified seven competencies that a postgraduate researcher should have or develop during the course of their PhD. Includes: personal effectiveness, communication skills, team working and career management.
QAA <i>Code of Practice for Career Education, Information and Guidance (2001)</i>	Placed a responsibility on HEIs to ensure that they have a strategy for CEIG that is adequately quality assured.
QAA <i>The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2001)</i>	Qualification descriptors described the qualities and transferable skills for employment that honours students would typically possess upon graduation.
The Harris Report <i>Developing Modern HE Careers Services (2001)</i>	Emphasised the value of better collaboration between careers services and academic staff.
Enhancing Student Employability Co-ordination Team (ESECT) established (2002)	Funded by HEFC, this group brought together a wide range of stakeholders including AGCAS, HEA, AGR, LTSN and NUS to help the sector engage with employability. Before its work ended in February 2005 it published the first volumes in the influential <i>Learning and Employability Series</i> .
Sir Gareth Roberts <i>SET for Success (2002)</i>	Roberts recommended that the joint skills statement be used as a guideline for additional skills training for research students to address the lack of transferable skills in the Science, Engineering and Technology disciplines.
White Paper <i>The Future of HE (2003)</i>	Reinforced the need to relate curricula to employers' needs, established foundation degrees and reinforced widening participation agenda.
QCA <i>Key Skills Standards (2004)</i>	Set out six skills at four levels (including the skill 'improving own learning and performance') providing higher level skills descriptors relevant to HE.
Scottish Funding Councils report <i>Learning to Work (2004)</i>	Intended as a guiding framework for policy development at national and institutional level, and as a basis for consultation and debate. The report recommends that all institutions should 'ensure that employability is embedded as a core purpose of the learning they provide at all levels'.
QAA Scotland Employability Quality Enhancement Theme (2004-2005)	The aim is to raise the profile of employability in higher education, to embed it and make it explicit. It emphasises that employability is not an add-on, but part of good learning and teaching practice.
Progress Files/Personal Development Planning (PDP) requirements (timescale 2000-2005/6)	HEIs agreed to have in place opportunities for all undergraduates to develop personally, academically and vocationally by 2005-06 and to record achievement on a transcript of use to employers. Implementation in Scotland 2006-07.
HEFCE's Centres of Excellence initiative (2005)	74 centres were set up, with a total of £315 million funding over five years from 2005-06 to 2009-10. This initiative represents HEFCE's larger ever single funding initiative in teaching and learning. A number of CETLs directly promote employability.

## Appendix 14 Research Publications by the Author

### 1 Research publications

Clark, W and Adamson, J (2006) '*E-portfolios – the pedagogy of using a VLE for student PDPs*' - paper presentation and workshop at the HEA conference "Managing diversity in teaching and learning". Oxford, 6-7 April

Clark, W and Adamson, J (2006) '*Assessing by e-portfolio*' – poster presentation at the EARLI SIG international conference "Assessment for Excellence". Redworth Hall, August

Clark, W and Adamson, J (2006) '*E-portfolios – using the VLE for student PDP*' – poster and paper presentation at the Northumbria Learning and Teaching Conference. Newcastle, September

Clark, W and Adamson, J (2007) '*Teaching and Evaluating Reflection – can we, should we?*' – round table discussion paper 2<sup>nd</sup> Northumbria Academic Practice Conference. Newcastle, 28-29 June

Clark, W and Adamson, J (2008) '*Robert and Susan and the quest for learning autonomy*' – paper presentation at Telling ePortfolio stories: The road to 'stickiness' conference. Wolverhampton, 5 June

Clark, W and Adamson, J (2008) '*Taxonomy for the assessment of PDP/ePortfolios*' – round table discussion and poster at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Northumbria Academic Practice Conference. Newcastle, 27 June

Clark, W and Adamson, J (2008) '*Developing a vocabulary for reflective learning*' – paper presentation at St Jerome's eportfolio conference, Toronto, Canada, 7-8 July

Clark, W and Adamson, J (2008) '*A Taxonomy for ePortfolio assessment of Personal and Professional Development Planning*' – paper presentation at the Assessment in HE Conference, Carlisle, 9 July

Clark, W and Adamson, J (2008) '*Developing the autonomous lifelong learner: tools, tasks and taxonomies*' – round table discussion at the EARLI/Northumbria Assessment Conference 2008 – Potsdam, Germany, 27-28 August

Clark, W and Adamson, J (2008) '*Using an eportfolio to foster a deep approach to learning*' - paper accepted for inclusion in the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSoTL) conference, Alberta, Canada. 16-19 October (Unfortunately I was not able to take up this opportunity because of lack of funds)

Clark, W and Adamson, J (2008) – contribution of case studies for forthcoming JISC report on use of eportfolios for learning and assessment.

