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Staff and students co-creating curricula in UK higher education: exploring process and evidencing value

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Abstract

Student engagement in learning and teaching is receiving a growing level of interest from policy makers, researchers, and practitioners. This includes opportunities for staff and students to co-create curricula, yet there are few examples within current literature which describe and critique this form of staff-student collaboration (Bovill (2013a), Healey *et al* (2014), Cook-Sather *et al* (2014). The competing agendas of neoliberalism and critical, radical pedagogies influence the policy and practice of staff and students co-creating curricula and, consequently, attempt to appropriate the purpose of it in different ways.

Using case-based research methodology, my study presents analysis of staff and students co-creating curricula within seven universities. This includes 17 examples of practice across 14 disciplines. Using an inductive approach, I have examined issues relating to definitions of practice, conceptualisations of curricula, perceptions of value, and the relationship between practice and institutional strategy.

I draw upon an interdisciplinary body of literature to provide the conceptual foundations for my research. This has been necessary to address the complexity of practice and includes literature relating to student engagement in learning and teaching, conceptual models of curriculum in higher education, approaches to evidencing value and impact, and critical theory and radical pedagogies.

The study makes specific contributions to the wider scholarly debate by highlighting the importance of dialogue and conversational scholarship as well as identifying with participants what matters as well as what works as a means to evidence the value of collaborations. It also presents evidence of a new model of co-creating curricula and additional approaches to conceptualising curricula to facilitate collaboration. Analysis of macro and micro level data shows enactment of dialogic pedagogies within contexts of technical-rational strategy formation and implementation.

I demonstrate the value of my methodological approach, particularly my use of participative methods, and the value of developing a theoretical approach informed by critical theory.

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Researching this topic has often made me reflect on the stake my four and six year-old children have in their education and the importance of them developing their voices to be heard and for others to respond with care and respect. The writing of this PhD ends here, but the values I explore and champion will stay with me as I move forward as a researcher, as a teacher, and as a parent.

Maya and Sebastian, I dedicate this to you.

Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature   _____

Printed name   __Cherie Woolmer_____

Definitions and Abbreviations

ASPEN   Academic Strategy and Practice at Edinburgh Napier

BIS   Business, Innovation and Skills

CA   Contribution Analysis

CSR   Case Study Research

EBL   Enquiry Based Learning

HEA   Higher Education Academy

JISC   Joint Information Systems Committee

KIS   Key Information Set

KPI   Key Performance Indicators

LO   Learning Outcome

NUS   National Union of Students

NSS   National Student Survey

NSSE   National Survey of Student Engagement

PBL   Problem Based Learning

PTAS   Principal's Teaching Award Scheme

QAA   Quality Assurance Agency

QEF   Quality Enhancement Framework

RCT   Random Controlled Trials

REACT   Realising Engagement through Active Culture Transformation

REF   Research Excellence Framework

SaP   Students as Partners

SFS   Student Fellows Scheme

SoTL   Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

SSLC   Staff Student Liaison Committee

SPARQS Student Participation in Quality Scotland

TCA   Theory of Communicative Action

TEF   Teaching Excellence Framework

TESTA   Transforming the Experience of Students through Assessment

UKES   United Kingdom Engagement Survey

Chapter 1: Introduction

'A commitment to sharing power within the learning and teaching context involves more than simply moving from a teacher-focus to a student-focus, but instead a full re-examination of the inter-relationships of both roles'.

Huxham *et al* (2015, p.533)

How to maximise learning to ensure student success in higher education has been a concern for some decades. More recently, this topic has developed into a field of research and practice referred to as Student Engagement and has risen up the policy agenda significantly, featuring, for example, in the Quality Assurance Agency's code of practice on Student Engagement and in the recent white paper (2015) consultation *Higher Education: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice.*

Research into student engagement is concerned with social as well as academic aspects of university life. The timing of this research, which examines the co-creation of curricula, is particularly pertinent given the ongoing debates relating to the increasing commodification of higher education which occurs as a result of neoliberal policies and ideologies. This is especially relevant at a time when the sector is consulting on a proposed Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and where individual financial costs to participate in university are increasing. For this reason, I have included critiques of the political ideologies which frame and influence the nature, purpose, and value of staff and students co-creating curricula. I argue there are two competing ideological positions which influence the policy and practice of co-creating curricula: neoliberalism and critical pedagogy.

This thesis presents an analysis of staff and students co-creating curricula across seven universities in the UK. It combines the micro-level data of practice from staff and students involved in collaborative activities as well as analysis of macro-level institutional strategy statements. My research questions for this

study have focussed on how staff and students understand and define their practice, the value they see from such collaborations, and the connections the respective practices have to institutional strategy. The unit of analysis for my study has been institutions with examples of staff and students co-creating curricula being nested within them. I refer to the micro ('on the ground' practice of staff and students co-creating curricula) and macro levels (institutional level strategy) of analysis within each institution, discussing in and across case themes within my data.

The study aims to redress three fundamental issues within current research on student engagement in teaching and learning. The first relates to the relatively few examples in the literature which demonstrate how staff and students are co-creating curricula in higher education or how they are conceptualising their practice. The second relates to the need to evidence the value of this kind of collaboration (in addition to many other types of staff and student collaborations). The third relates to identifying the connection (or otherwise) between the practice of co-creating curricula (at the micro-level) of the classroom to the wider context (macro-level) of the institution. By critically exploring processes and evidencing the value of co-creating curricula, I provide a unique contribution to this field of enquiry.

The study is theoretically informed by literature relating to student engagement in learning and teaching, critical theory and radical pedagogies, curriculum theory, and approaches to measuring value and impact. These separate perspectives combine to inform specific research questions and culminate with my data analysis to provide new perspectives on co-creation of curricula in higher education. In agreement with participants, individuals and institutions are named within this research.

My research approach has been inductive and has made use of multiple methods of data collection. The overarching methodology for my research is Case Study Research (CSR) which has included analysis of institutional documents and semi-

structured interviews with a visual participative task for participants. This has enabled me to construct rich, contextual accounts for each case study and for me to assemble different types of evidence to inform the outcomes of my study.

Regarding types of evidence, Shulman (2013) suggests that there are three types which can be gathered in research: the first relates to large scale, random controlled trials (RCT); the second is repeated collection of local data on a topic; the third involves a dialogic process between these first two. With the first type of evidence the aim is to collect data which is generalizable. In the second one, collects data to understand events at a local level, usually through development of case studies. He argues that the third type of evidence involves dialogue between evidence types one and two, using professional judgements to establish meaning and value. Shulman argues this is needed if we are to keep revisiting and making sense of generalisable data in new and changing circumstances.

My study constitutes what Shulman would describe as 'type two' evidence: a series of rich case studies which attempt to capture the temporal and situated dimensions of practice as well as the narratives of staff and students involved in co-creating curricula. However, my approach of semi-structured interviews and inclusion of a visual task has also given space for participants to include their professional judgements on how they experience and make sense of co-creating curricula. As such, I see my study complementing other qualitative studies in the field, such as Bovill (2013a), and addressing recommendations from large scale, quantitative studies such as that carried out by Pauli *et al* (2016, p 8) who suggest in their own recommendations the need for 'further research aimed at developing a measure of value placed on Students as Partners (SaP) pedagogies to accompany our own measure of SaP experience'.

The remainder of my introductory comments provide an overview of student engagement in higher education, providing the wider context in which my study is located and the rationale for my focus.

1.1 Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

Discussion about the purpose of higher education is worthy of its own thesis. Authors such as Barnett (2008), Collini (2006), and Readings (1996) offer extensive analysis regarding the history and purpose of higher education and reflections on the effect of neoliberalism on the politics and practices in universities. Some of this commentary reflects back to the foundation of universities in medieval times. However, for the purposes of my study, it is relevant to focus on debates which have occurred since the massification of higher education, namely since the 1960s, and to focus specifically on the positioning of teaching and learning within these debates in the UK context.

The neoliberal agenda in higher education is characterised by a shift in attention to link learning with economic productivity, to commodify the experience as a return on investment (financially, in particular), and increasing importance given to individualising and commodifying the experience.

Olssen and Peters (2005, p. 314) state: 'Neoliberalism is a politically imposed discourse, which is to say that it constitutes the hegemonic discourse of western nation state.' They go on to outline how neoliberalism has been applied to higher education, creating a new mode of regulation of governmentality, the aims of which, for government, are to create an 'individual that is an enterprising and competitive entrepreneur....This means that for neoliberal perspectives, the end goals of freedom, choice, consumer sovereignty, competition and individual initiative, as well as those of compliance and obedience, must be constructions of the state acting now in its positive role through the development of the techniques of *auditing*, *accounting* and *management*.'[original emphasis](p. 315). Naidoo and Williams (2015, p. 208-209) propose the adoption of neoliberalism in higher education has resulted in 'the reconceptualisation of students as consumers of HE' and go on to note 'there has been less research on the impact of consumer mechanisms on the curriculum, on the professional practices of faculty and on the shaping of student identities and equity.'

I am keen to avoid presenting a fatalistic account of the current situation of higher education in the UK but I acknowledge there are important political and ideological shifts afoot which present significant challenges to the sector. These include tuition fees, cuts in government funding, introduction of private providers and the decision to leave the European Union. I agree with Collini's (2006, p.22) reflections when he states that 'the pace of change (since 1960s) has been so fast that no decade can plausibly be chosen to represent the 'normal' condition of the system'. Because of this, he goes on to suggest, the idea of a golden age of higher education before massification is futile. Readings (2016) argues we should therefore avoid romantic nostalgia of a bygone age of higher education. Yet I do ascribe to the view of higher education which is about civic as well as economic, developing collective as well as individual gains.

Readings (1996) goes on to discuss how Western notions of the university frame much of the transnational discussion on higher education. Much of current higher education provision is aligned with the Humboldtian idea of the university being concerned with knowledge production and knowledge acquisition. Translated into current parlance, we recognise this as the functions of research and teaching in universities today.

Influential reports such as Dearing (1997), Browne (2010), and now the current Higher Education white paper have contributed to the positioning of learning for individual gain, resulting in the ideology that university education is a private, individual good. Compounded with the advent of paying tuition fees to study in England and Wales and national tools such as the National Student Survey (NSS), which measures student satisfaction with their learning, there is concern that higher education is increasingly being seen as a commodity and students the consumers of it. With the proposed introduction of a Teaching Excellence Framework in England and Wales (and possibly Scotland), things seem even less certain regarding the further commodification of higher education in the UK. This sets a challenging scene in which to address student engagement in learning and teaching and, specifically, co-creation of curricula which is the focus of this

study. The values of inclusion, emancipation, and co-construction of learning sit in opposition to those of neoliberalism, creating a battleground where policy and practice of student engagement and co-creation of curricula is understood and appropriated.