Clark, W. and Adamson, J. (2009) 'Assessment of an ePortfolio: developing a taxonomy to guide the grading and feedback for Personal Development Planning', *Practitioner Research in Higher Education*, 3(1) pp 43-51

Adamson, J. (2015) 'Constructing a Model for HE Teaching – PEDaLL (Personal, Employability, Development (Planning) and Lifelong Learning', *On Reflection*, 28, pp 24-32

## 2 National and International collaboration

- 2.1 **Member of the ELLI in HE pilot research project 2007-2008. Project undertaken by 13 HE institutions from all over the UK to investigate the effectiveness of the Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory in the HE. This was successfully concluded, report launched at Northumbria on 28 October 2008.**
- 2.2 **Contributing to the HEFCE funded "Dispositions to Stay" ELLI-linked research project - retention and progression, Manchester and Bedford Universities 08/09**
- 2.3 **Member of Cohort IV of the International Coalition for ePortfolio Research, which includes teams from universities in the USA, Canada, UK and the Netherlands input from universities & leading academics, Australia (2007-2010).**
- 2.4 **Contributor to the JISC study 'The role of eportfolios in formative and summative assessment', collaborating with David Baume (Higher Education Consultant) and Janet Strivens (University of Liverpool) (2008)**

## 3 Collaboration within CEIS and other Schools in UNN.

- 3.1 **Collaboration on general PDP/ePortfolio research from Academic Registry as an Academic Adviser with CEIS (now Engineering and Environment)**
- 3.2 **Collaboration on ELLI and International Coalition for ePortfolio research with Wendy Clark, Alan White (Academic Advisers), Jamie Thompson (National Teaching Fellow, Academic Registry)**
- 3.3 **Collaboration on Assessment for Learning projects in CETL.**

## 4 Conferences

Clark, W and Adamson, J (2008) '*Robert and Susan and the quest for learning autonomy*' – paper presentation at **Telling ePortfolio stories: The road to 'stickiness'** conference. University of Wolverhampton, 5 June

Clark, W and Adamson, J (2008) '*Taxonomy for the assessment of PDP/ePortfolios*' – round table discussion and poster at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Northumbria Academic Practice Conference. Newcastle, 27 June

Clark, W and Adamson, J (2008) '*Developing a vocabulary for reflective learning*' – paper presentation at St Jerome's eportfolio conference, Toronto, Canada, 7-8 July

Clark, W and Adamson, J (2008) '*A Taxonomy for ePortfolio assessment of Personal and Professional Development Planning*' – paper presentation at the Assessment in HE Conference, Carlisle, 9 July

Clark, W and Adamson, J (2008) '*Developing the autonomous lifelong learner: tools, tasks and taxonomies*' – round table discussion at the EARLI/Northumbria Assessment Conference 2008 – Potsdam, Germany, 27-28 August

Adamson, J. (2014) 'The PEDaLL Model for Teaching in Higher Education', *Proceedings of the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Residential Seminar of the Centre for Recording Achievement*, University of Aston, Birmingham, 27-28 November, Available at: <http://www.recordingachievement.org/images/pdfs/SEMINARS/ja.doc> (Accessed: 17 December 2014)

## Appendix 15 Aligning Assessment with Lifelong Learning

Boud and Falchikov (2006) outline a number of approaches that maximise opportunities for lifelong learning within teaching and learning through the alignment of the assessment requirements within a socially constructed curriculum.

### *Engages with standards and criteria and problem analysis*

- Provides practice in discernment to identify critical aspects of problems and issues and knowledge required to address them.
- Involves finding appropriate assistance to scaffold understanding from existing knowledge base
- Gives learners practice in identifying, developing and engaging with criteria and standards.

### *Emphasises importance of context*

- Locates issues in a context that must be taken into account
- Identifies aspects of context that must be considered
- Decides on what aspects of work requires feedback from others
- Recognises solutions vary according to context

### *Involves working in association with others*

- Participates in giving and receiving feedback
- Utilises practitioners and other parties external to the education institution
- Involves engagement with communities of practice and ways in which their knowledge is represented
- Involves working collaboratively with others (not necessarily involving group assessment) including parties external to the educational institution

### *Involves authentic representations and productions*

- Identifies and uses of communities of practice to assist in developing criteria for good work and peer feedback
- Tasks directly reflect forms of activity in professional practice commensurate with level of skill possessed (ie high level of authenticity)

### *Promotes transparency of knowledge*

- Invites analysis of task structure and purpose
- Fosters consideration of the epistemology of learning embedded in tasks
- Tasks draw attention to how they are constructed and seeks to make this transparent