Debates regarding student engagement in the UK have, to a certain extent, sought to reframe and challenge the idea of the student as consumer. For example, Buckley (2014) and the National Union of Students (NUS) (2012) manifesto for partnership both make such assertions. More radical agendas, which seek to democratise learning, which place students as active agents in their learning, are emerging within the sector, standing in firm opposition to the student-as-consumer ideology (Neary, 2008, 2012; Bovill, 2013b). Recent pilots of a UK version of US National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) focusses more on measuring student engagement with learning rather than satisfaction measured by the current National Student Survey (NSS)(which arguably reinforces ideas of transaction and exchange rather than agency and responsibility in learning).

The values which inform my own teaching and educational development work draw heavily on the ideals of inclusiveness, transformation and social justice. However, I have also worked for many years in academic development roles which have required me to interpret and implement institutional Learning and Teaching Strategies which, without exception in my experience, are informed by technical-rational approaches to strategy formation.

1.2 Student Engagement and Students as Partners

Student Engagement is a pervasive term used in higher education and has been enshrined in a number of public policy documents in the UK. It is commonly used to refer to both broad experiences like 'university life' and to specific ones, such as engagement with learning in a classroom activity. However, it is

acknowledged that there is a lack of clarity on how the term is understood and, more importantly, to what ends it is being used in planning and practice within universities. Buckley (2014, p.2) discusses how student engagement is being articulated in two clear ways in the UK, 'as [both] a mainstream solution to common challenges, and as a radical approach involving a fundamental change to the structures and values of higher education'. Buckley's discussion usefully illustrates how higher education in the UK has evolved to a particular understanding of student engagement. Unlike in the US and Australia, Buckley argues that in the UK, there is a conflation of pedagogical practices (engagement in learning) and political agendas (through involvement in governance). Agencies such as the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) have dedicated parts of the national Quality Assurance Code of Practice to Student Engagement (2012), defining it as 'time spent on a task, quality of effort, student involvement, social and academic integration, good practices in education, and learning outcomes'. The QAA also notes that 'the term covers two domains relating to: improving the motivation of students to engage in learning and to learn independently [and] the participation of students in quality enhancement and quality assurance processes, resulting in the improvement of their educational experience'. Other organisations focussing on student engagement include The National Union of Students (NUS) (2012), which has published a Manifesto for Partnership, and SPARQS (Student Participation in Quality Scotland) (2012), which has published a Student Engagement Framework.

The conceptualisation and focus of student engagement has evolved differently in different countries. For example, in the UK, student engagement has often focussed on student involvement in representation and governance, whereas in the United States the focus has been on the involvement of individuals with their learning (Wolf-Wendal *et al,* 2009).

There is increasing attention being given to student engagement with teaching and learning in the UK, drawing heavily on the ethos of developments in the United States. This has included more examples of working with students as co-researchers to address Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) and

contributing to academic development activities such as postgraduate certificates in academic practice for new lecturers.

Additionally, numerous models have been developed to exemplify the roles, domains, and the nature of the activity in which students are collaborating. These are explored fully in chapter two.

The growing interest in national and university policies related to student engagement in learning and teaching is evident and appears to be on an upward trajectory. However, like Buckley, a number of authors share a growing level of caution about the uncritical use of the term (Sabri, 2011; Bovill, 2013b; Carey, 2013; Gibbs, 2016). Sabri (2011) and Carey (2013) both argue that the term student engagement has been hijacked within neoliberal ideology, which situates the student as a consumer. Sabri (2011, p.657) notes that public policy discourse 'homogenises, commodifies and diminishes an understanding of both "student' and 'experience'. This discourse has… sanctioned and legitimated a limited conception of the experience of students in higher education which treats students as rational technical learners'. She goes on to argue that this limited conception arises from what Sabatier (1998) describes as an Advocacy Coalition Framework, which results from a collusion between QAA mechanisms - quality enhancement initiatives which focus at the micro-level in an institution - and, finally, a [flawed] understanding of the Approaches to Learning (AL) research from Prosser and Trigwell (1998). I return to this point later in chapter two in relation to McLean's (2008) discussion of mechanisms, which have, intentionally or otherwise, resulted in dominating the discourse in this field.

Drawing upon commentary from similar developments in secondary schools, Michael Fielding (2004) writes persuasively about the potentially galvanising effect that prioritising student voice might have on pupil learning. His discussion, along with authors such as Sara Bragg (2007), is firmly rooted in radical philosophies similar to those espoused in critical pedagogy, namely that student engagement and student voice are processes towards achieving a more

just and democratic citizenship. Writing over ten years ago, Fielding talks of the potential 'new wave' of student voice and the renewal of civic society which could arise from new pedagogies developing in schools. He describes how the schools sector is also littered with terminology such as 'personalisation', 'collaborations', 'networking' and 'transformation' and argues that 'the populist panacea of 'personalisation' is unlikely to address or redress [a totalitarian era]' (2004, p.198). Fielding (2004) and Bragg (2007) draw heavily on Foucauldian Governmentality Theory to help critique and understand neoliberal interpretations (and limitations) of student voice and student agency in schools.

Sabri's and Fielding's argument suggest that developments in student engagement in higher education, like student voice in schools, are each subjected to the effect of macro-level public policy environments. As a result, they are misappropriated and these 'movements' cease to be just that and risk becoming 'agendas' of the neoliberal endeavour, where terms become political tools which influence funding, measurement and ultimately, practices at the meso (middle-level management structures) and micro-levels of learning. Through this process there is a risk of destroying the original intention and values underpinning student voice and student engagement. Buckley (2014,p. 3) notes this paradox in higher education: 'The fact that student engagement can coherently be thought of as both underpinning and undermining a quasi-market model of HE should make clear the lack of conceptual clarity; a clear conceptualisation of student engagement would not permit it to be both mainstream and radical in these ways.'

Kahu (2013) provides a useful critique of the varying perspectives from which student engagement research is considered. She describes these as the behavioural perspective, the psychological perspective, the socio-cultural perspective, and the holistic perspective. She presents a conceptual model of engagement which looks to integrate these various perspectives, developing what she describes as a psycho-social model. Kahu (2013, p.768) argues that this approach allows us to:

'[view] student engagement as a psycho-social process, influenced by institutional and personal factors, and embedded within a wider social context, integrates the social cultural perspective with the psychological and behavioural issues discussed. The framework includes not just those elements within an institution's control, thus ensuring a much richer and deeper understanding of the student experience.'

The field of research referred to as student engagement contains within it the growing interest of working in partnership with students. Addressing student engagement in learning and teaching and through collaborative approaches fundamentally require a revisiting of the nature of staff and student interactions and the values which inform them. As Healey *et al* (2014, p. 15) explain 'all partnership is student engagement, but not all student engagement is partnership'. Cook-Sather *et al* (2014, p.1) argue that 'partnerships are based on respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility between students and faculty'. These three principles suggested by Cook-Sather *et al* place staff (referred to as faculty in the US) and students in reciprocal discussions where direction and outcomes are negotiated and where ownership and risk are shared.

1.3 Focus of study

There are a growing number of examples of staff and students working in partnership in higher education. These examples include students undertaking research and consultancy to improve teaching and learning, for example: co-delivering academic development (at the University of Uppsala) and providing peer observation of teaching (Cook-Sather, 2014b).

My study focusses on the particular dimension of staff and students working together to co-create curricula. Healey *et al* (2014) and Trowler and Trowler (2010) acknowledge that this particular dimension of student partnership activity is less well evidenced and understood.

This study has been made possible due to funding from the Higher Education Academy's Mike Baker Doctoral Programme (see Appendix 1 for proposal summary). As such, the research outline from the original HEA proposal provided parameters for me to work within. A combination of the original proposal, my analysis of the literature, and my professional experience of collaborating with staff and students have all informed the focus and approach of my research.

My study uses a case-based research approach to examine examples of staff and students co-creating curricula. In doing so, I have looked at the micro-level practice of co-creating curricula alongside the macro level context of each university setting. This approach has allowed me to research the meaning-making processes and discourse of individuals involved in this practice and the relationship these examples have with the wider context of the institution. I have also been able to look at in and cross-case themes. My research questions reflect the interactions of these organisational dimensions and seek to foreground the experiences of staff and students involved in co-creating curricula. I have also argued that much of the collaborative process is tacit and have therefore drawn upon visual methods as well as semi-structured interviews to explore and elicit experiences and understanding from participants. My research questions for this study include:

RQ1: In what ways do staff and students understand and define curriculum?

RQ2: How is co-creation of curricula defined by staff and student practitioners?

RQ3: What current examples of practice illustrate co-creation of curricula in UK HE?

RQ4: In what ways do practitioners define the impact and value of this work?

RQ5: How do practice and institutional strategies inter-relate?

1.4 Structure

My thesis is structured in to six chapters. My second chapter discusses the conceptual framing of my study. In my second chapter, I argue that the practice of co-creating curricula with students is complex, with multiple dimensions each of which could be the sole focus of research (for example, power, identity, and development of graduate attributes).

I have been concerned with further understanding what co-creation of curricula involves and how it is understood by participants, as this is particularly under-defined in the current literature. Developing an understanding of what it is and how it works through the experiences of participants has been central to the development of my research questions and my methodological approach and the conceptual framework to inform my analysis and discussion. This study contributes to the field by helping to understand the contextual factors that inform and support co-creation of curricula, as well as identify and describe what co-creation of curricula is and how it is occurring in different settings, as defined by participants engaged in the activity itself. I draw upon four theoretical perspectives to address the complexity of the study. These include a discussion of existing literature relating to staff and students co-creating curricula (in the UK and beyond), a discussion of critical theory and radical pedagogies, conceptualisations of higher education curriculum, and educational development literature which examines measuring impact and value of learning and teaching initiatives.

The third chapter outlines my methodological approach, detailing the rationale for Case Study Research (CSR) and the additional value of using visual prompts within interviews with participants. I demonstrate here the value of the pilot study which helped refine the main study. I also discuss ethical issues relating to the study, my own reflexivity, and reflections on the limitations my study.

Chapter four is presented in two parts to reflect analysis of institutional strategic data from the macro level of the organisation (Part A) and the micro-level practices of co-creating curricula (Part B) for each case study site. Chapter five provides discussion of the results. I present five topics for discussion which cut across and address multiple aspects of the research questions outlined above. The topics relate to practice discourse and dialogue, a new model of co-creating curricula, moving beyond outcomes focussed curricula, evidencing value, and the role of institutional support, and I address my research questions in relation to these topics.

In chapter six, I outline the contribution my research makes to the field of student engagement in learning and teaching and the practice of staff and students co-creating curricula. I conclude with suggestions for further research and implications for practice.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framing

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conceptual foundations for my research. Due to the inductive approach used in my study, the theoretical perspectives presented here were arrived at through an iterative process and have been informed by my ongoing literature review, dissemination, and feedback on early findings and through detailed analysis of my data. Staff and students co-creating curricula in higher education is a relatively nascent area of practice and consequently research on the topic has yet to establish a common theoretical framework.

My study draws upon four theoretical perspectives from literature in education, sociology and organisational development and I bring them together to address the particular dimensions of my study. This has been necessary to examine the complexity of the practice of co-creating curricula and how this relates to context and setting. This chapter examines the following topics:

- Student engagement in learning and teaching and co-creation of curricula in higher education
- Critical theory and radical pedagogies
- Curriculum conceptualisation in higher education
- Measuring impact and articulating value

I explain the relationship between these theoretical perspectives and how they combine to provide the conceptual framework for my study. To achieve this, I examine each theoretical perspective in turn and conclude with a synthesis that illustrates how they have helped to position my study, develop my research questions, and make sense of my data analysis and discussion.

It is not possible in the confines of this PhD thesis to address the breadth of debate in each theoretical domain. However, conscious of the breadth and depth of each theoretical perspective I present, my concern is in providing a rigorous account of my rationale for including it and how I have used it to inform my study. This has included being cognisant of the varied terminology I have used through this chapter, and being careful to offer my own working definitions where necessary. Most of the literature discussed draws upon the UK context as this has been the location of my research. However, in my discussion I do consider and cross reference international contexts where appropriate.

In section one, I provide an overview of the existing literature relating to student engagement in learning and teaching and co-creation of curricula in higher education, including the history and development in the UK and US and the rise of the Students as Partners discourse in the UK. This includes an account of international practice and highlights the tentative range of definitions related to the field of research as well as the guiding principles that have been published to help inform practice. I illustrate how research on co-creating curricula in higher education is nascent in relation to other aspects of collaboration in learning and teaching, and I situate my own study within this emergent area of research. I also offer a critique of the current status of this work and identify opportunities to contribute to this emergent body of literature.

I have deliberately chosen to describe the examples of practice in my study as *collaborations* rather than partnerships. This is in part to recognise the absence of the term *partnerships* in the discourse of participants in this study, but also to recognise that, in the UK context specifically, the terms *students as partners* and *student partnerships* are part of the policy narrative which I wish to recognise as distinct from participants' narratives. This issue is addressed in more detail in the discussion within chapter five, but at this point I would like to stress that my choice of terminology is not intended to be normative or prescriptive, in fact, quite the opposite. I have, where possible, taken participants' language as my starting point, thereby intentionally describing the

practice of co-creating curricula as collaborative and inclusive of a range of different kinds of participation.

After establishing the context of my study in relation to existing higher education research, section two explores the role of social theory in educational research and, specifically, critical theory and radical pedagogies. I present McLean's (2008) interpretation of Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action and her application of it in relation to critical university pedagogy. I discuss the usefulness of McLean's interpretation of Habermas's discussion of the colonising effect of neoliberal policies and her application of it on the university 'lifeworld'. I argue that her application of Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action (TCA) specifically to the university environment provides a useful context in which to examine and critique the interplay between macro-level policies and micro-level practices in teaching and learning within institutions– a central aspect to my study in the examination of co-creating curricula. Authors such as Bryson (2014) have provided useful accounts of the relationship and responsibilities between the university and the individual when addressing student engagement. However, McLean's arguments for developing critical university pedagogy problematise the relationship between the organisation and individuals and, in doing so, demonstrate the need to be mindful of the ideologies at play behind policy and how they enable or constrain practice.

Section three outlines conceptual models for curriculum in higher education. This builds upon some of the ideas presented by McLean's argument for critical university pedagogy, but also serves specifically to introduce other, complementary, concerns with defining curriculum in UK higher education. I suggest in my discussion that conceptualisations of curriculum potentially influence the opportunities made available for co-creating curricula. I argue there is a lack of debate (or consensus) about curriculum in UK higher education and suggest this has repercussions for researching the practice of staff and students co-creating curricula.

In section four, I critically reflect upon the current policies and practices of measuring the impact of learning and teaching in higher education in the UK. I critique ideas of causality in relation to the measurement of impact of learning and teaching and discuss how current discourses and practices contribute to what McLean describes as the colonisation of the university 'lifeworld'. I present Bamber's (2013) discussion of the 'impact chimera' and build upon her argument that we should focus on 'evidencing value' of educational experiences within the sector, demonstrating how her discussion informs my research questions.

2.2 Terminology

As interest in student engagement has grown, so has the terminology associated with it. Phrases such as 'students as change agents', 'active student participation', 'students as colleagues', 'students as co-producers', 'co-creators', and 'co-enquirers' occur frequently in the literature (Dunne, 2016). There is growing sensitivity in the field to the array of terminology being used and an awareness of how this can potentially confuse practice (Gibbs, 2016; Wolf-Wendal *et al.*, 2009). Bovill (2013b:101) notes:

> 'we should perhaps be wary of the sometimes uncritical use of terms such as participation, engagement, co-creation and students as change agents. This terminology is being used by staff and university administrators with a vast range of motivations and intentions. We need to be explicit about our intentions, about the details of which particular students are involved, how they are involved, and about evaluating students' experiences of co-creation.'

Several authors (discussed below) have provided models to help to describe and conceptualise student engagement in higher education. It is important to acknowledge that this history and focus of student engagement in the UK differs from other western countries, such as the US. Wolf-Wendal *et al* (2009) note how the US has a longer history of addressing dimensions of individual engagement with learning and teaching through the work of Astin (1984) Tinto (1993) and Kuh (2001). Data gathered through the National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE) in the US has led to the identification of High Impact

Activities on Learning (Kuh, 2008). The UK has been adapting the NSSE and piloting the UK Student Engagement Survey (UKES) in parallel to the National Student Survey but there has been a dominance in the UK to focus student engagement on issues of representation and governance.

This is illustrated by the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) code of practice on student engagement which was published in 2012 and has been applied in the review cycle for institutions in England and Wales since 2013. The code states that there is an expectation for institutions to 'take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience' (p. 6).

Bryson and Hand (2007) report that in their research with students in a business school in an English university, they:

> '…found good examples of engagement manifesting itself in the accounts of these students; active participation in class activities, enjoyment of particular modules, reading more widely around the subject, enthusiasm about their course and even a few examples of immersing themselves in the pleasure of learning for its own sake; rather more common was a different notion of engagement with something other than education - the sense that HE was all about a means to an end – getting a good job – which necessitated acquiring a good degree.'

They go on to draw upon Mann's (2001) argument that universities can alienate as well as encourage students to engage. Kandiko and Mawer (2013) were commissioned by the QAA to study student's expectations and perceptions of higher education. Whilst the report was wide ranging in terms of the various aspects of quality and student engagement was included as a dimension of their research. Some of their findings resonate with those listed by Bryson and Hand in terms of future focus and employability. However, Kandiko and Mawer reported that students also expressed a desire to work collegially with academic colleagues rather than just in a representative form.

Only relatively recently has the focus of student engagement with learning and teaching (beyond representation and governance) received attention in the UK. Within the last two years, the phrase 'Students as Partners' has gained a foothold in the UK policy domain, influenced strongly by the Higher Education Academy's adoption of this term.

In approaching the literature, it has been important for me to understand not only the range of terms and definitions currently being used in the higher education sector but also, and perhaps most importantly, the relationship between them as many terms are used interchangeably and frequently without definition. Bryson (2011, p.1), agrees with Bovill (2013), that, 'In the UK, the concept of student engagement is relatively underdeveloped in conceptual and research terms. Therefore, the term is frequently used but infrequently defined or explored'.

2.3 Student Engagement in Learning and Teaching and Co-creation of Curricula in Higher Education

The field of student engagement in higher education, as noted in my introduction, covers a wide variety of experiences associated with university life. This includes participation in representation and governance, involvement in clubs as societies, and disciplinary research.

My study sits within the area of student engagement in learning and teaching and, specifically, the practice of staff and students co-creating curricula. To this end, it is useful to explore the different facets of student engagement in learning and teaching by using concentric circles as a way of explaining how key terms inter-relate; it provides a clarifying way to think about the relationship of these things in an otherwise messy terrain. This relationship is highlighted in Figure 1 below:
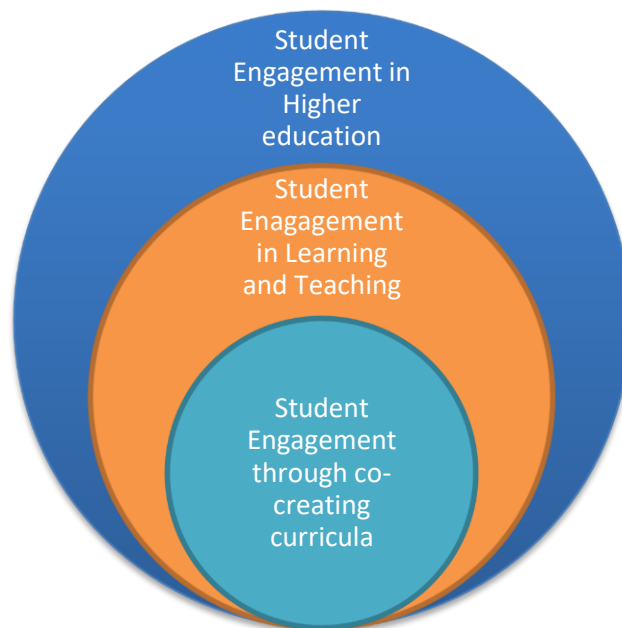
Figure 1: Relational diagram of student engagement in learning and teaching.

There are a number of authors in the UK who have attempted to describe the practices and domains in which student engagement in learning and teaching activity is being developed in university life.