### *Fosters reflexivity*

- Fosters linking of new knowledge to what is already known
- Not all information required for solution of problems is given
- Prompts self-monitoring and judging progression towards goals (testing new knowledge)

### *Builds learner agency and constructs active learners*

- Involves learners in creating assessment tasks
- Assumes learners construct their own knowledge in the light of what works in the world around them
- Focuses on producing rather than reproducing knowledge (fosters systematic inquiry)
- Provides opportunities for learners to appropriate assessment activities to their own ends

### *Considers risk and confidence of judgement*

- Provides scope for taking initiative (eg always taking the safe option is not encouraged)
- Elements of task are not fully determined
- Confidence in outcomes is built and sought (eg tasks encourage students to be confident of what they know and don't know)

### *Promotes seeking appropriate feedback*

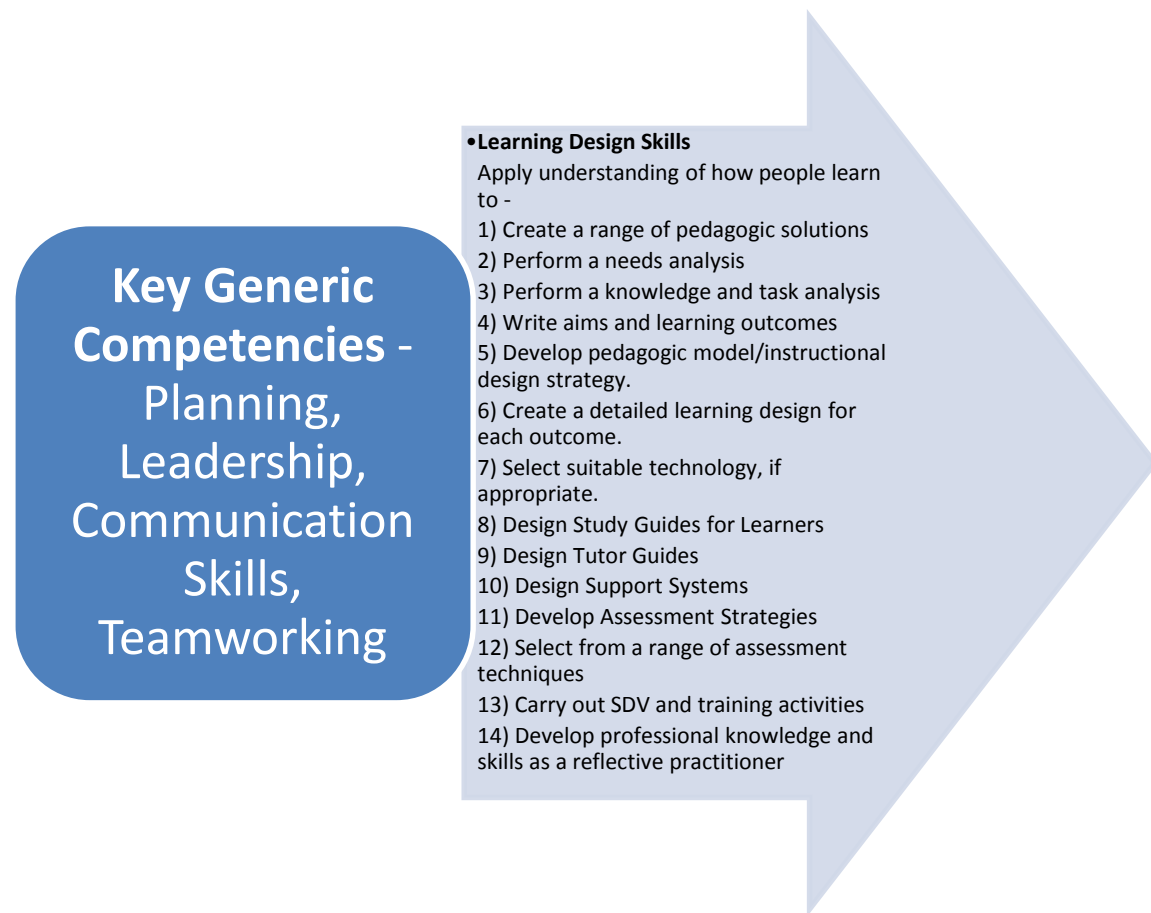
- Involves seeking and utilising feedback
- Feedback used from a variety of sources (eg from teacher, peer and practitioner)
- Grades and marks subordinated to qualitative feedback

### *Requires portrayal of outcomes for different purposes*

- Identifiably leave students better equipped to complete future tasks
- Involves portraying achievements to others (eg portfolio or patchwork text construction)

## Appendix 16 Deliverables arising from the competency framework

Deliverables and Evidence outcomes arising from the competency framework.



Adapted from MacLean and Scott (2011)



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