Trowler and Trowler (2010) were commissioned by the UK Higher Education Academy (HEA) to undertake a review of existing student engagement literature. They identified three dimensions of student engagement which overlap, in part, with my distinctions in Figure 1 above: student engagement with individual learning, student engagement with structure and process, and student engagement with identity (2010, p. 2). Since their literature review, there has been a growing interest in Student Engagement and an increase in publications (including critiques of the Trowler and Trowler review) on Student Engagement in a UK HE context.

The student engagement literature has evolved in the UK over the last five years to include an interest in engaging students in learning and teaching within higher education. This is not solely a UK phenomenon; examples in Sweden (University of Uppsala), Canada (McMaster), and Australia (University of Queensland), and

the US (Otis and Werder, 2010; Cook-Sather *et al*, 2014) all show policy and practice developments in this area.

Ryan and Tilbury (2013, p.5) claim '... learner empowerment – actively involving students in learning development and processes of 'co-creation' that challenge learning relationships and the power frames that underpin them' is one of six new pedagogical ideas in higher education contributing to more flexible pedagogies.

The developmental model presented in Figure2 by Dunne and Zandstra (2011, p. 17) attempts to capture two dimensions of student engagement with learning and teaching. The lower left-hand quadrant identifies the opportunities for student voice and co-creation. They describe their model as capturing 'the extent to which any activity is led by students or led by the institution [and] the extent to which any activity is premised on active engagement by students in change, or is based on more passive forms of representation.'
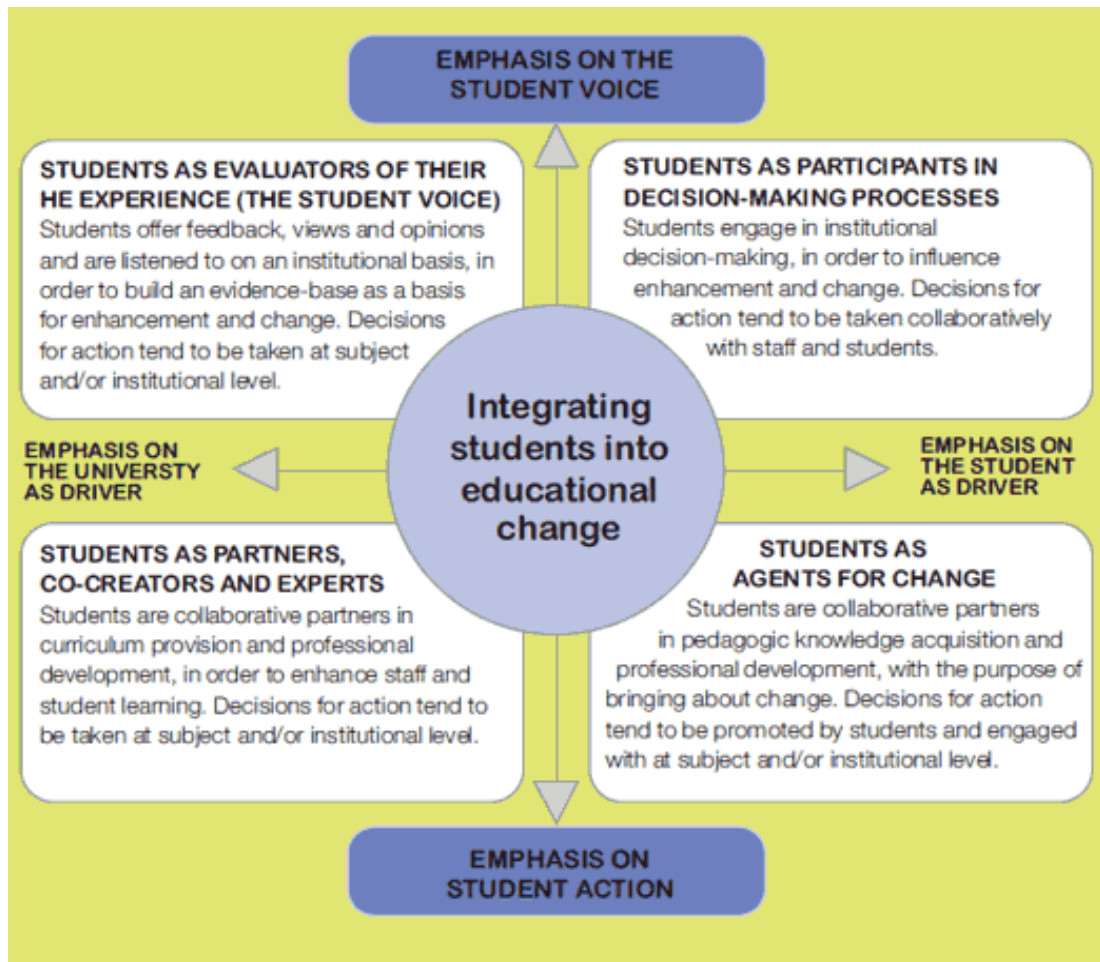
Figure 2. A theoretical model for students as change agents. Dunne and Zandstra (2011)

The Higher Education Academy (HEA) held a Students as Partners summit in September 2013 and the ideas from this informed the development of the HEA publication by Healey *et al* (2014) *Engagement through Partnership: Students as Partners in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*. This publication, along with the development of the HEA's Students as Partners strategic theme, gave prominence and patronage to the term *Students as Partners*. Healey *et al* (2014, p.7) position their work by arguing that:

> 'Students as partners is a concept which interweaves through many other debates, including assessment and feedback, employability, flexible pedagogies, internationalisation, linking teaching and research, retention and success [….] wider economic factors and recent policy changes are influencing a contemporary environment in which students are often positioned as passive consumers of, rather than active participants in, their own higher education. It is timely to take stock and distil the current context, underlying principles and directions for future work on students as partners in learning and teaching'.

Healey *et al* (2014) agreed with Trowler and Trowler's (2010, p. 14) assertion that 'there was little evidence of students being engaged in issues beyond their own individual learning [with] students typically presented as the customers of engagement, rather than co-authors'. Healey and colleagues present a number of arguments and examples of projects underway in the UK and position their discussion about students as partners in learning and teaching as distinct from other forms of student engagement, such as institutional governance, quality assurance, community engagement, and extra-curricular activities.

Perhaps one of the most influential ideas in the Healey *et al* discussion is their argument that partnership is 'a process of student engagement' and that the process of partnership necessitates student engagement but that student engagement does not require partnership. Figure 3 presents the model developed by Healey *et al* (p. 25).
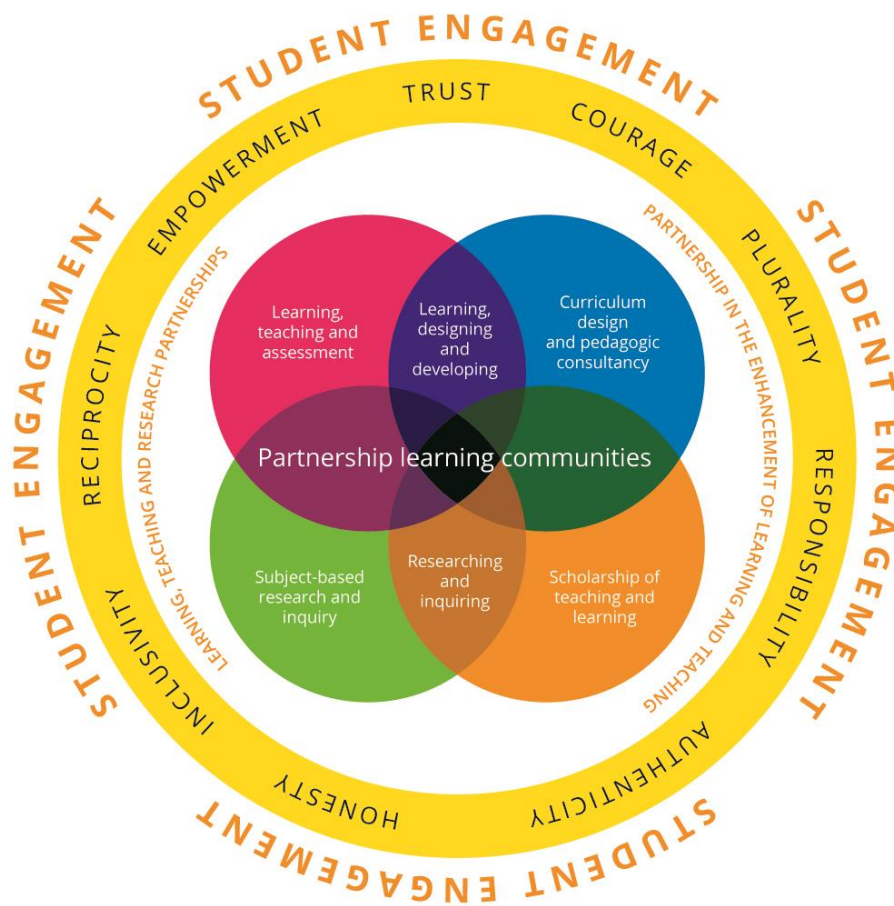
Figure 3. Model of Students as Partners Healey *et al* (2014)

The model also suggests that student engagement in learning and teaching is supported by the principles and values of honesty, authenticity, inclusivity, reciprocity, empowerment, trust, responsibility, plurality, and courage. These principles inform a number of domains of activities between staff and students, including subject-based research, participation in teaching and assessment, and pedagogic consultancy. These elements, demonstrated in the Venn diagram, converge to create what Healey *et al* (2014) describe as partnership learning communities.

Bovill *et al* (2016) complement Healey *et al's* (2014) suggested 'domains' of activity by discussing the various roles students can occupy in this area, outlined in Figure 4, below. Importantly, they acknowledge that these roles are fluid and an individual can occupy multiple roles at any one time and/or shift between

them. For example, a student involved in an institutional project and another student involved in curriculum redesign are both change agents, just in differing contexts. Similarly, a student undertaking primary research (related to a discipline) and a student adopting an enquiry-based approach to curriculum redesign are also both co-enquirers and co-producers of new knowledge.
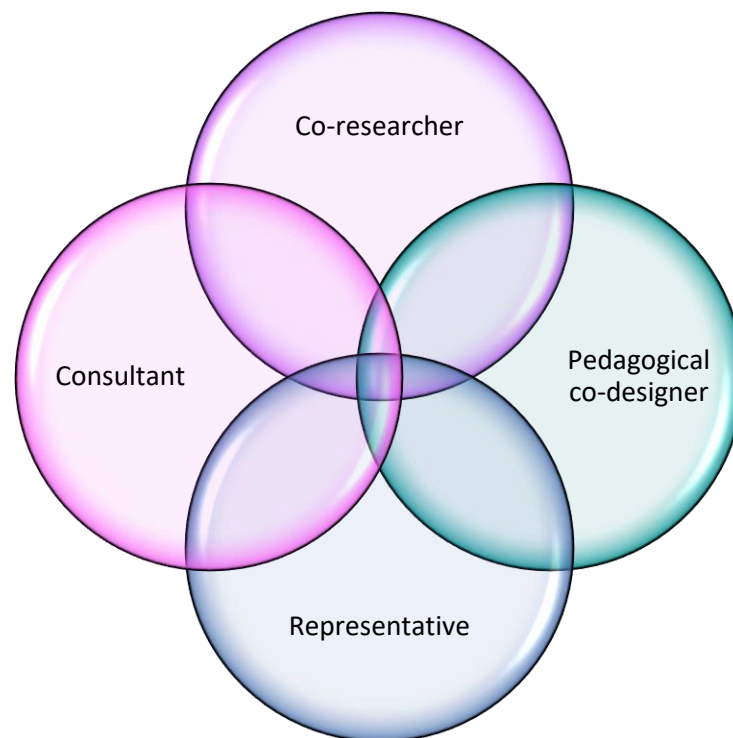
Figure 4: Roles of students in teaching and learning, Bovill *et al* (2016)

Bovill *et al's* suggestion that a student can occupy multiple roles reflects the reality of practice observed by other authors and has fed into a growing critique which suggests there is a risk of only the voices of the 'super-engaged' student (Bryson, 2014) dominating these practices. Moore-Cherry *et al* (2015) suggest the term *inclusive partnership,* which aims to work with the wider student body rather than select cohorts, in order to avoid a concentration of hyper-engaged individuals within a small group of students.

In parallel to the publication of Healey *et al's* (2014) work, Cook-Sather *et al* (2014) provide a comprehensive reflection on examples of practice across the UK and US. The authors draw upon their own research to illustrate the breadth of

activity and the reported benefits of these collaborations from staff and students in learning and teaching, with a small number demonstrating staff and students co-creating curricula.

Like Healey *et al*, Cook-Sather *et al* (2014, p. 1) advocate basing working in partnership with students on the foundational premise that such collaborations are based on 'respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility'. They state:

> 'These qualities of relationship emerge when we are able to bring students' insights into discussions about learning and teaching practice in meaningful ways –ways that make teaching and learning more engaging and effective for students and for ourselves. In our own teaching and in the partnership work we have studied, we have found that respect, reciprocity and shared responsibility are fostered when we draw on students' insights not only through collecting their responses to our courses but also through working with them to study and design teaching and learning together.'

The position argued by Cook-Sather *et al* (2014) clearly goes beyond the engagement of students as representatives in quality assurance and enhancement to a more fundamental repositioning of staff-and students as co-enquirers and co-creators of learning. They are keen to stress, however, that partnership and notions of 'shared power' do not necessarily mean that staff and students are the same in collaborative activity. Rather they state:

> 'In student-faculty collaborations, we need to acknowledge that our roles, expertise, responsibilities, and status are different. And they should be. Partnership does not require a false equivalency, but it does mean that the perspectives and contributions made by partners are equally valued and respected and that all participants have an equivalent opportunity to contribute.' (p. 7)

This acknowledgement of different contributions from staff and students is an important one. It recognises that staff and students have different types of power in a collaboration; for example, staff have the responsibility to veto if proposals contravene university regulations. But equally, Cook-Sather *et al* (2014) flag that collaborations start out with the intention to respect the

plurality of contributions made by all participants, acknowledging that different areas of expertise and perspective all have value (even if not equal value).

The number of initiatives relating to student engagement with learning and teaching are continuously developing, with an increasing number of examples having emerged within the literature during the lifecycle of writing this thesis. However, it appears there are still limited examples in the literature that relate specifically to staff and students co-creating curricula and even fewer examples which tackle the difficult (and contested) issues of the effectiveness of these particular types of collaborations; hence the focus of my study (Healy *et al*, 2014; Woolmer, 2016).

2.3.1 Student Engagement through Co-creating Curricula

Involving students in creating curricula could be seen from two perspectives (Woolmer, 2015). The first perspective could view co-creating curricula as an evolution of the well-established practice in the UK of involving students in governance and representation. It is commonplace for student representatives to participate at all levels of university committees relating to teaching and learning. The second perspective, also noted by Ryan and Tilbury (2013), argues that co-creating curricula with students is a more revolutionary and radical attempt to disrupt traditional paradigms in teaching and learning and to democratise decision making in the classroom and within curricula.

Whilst the Dunne and Zandstra (2011), Healey *et al* (2014) and Bovill *et al* (2016) models provided above show a range of activities that students can engage with in their learning experience, there are a smaller number of authors, who focus on student engagement through co-creating curricula (Brooman *et al*, 2015; Huxham *et al*, 2015; Crawford *et al*, 2015; Bovill, 2013a). Interest in research addressing co-creation of curricula in higher education is relatively recent. There is a more established debate relating to students co-creating curricula in schools. For example, Rudduck (2006), Fielding (2004) and Bragg (2007) have been significant advocates of student voice in schools in the UK. Breen and

Littlejohn (2000) have focussed on involving students in classroom decision making. Bron *et al* (2016a, 2016b) have critiqued the relevance of Boomer's approach to curriculum as a process, integrating student voice within this process with the aim of developing democratic citizenship.

Fielding (2004) and Bovill and Bulley (2011) provide a more focused discussion on processes and activities which can involve students, specifically in course (re)design and delivery. Interestingly, there are a number of similarities between Fielding and Bovill and Bulley's models even though they are applied in secondary (Fielding) and higher (Bovill and Bulley) education contexts, respectively. Fielding's continuum of engagement and Bovill and Bulley's Ladder of participation describe not just activities but also processes of involvement and agency of the student. For example, Fielding (2004, p. 201) describes a continuum of student involvement starting with 'students as data sources', providing feedback via evaluation, through to 'students as active respondents', 'students as co-researchers', and 'students as researchers'. (See Appendix 2 for detail.)

Similarly, Bovill and Bulley's ladder of participation (see Appendix 3), adapted from Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation, describes a progression of control and agency of the student in curriculum development, ranging from little or no control (where the student is an informant) through to students being enabled to exercise more control and choice through curriculum structures. Importantly, Bovill and Bulley's model takes account of power structures not only exercised by individual academics but also institutional and quality assurance controls and measures which permit (or negate) the space for students to be involved in co-creation of the curriculum.

Trowler and Trowler (2010, p. 11), in their literature review, note that the evidence suggests 'the most common form of engagement in learning and teaching in the UK is through feedback questionnaires'. If this is indeed the case, then the predominant form of student involvement in curriculum design

and delivery is as 'data sources' (using Fielding's description), with little opportunity to exercise agency and control over their curriculum and often at the bottom (or low-down on) Bovill and Bulley's ladder of participation.

Treating students as data sources is reiterated by Healey *at al* (2014, p. 48) who argue, in the UK context, that 'students are commonly engaged in course evaluations and in departmental staff-student committees, but it is rarer for institutions to go beyond the student voice and engage students as partners in designing the curriculum and giving pedagogic advice'.

The lack of visible examples in the literature of staff and students co-creating curricula proved a challenge when identifying cases to include in my study. This is discussed in detail in chapter three but it is worth noting here that the lack of description and definition of co-creating curricula influenced the development of my research questions, my research design, and my approach to sampling. I wanted to avoid offering prescriptive definitions of co-creating curricula when selecting cases precisely because of the ambiguity about terminology and practice within the literature, and, instead, asked participants to self-identify as being engaged with this type of activity.

2.4 Critical Theory and Radical Pedagogies

Much of the debate in the literature regarding student engagement in learning and teaching in higher education has provided thought and critique to models of practice and I have illustrated how co-creation of curricula sits within the field of research on student engagement in learning and teaching. I now turn to aspects of social theory and specifically, critical theory to help critique the policy environment in which this research sits. Besides authors such as Fielding (2004) and Bragg (2007) who have drawn upon social theory to critique student voice work in schools but, with the exception of authors such as Bovill (2013b), there has been little application of social theory, and specifically critical theory and radical pedagogies, to co-creating curricula in higher education.

The ideas I present here aim to demonstrate the value of critical theory and how it informs my study. Murphy (2013) advocates the use of social theories in a selective and purposeful way in educational research, encouraging the educational researcher not to fear selecting aspects of theories that help with our research. He notes, 'If anything, cherry-picking and cross-pollination should be positively encouraged – for how else do we arrive at original and innovative forms of knowledge, forms that can help us progress through the world of often stale and moribund arguments and paradigms in educational policy and practice?' It is in this spirit that I have approached and engaged with social theory, specifically critical theory and radical pedagogies in my study; by including the application and discussion of critical theory and radical pedagogies to the higher education environment.

Critical Theory emanates from the Frankfurt School of neo-Marxist socio-theorists such as Adorno, and Horkheimer. McLean (2008, p. 8) describes the genesis of the term 'critical theory', first used by Horkheimer in 1937, stating:

> '[Horkheimer] rejected the assumption underpinning prevailing research methodologies that techniques will uncover objective truths about the social and political world. As an oppositional alternative, he proposed critical theory which attempts to generate knowledge from speculative attempts to understand the interwoven, interdependent nature of the human subject and the objective world. Such knowledge, Horkheimer argued, would lead to a critical understanding of society and also be practical by guiding political and social action'.

The theorists associated with the Frankfurt School, which was established in Germany prior to the rise of the Nazi regime, progressed radical ideas at a time of political and social upheaval. This informed the focus of debate amongst members of the Frankfurt School who were concerned with ensuring there was no 'closing down of debate' (McLean, 2008, p. 9). To this end, theorists associated with the Frankfurt School were all concerned with understanding how to engage as a democratic society for the better good and avoid a re-emergence of what occurred in the Nazi era.

Boham (2005) states, 'For Horkheimer a capitalist society could be transformed only by becoming more democratic, to make it such that "all conditions of social life that are controllable by human beings depend on real consensus" in a rational society (Horkheimer, 1972, p.249–250).'

McLaren (2003, p.69) describes it as follows:

> 'Critical theorists begin with the premise that *men and women are essentially unfree and inhabit a world rife with contradictions and asymmetries of power and privilege*. The critical educator endorses theories that are, first and foremost, *dialectical*; that is , theories which recognise the problems of society as more than simply isolated events of individuals of deficiencies in the social structure. Rather, these problems form part of *the interactive context* between individual and society.'[original emphasis]

McLean (2008, p.8-9) argues that critical theorists are committed to 'critiquing current conditions and to propelling action towards future emancipation and social justice. To this end, critical theory is normative; it points to action to challenge social injustices for a freer and fairer society'. She goes on to note that 'critical' in this context 'refers not only to a critique of social conditions, but also Kant's idea of self-reflective examination of the limits and validity of our own knowledge and understandings. [.....] Yet it is important to understand that critical theory does not aim to produce definitive knowledge'.

Building on the foundational arguments of critical theory established by Horkheimer and Adorno, Jürgen Habermas has further developed the ideas associated with critical theory. Boham (2005) confirms this:

> 'The focus on democracy as the location for cooperative, practical and transformative activity continues today in the work of Jürgen Habermas, as does the attempt to determine the nature and limits of 'real democracy' in complex, pluralistic, and globalizing societies.'

The development of critical theory provided the philosophical underpinning for what was to become Critical Pedagogy. Darder *et al* (2003, p. 2) describe critical pedagogy as having 'loosely evolved out of a yearning to give some shape and coherence to the theoretical landscape of the radical principles, beliefs and practices that contributed to an emancipatory ideal of democratic schooling in the United States in the twentieth century'. Henry Giroux was one of the first to adopt the term but authors such as Paulo Freire, bell hooks, Peter McLaren, and Michael Apple are rooted firmly in the discourse of critical pedagogy. It is not possible to discuss the breadth of their works here but I aim to illustrate the underlying principles which inform the movement of critical pedagogy.

Darder *et al* (2003, p. 3) discuss how the work of John Dewey and his linkage of education and democratic societies was a major influence on critical pedagogy and provided us with a 'language of possibility'. Perhaps central to our consideration of critical pedagogy is the overtly political challenge it makes to education in society.

Bovill (2013b, p. 100) discusses the importance of understanding the history of critical pedagogy and how it relates to current debates on student engagement and co-creation, arguing:

> 'The current higher education literature calling for students to be more active participants in their learning does not always draw upon the long tradition of critical pedagogy or popular education and the more radical, emancipatory or transformatory rationales that underpinned calls for negotiated curricula in much of the historical literature. In contrast, it often focuses more on, for example, student engagement, retention, learning communities, and employability skills, it is often less overtly political and demonstrates a more mainstream, instrumental adoption and dilution of concepts of participation'.

Bovill's argument, along with my preceding outline of critical pedagogy, highlights the need for research into co-creation to be cognisant of the political, and therefore ideological, roots which frame discussion. I therefore build on Bovill's ideas and argue that *all* debates about co-creating curricula are

political, whether they draw upon critical pedagogy or neoliberalism. I examine the role of social theory, particularly critical theory and radical pedagogies, and draw upon McLean's (2008) application of Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action and development of critical university pedagogy as a foundation for exploring practices of co-creating curricula within my case studies. Boham (2005[1]) says of Habermas's (and other critical theorists) work:

> 'A closer examination of paradigmatic works across the whole tradition ……reveals neither some distinctive form of explanation nor a special methodology that provides the necessary and sufficient conditions for such inquiry. Rather, the best such works employ a variety of methods and styles of explanation and are often interdisciplinary in their mode of research.'

Due to this lack of 'distinctive form of explanation [or] a special methodology' in Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action, I have chosen to focus the remainder of my discussion of on the application of his ideas by McLean (2008). In doing so, I demonstrate how McLean has used Habermas's ideas to demonstrate the value of critical university pedagogy. I then extrapolate McLean's arguments and discuss how the application of her approach can provide a novel lens to consider the practice of staff and student co-creating curricula.

Unlike the other areas of literature introduced in this chapter, I began integrating social theory and Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action at a later stage of my study rather than at the start of my literature review. This was in response to feedback I received from early dissemination of my results with other researchers in the field. Therefore, my application of this particular dimension of social theory is retrospective, through the inductive process of my research and has provided most value at the data analysis and discussion stages of my study.

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[1] The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy. Published March 2005. Accessed at http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/critical-theory/ accessed September 2016

2.4.1 Use of Social Theory in Educational Research

Before exploring McLean's application of Habermas's work, I believe it is important to note current debates on the use of social theory in education research, particularly given how I have arrived at and made use of social theory in my study.

Murphy (2013, p.3-4) states that 'educational research embeds itself in a wide variety of theoretical discourses, using them to explore issues such as professional and cultural identities, forms of education management and changing work practices and priorities'. He goes on to note that social theory, is 'broadly speaking...analytical frameworks or paradigms used to examine social phenomena'. Murphy quotes Harrington (2005, p. 1) who defines social theories as encompassing ideas about 'how societies change and develop, about methods of explaining social behaviour, about power and social structure, gender and ethnicity, modernity and "civilisation", revolutions and utopias'.

Also relevant to its application to my thesis is the interdisciplinary nature of many social theories. The breadth and diversity of theories at hand offers educational researchers opportunities as well as challenges, requiring us to delve into territories and schools of thoughts with which we are perhaps less familiar or less comfortable. In Murphy's (2013, p. 6) discussion of influential social theorists, he acknowledges that their work often spans disciplines such as sociology, psychology, linguistics, cultural studies, and literary criticism, noting how their work is:

> 'utilised across these fields and belong to no one particular discipline ....this level of complexity is often one of the reasons why their work is so influential; it is also one of the reasons why educators can experience difficulty during the act of application, the lack of disciplinary belonging is a burden as well as a benefit'.

Murphy's advocacy of adopting elements of social theory to educational research (and not being overly concerned with purist application) has been a guiding

principle for how I have approached the conceptual framing of my study, enabling me to utilise elements of social theory that offered useful perspectives on the core ideas from the varied literature informing my study as well as on the findings from my study.

2.4.2. Critical University Pedagogy and Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action

Palmer (2001, p. 214-215) describes Jürgen Habermas as 'a second generation philosopher, social theorist and cultural critic', noting that '[t]hough a social theorist and philosopher rather than an educationist, Habermas has exerted a profound influence on education'.

McLean (2008) notes that Habermas's arguments are often dense and not easily accessible to the many readers, and I do not attempt to cover the breadth of his work here. Rather, I am interested in how educationalists' interpretations of his work, particularly McLean's application of it in a university context to develop critical university pedagogy, is useful to my study. Before doing so, I provide an overview the origins and context in which Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action developed.

Habermas does not primarily align his work with critical pedagogy literature. Lovat (2013, p. 69) describes him as 'education's reluctant hero', noting how his theories of knowing and communicative action 'have the capacity to deepen our research understandings in several areas of education':

> 'Habermas conceives of more authentic ways of knowing through critical reflection and engagement, or *praxis,* conceptions of learning with potential to challenge the dominant notions of the role of the teacher and the kinds of pedagogy that are the most *effective*'. [original emphasis]

Lovat (2013, p. 72) describes how Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action developed in response to the uprising of the Third Reich in Germany and his

interest in developing emancipatory knowledge and the possibilities of developing 'the self-reflective knower'. Habermas sees universities as key in the role of educating and developing citizens who can participate in democratic processes. Habermas ascribes to the idea that knowledge is socially constructed and that, as McLaren (2003, p. 73) argues, 'emancipatory knowledge helps us to understand how social relationships are distorted and manipulated by relations of power and privilege [and aims to create] the conditions under which irrationality, domination, and oppression can be overcome and transformed through deliberative, collective action'. McLean (2008) argues that policy development and implementation within higher education can distort and manipulate the social relationships noted by McLaren.

Phrases such as 'irrationality, domination and oppression' are evocative terms and may, at a first reading, feel less applicable when considering higher education. However, there is a growing field of research, drawing upon social theory, which critiques and evidences the domineering forces of neoliberal policy implementation in higher education and the associated tension between managerial practices and individual autonomy. In his discussion of bureaucracy, accountability and rationality in higher education, Murphy (2009, p. 684) states:

> 'At the heart of the debate is the contemporary emphasis on the *accountability* of institutions, particularly towards the public purse. This fiscally-oriented version of accountability reaches its zenith with recent efforts to reconfigure the lecturer/student relationship as one of producer/customer – a development that has inevitably been the subject of some ire'.

In Habermasian terms, such policy intent leads to colonisation of the lifeworlds within universities, namely the practices and customs of individuals and groups. McLean (2008, p. 11) describes the structural elements which Habermas uses to define 'colonisation of lifeworlds', providing the following definition:

> '….communication is distorted when 'lifeworlds' are 'colonised' […..]For Habermas the 'lifeworld' is a broad, complex world made up of the practices, customs and ideas of individuals or groups. More precisely, the lifeworld is a human resource made up of culture, society and personality. 'Colonisation' refers to the inappropriate invasion of the individual or collective lifeworld by money and power. [….] The mobilisation of

> communicative reason and action...is the counter to colonisation and strategic action.'

With regard to the colonising effect of bureaucracy in higher education, Murphy (2009, p. 684) suggests that Habermas's debate about functional and dysfunctional bureaucracy provides '...a more subtle analysis of accountability, one that allows some space for the development of dialogue over the reaches and limits of the accountable university in modern democracies.'

This is explored further in Murphy and Flemming (2010, p. 6) who describe the relationship between colonisation of the lifeworld and communicative action:

> '...capitalism has ushered in a process of one-sided (instrumental) rationalisation, and has done so via the state and the market overstepping their own functional boundaries and 'colonising' the lifeworld. Political and economic imperatives, the two main manifestations of instrumental rationality in Habermasian terms, have more and more reduced the potential for communicative rationality to guide and shape decisions and action that affect the core activities of the lifeworld...the pursuit and maintenance of state political agendas. Alongside the ability of capitalism to exploit new avenues for wealth creation, have resulted in more and more decisions affecting the lives of citizens being based on the 'bottom line' of power/money.'

I now turn to explore these ideas in more detail, drawing upon McLean's translation of Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action, specifically in relation to university pedagogy and its connectedness with the macro influences of institutional context, and its usefulness to my study.

McLean (2008, p. 9) states early in her discussion that Habermas appeals to her because 'he opens up the possibility of being simultaneously hopeful and radical about the future'. She also argues that development of communicative action is required to counter neoliberal discourse and ideals which Murphy (2009) suggests has led to a reconfiguration of lecturer/student relationships and has propagated a vision of higher education which commodifies education.

With regards to higher education and university pedagogy, McLean illustrates her concerns with the colonisation of higher education with neoliberalism and the prevailing technical-rational discourse associated with policy at the expense of other values associated with higher education. She is not alone in these concerns of colonisation and associated discourse. This colonisation occurs at a macro-level, through policy development and a meso-level, through managerialist practices. McLean gives a convincing critique of the impact of quality regimes in UK higher education, noting how they have 'colonised the terrain of professional discourse…by appropriating such terms as justice, choice, opportunity, student-centred, empowerment and ownership', (p. 48). She argues that universities are in crisis as a result of a number of 'contradictions, tensions and complexities', and that 'it is no longer possible to claim one big 'idea' of the university. However, she notes that although universities have lost direction and face a legitimation crisis, 'crises produce possibilities'.

McLean (2008, p. 42) argues that critical university pedagogy is the place through which to address this opportunity. 'From Habermas's perspective, the improvement of any social, political or ethical matter requires conditions in which undistorted communication can take place. Central to this argument ... is the premise that university pedagogy *is* such a matter. It is, in Habermas's (1987, p. 330) terms, a communicatively structured activity'. She goes on to suggest that '[a]s a communicatively structured lifeworld the education of university students is being colonised inappropriately by technical rational consideration' (2008, p. 75-76) and argues the need for discursive practices, through critical university pedagogy to address this.

Murphy and Flemming (2010, p.7) describe Habermas's interest in communication and discourse: 'according to [Habermas's] theory, all communication is open to being tested as to whether it is comprehensible, sincere, truthful and appropriately expressed. Habermas calls these *validity claims* and they are redeemed in what he calls discourse or communicative action' (original emphasis).

Attention to discursive practices is the crucial link I make between McLean's work and my own study. I am interested in the influence and interchange between policy and practice on co-creating curricula and believe McLean's application of Habermas's work provides an interesting critique of learning and teaching in higher education. Her discussion provides a useful platform to explore and extrapolate into the field of co-creating curricula. While her arguments do not address staff and students co-creating curricula specifically, much of her argument to reclaim discourses from colonising policies and focus on expertise at the micro-level aligns with my interest in competing ideologies which influence student engagement in learning and teaching and resonates with my research (both in its questions and findings). It is her recognition of possibilities and a hopefulness to engage with the idea of a colonised lifeworld that attracts me to McLean's application of Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action (TCA) to university pedagogy.

In McLean's discussion of her arguments for critical university pedagogy, she states: 'it is rare to find a community of intellectuals composed of students and their teachers' (p. 121). The idea of critical university pedagogy, applied to the practice of co-creating curricula, offers a radical opposition to colonising discourses of neoliberalism in education. I argue in my discussion that an application of critical theory and critical pedagogy can provide countenance to the possibility of staff-student collaborations being hijacked by neoliberal, consumerist ideologies.

Noting Habermas's uncertainty about the extent to which discourses shape the lifeworld, McLean (2008, p. 49) argues:

> 'nevertheless, language sends a strong message which we can decipher by attending to what is sayable; what is talked about and how; who can say what; what is consented to; what is construed as possible and impossible; what is and can be envisaged; and, what is silenced, excluded, or lost'.

This is an important reminder for my study as it is precisely the opportunities to explore, challenge, and reclaim discourses that have been the focus of my data

collection and links with and justifies my interest in examining micro level experiences of staff and students collaborating.

McLean's call to focus on discourses is echoed by Werder *et al's* (2010) discussion of conversational scholarship. Werder, Ware, Thomas and Skogsberg, a team of staff and students working in collaboration, discuss the process of participating in a dialogic forum for learning and teaching at Western Washington University. They call this process *Parlour Talk*. Their work provides a practical example of the kind of spaces where traditional discourse, which takes place in a classroom environment, can be disrupted and reframed in the ethos of collaboration. They build upon Shulman's (2005) idea of Signature Pedagogies and suggest that conversational scholarship, the development of a culture of scholarship relating to teaching and learning which is co-constructed by staff and students alike, is a pedagogy of dialogue. Werder *et al* (2010, p. 20) argue dialogic pedagogy is a signature pedagogy from communication studies, citing Huber and Hutchings (2005), who argue the central importance of this when they call for 'more and better occasions to talk about learning [and that] students need to be a part of that discussion.'

Within their discussion, Werder *et al* present five principles of conversational scholarship. These include: creating structured informality, providing shared ownership, ensuring reciprocal benefits, inviting broad-based and proportional representation, and recognizing individual and collective expertise and contributions (p. 18-19).

McLean's interpretation of Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action provides critical sensitivity to the current Student as Partners policy discourse and the potential for it to colonise, in Habermasian terms, the burgeoning practice of staff and students co-creating curriculum. McLean, along with Werder *at al*, highlight the need for researchers and practitioners to focus on the discourses that occur through conversational scholarship at the micro level of universities -

the interaction between individuals. Specifically, McLean (2008, p. 169) calls for:

> 'collective action and solidarity at the level of the institution [because this might] create conditions for a more critical form of pedagogy to segue from current practices. Just as it is for the world we find ourselves in, the future for universities is not predictable for there are many possible futures, so we have to accept the provisionality at the same time as trying to construct ideas about, and shape, an unknown future. Nonetheless, critical pedagogy encourages us to keep the goals of justice, communication and reason at the front of our minds; it reminds us that we must learn to live well with each other; and, it foregrounds the texture and detail of everyday university life'.

McLean recognises the tension identified by Boham (2005), regarding the application of abstract theory to 'micro' accounts of teaching and learning practice. McLean's discussion of critical university pedagogy and Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action does not provide a methodological approach. Rather, the concepts provide a lens through which I consider and discuss aspects of my empirical data.

2.5 Conceptualising Higher Education Curriculum

I have outlined existing research on student engagement in learning and teaching and the concept of critical university pedagogy. I now turn to the third theoretical perspective which informs the foundations of my study. This relates specifically to literature on higher education curriculum. As argued earlier, it is important to afford space to this topic in order to better understand how and why staff and students co-create curricula, looking first at their definitions of curriculum.

It is not just that students may or may not have the opportunity to engage in co-creation. We, in higher education, actively socialise students to respect the teacher's authority on standards, areas of importance in terms of quality, and

knowledge domains. This sets an authoritative tone. It raises interesting questions about when and where opportunities for co-creation occur and links directly with principles of critical pedagogy and McLean's argument for critical university pedagogy.

Toohey (1999) and Barnett and Coate (2005) assert that many curriculum ideologies are tacit, which provided the rationale for including a research question addressing conceptions of curriculum in my research. I have asked participants to explore this tacit knowledge prior to exploring their reasons and motivations for co-creating curriculum. Importantly, I argue this is necessary as being able to understand an individual's approach to curriculum may provide insights into how they approach co-creation of curricula, both in terms of how it might enable or restrict possibilities.

Toohey (1999, p. 67) argues that it is common to find:

> '…higher education curriculum which espouses a broad range of goals and fails to deliver. It is often instructive to examine the way in which the curriculum operates to determine which values take precedence […] Although many departments and faculties pay lip service to a range of educational goals, the discipline approach, with its emphasis on breadth rather than depth is still the dominant model [….] Although [some academics] may have different aspirations, they are often limited to reproducing the model of teaching that they experienced as students'.

This, again, is an important reminder of the context which individual academics interested in co-creating curricula with students operate in, and as such can act as an enabler or barrier.

I specifically draw upon and critique the literature relating to curriculum in UK higher education and have not included peripheral literature (schools based curriculum theory, for example) in this chapter. My primary reason for this is that curriculum is arguably differently defined and implemented in higher education compared to curriculum within primary and secondary education. The

models I present include: Biggs (1996), *Constructive Alignment*, Barnett and Coate (2005) *Knowing, Acting, Being*, Bernstein (2000) *Pedagogic Device*, and Fraser and Bosanquet's (2006) *Curriculum Conceptualisations Categories*. These models are included as they have been applied specifically to higher education.

In the next section, I explore three key areas: the lack of debate about curriculum in UK higher education, a selection of models and approaches to curriculum development, and a discussion about the importance of context, which includes disciplines and the wider environment and the influence this has on curriculum.

2.5.1 Identifying the Lack of Debate about Curriculum in Higher Education

When approaching the literature in the early stages of my literature review, I found it increasingly challenging to 'pin down' a definition of curriculum that held any kind of consensus within UK higher education. As with my earlier discussion of the literature relating to student engagement and partnership, definitions of curriculum in higher education seem equally fluid and under-defined; some authors separate out content and product from process and pedagogies while others give prominence to knowledge as the focus for curriculum. Equally, there is significant literature within the UK context that addresses course design and perhaps less which critiques the underpinning philosophical questions relating to curriculum and critical pedagogy.

To illustrate this, Barnett and Coate (2005) offer a compelling account on the lack of debate about curriculum in higher education. Noting that there appears to be little interest in talking about curriculum in policy debates, they argue the need for us to be clear about the 'territory in which we are operating in' (p. 5). Kandiko and Blackmore (2012, p. 3) argue 'The curriculum offers a useful lens to view higher education, and sharpens the focus on students and their education, notions that are often lost in the study of universities', adding that, 'control of

the curriculum is a source of power in universities and has vast financial implications' (p. 6). The lack of debate identified by Barnett and Coate and the powerful status of curriculum in universities identified by Kandiko and Blackmore both serve to highlight why it is important for my study to understand participants' definitions and conceptions of curriculum. These also inform the types of opportunities provided to co-create curricula with students; understanding the territory is paramount for teachers and students who wish to co-create curricula. This relationship has not been fully explored in existing literature relating to staff and students co-creating curricula, apart from Bovill and Woolmer (2014) who offer tentative considerations regarding the relationship between curriculum theory and co-creation.

Barnett and Coate (2005, p. 15-16) go on to acknowledge that talking about curriculum can be uncomfortable for some:

> 'To raise questions about curriculum would also bring into view matters of the purpose of higher education, the framing of the student experience and the kinds of human being that HE might seek to develop in the twenty first century. These are complex matters which, in turn, usher in issues of values, the nature of human beings, the relationships of individuals and society and the challenges facing mankind (sic) in the twenty first century.'

This resonates strongly with discussions presented from McLean (2008), Readings (1996), and Collini (2012) who all argue (with varying degrees of assertion) that higher education faces a crisis of purpose and mission in society in the face of neoliberalism. If we accept Barnett and Coate's argument, we not only see the lack of debate about curriculum in HE, but the idea that if debate *does* happen, it raises fundamental and potentially difficult questions about the broader purpose of both teaching and learning and the role of universities in society.

Schiro, a US based scholar, makes an important claim about how educators use the word curriculum differently depending on the context of our discussion: 'It is necessary to distinguish between the curriculum domain, the institutional

domain, the epistemological domain, and so on, when discussing the endeavours of persons interested in curriculum. This is because people often behave differently when working within these different areas of discourse'. This is interesting in the context of my study. While not addressed explicitly in interview questions, I was mindful to take account of the relationships between each 'domain' in my research analysis.

Schiro (2013, p. 10) suggests 'ideology is used to distinguish between motives that underlie behaviours and articulated beliefs… the expressed intent (or philosophy) is frequently contradicted by actual behaviour… A distinction need to be made between the visions, myths, doctrines, opinions, worldviews, and belief systems motivating curriculum workers to behave as they do and the verbalisations they make'. Equally, 'getting at' what is espoused and what is enacted in practice is something I have addressed in my research and has been a key rationale for including a visual exercise in my methodology, as it offers an alternative medium to discuss curriculum.

Nonetheless, there are discussions within the literature that engage with this dilemma. These authors (noted previously) discuss issues of curriculum but they vary considerably in how they approach the issue and the extent to which models of curriculum are theoretical or based on empirical data. It is helpful to think of the arguments on some sort of a continuum; at one end we find philosophical/theoretical proposals and, at the other end we find reflections drawn from academic practice and Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) research.

2.5.2 Models of Conceptualising Curriculum.

Kandiko and Blackmore (2012, p. 7) suggest that:

> '...curriculum can be viewed through four lenses (Bernstein, 1975, 2000).
> The planned curriculum features in course documentation. The created or
> delivered curriculum reflects the planned curriculum translated into
> practice. The received or understood curriculum refers to the intended

learning experience and the way it is understood by students. The hidden or tacit curriculum contains those parts that are not formally a part of the curriculum, but are nevertheless conveyed through educational content and processes and by the organisational culture. Often the first two receive most of the attention, with very little acknowledgement or analysis of the last category. This highlights the complexity of the curriculum, and its dynamic nature.'

I present four models of curriculum in the following section. They address various dimensions, or lenses, identified by Kandiko and Blackmore (2012). These include: Biggs's model of Constructive Alignment, Barnett and Coate's Knowing, Acting, Being, application of Bernstein's Pedagogic Device, and Fraser and Bosanquet's research on process and product models of curriculum. These models are not intended to be presented as an exhaustive list of literature relating to curriculum in higher education; I chose to include them here as they have had significant influence within the sector. There are additional, related discussions from authors such as Toohey (1999) on approaches to course design, Fotheringham *et al* (2012) on curriculum and strategy delivery, Shulman's (2005) Signature Pedagogies within the disciplines, and Meyer and Land's (2005) Threshold Concepts. These are included because they offer useful and complementary perspectives on learning and curriculum.

My own conceptualisation of curriculum is one which views curriculum as a dynamic process, which sees knowledge as co-constructed. Indeed, like the participants in this study, I had not previously given extended thought to my personal definitions of curriculum, and my views developed as I immersed myself in the literature. I recognise more fully now that my espoused beliefs are frequently challenged by much of my teaching experience, which has involved delivering teaching linked to learning outcomes (and sometimes materials) designed by others. My reflections on this tension have informed my interest in how concepts of curriculum (and teacher's espoused values) are mediated and influenced by culture and context as well as the extent to which this effects enactment of curriculum.

2.5.2.1 Constructive Alignment

Biggs (1996) developed the model of Constructive Alignment in curriculum development and fundamental to his model is the idea of constructivism in learning:

> 'learners arrive at meaning by actively selecting, and cumulatively constructing, their own knowledge, through both individual and social activity. The learner brings and accumulation of assumptions, motives, intentions, and previous knowledge that envelopes teaching/learning situation and determines the course and quality of the learning that may take place.' (p. 348)

Biggs's intention with constructive alignment is to shift the focus of curriculum design from teacher-focussed to student-focused, taking in to account the world of the learner. In tandem, he argues that teaching 'forms a *complex* system embracing, at the classroom level, teacher, students, the teaching context, student learning activities, and the outcome; the classroom system is then nested within the larger institutional system' (original emphasis) Biggs (1996, p. 350).

To achieve alignment, Biggs's model suggests the need to ensure that all elements of course design are coherent, including the means by which students can demonstrate their understanding of their learning. In order to do this, the model of constructive alignment argues the need for teachers to express the learning objectives for students as a result of engaging with their learning. To this end, the aims of a class, the content and methods used to teach the class, and the assessment should all 'align' to enable the student to meet stated learning objectives.

The principles of constructive alignment and particularly the use of learning objectives to frame development and delivery of teaching has been a powerful one in higher education. An expression of learning outcomes is a requirement for development and redesign of modules. Indeed, the utility of learning outcomes has extended beyond the classroom. For example, I have been requested on

numerous occasions to demonstrate the learning outcomes of workshop and papers I have presented at educational conferences.

Authors such as Furedi (2012) have offered strongly-felt critiques of the pervasiveness of learning outcomes in higher education. Dobbins *et al* (2016) discuss how the prevalence of learning outcomes has been further strenthened through the outcomes of the Dearing Report (1997) and through the Bologna Process. Colleagues have expressed degrees of frustration (drawing on my professional experiences which are echoed in this study) from having to teach to pre-defined learning objectives.

Although I believe it was not Biggs's original intention to suggest such prescription to practice, the dominance of learning outcomes has occurred due to the compatibility with existing quality assurance mechanisms in the UK and the rest of Europe. In a more recent publication, Biggs and Tang (2011, p. xviiii) argue:

> 'one of the virtues of constructive alignment ....is that it makes quite explicit the standards needed if the intended learning outcomes are to be achieved and maintained, and it helps teachers design the learning activities that are most helpful in bringing students to achieve those outcomes. It also allows teachers to give credit for open-ended higher order outcomes, and for desirable but unintended outcomes. This is important in the present context for the criticism is often made that outcomes-based education is concerned only with closed skills and competencies...'.

Whilst accepting the original intention to shift teaching to consider a student-focus, Biggs's model is problematic for two reasons in the context of my study. The first is perhaps an obvious issue- as is implied in the word – co-creating curricula is a creative process, which involves embarking on a series of discussions about curricula that could end in a multitude of places. For models of co-created curricula which involve in-class development of curricula, structured learning outcomes may be problematic. Secondly, Biggs's model suggests a certain assumption of 'cause and effect' between curriculum design

and the reality of curriculum enactment, which sits uncomfortably with my own view of process-driven, co-constructed ideas of learning. Equally, whilst he acknowledges that learning occurs in a complex system, his approach does not take account of the fluidity- the pushes and pulls- that impact on curriculum within that system which therefore requires flexibility.

2.5.2.2. Knowing, Acting, Being

Building upon their assertions that curriculum is not discussed in UK higher education, Barnett and Coate (2005) present seven 'tacit notions' of curriculum. They state that 'these tacit notions of curricula have emerged from different voices within higher education and as such exhibit varying concerns. Therefore, whatever conceptualisations of curricula we can tacitly identify will not necessarily form a coherent picture' (p. 27). Exploring these tacit assumptions influenced my choice to include visual research methods in my study.

The tacit notions of curricula which they identify are summarised as follows:

- Curriculum as *outcome:* Assuming learning outcomes can be made explicit and their achievement measured.
- Curriculum as *special:* There is a perception that academics 'own' the curriculum and that political reviews of HE (i.e. Robbins and Dearing) have explicitly stayed away from curricula matters
- Curriculum as *culture:* Academic cultures are shaped by disciplinary values, norms, and rules of communication
- Curriculum as *reproduction*: There is a 'hidden' curriculum which serves to reproduce social structures which benefit some and not others.
- Curriculum as *transformation:* Theories such as feminist and critical pedagogy which seek to uncover tacit rules and underlying power structures in the classroom as well as in curriculum
- Curriculum as *consumption:* Curricula are pulled in different directions as they are subject to market forces. Disciplinary depth and specialism are

set against external demands for a 'useful', functional curriculum product.

- *Liberal* curriculum: Focussed on educating the "whole" individual and provides a counter balance to university education which is perceived as too narrow and unbalanced.

Their writing on curriculum takes a broad sweep, bringing in social and cultural influences from inside and outside of higher education. Whilst this makes their discussion comprehensive, their framing of different notions feels somewhat disparate.

Acknowledging the difficulties associated with trying to develop a framework of curriculum in higher education due to disciplinary specialisms, Barnett and Coate argue three domains of curricula which could inform debate. They specify these as the domains of Acting, Knowing, and Being (p. 70). They developed this model after analysing data from five disciplines in six institutions.

In their model, 'knowing' refers to the knowledge which pertains to a particular discipline, 'acting' refers to the extent to which a student thinks and practices within a discipline (what McCune and Hounsell (2005) describe as Ways of Thinking and Practising (WTP) in disciplines), and 'being' refers to the development of a student as a person.

Within their model, Barnett and Coate suggest that the emphasis between the three dimensions of knowing, acting, being, differ across disciplines in arts and humanities, science and technologies, and professional subjects. For example, greater emphasis on 'acting' is placed in the curriculum of professional subjects, as students develop into their chosen profession, be it nursing or teaching. Both the arts and humanities and science and technology disciplines placed greatest emphasis on 'knowing', with arts and humanities placing a second emphasis on 'being'. Science and technologies, they suggest, place 'being' last in terms of emphasis.

They conclude their discussion by offering three observations:

- The curriculum reflects the social context in which it is located.
- The hidden curriculum is pervasive and powerful.
- The knowledge fields are powerful and have a powerful hold on changes to curriculum.

They go on to note:

> 'we need to consider the extent to which curriculum can be separated from pedagogy … where does the development of the curriculum end and pedagogical strategies begin? We would suggest that there is a challenge for all curriculum designers in answering this question.' (p. 80)

I return to this issue in my discussion of Fraser and Bosanquet's empirical research in section 2.4.2.4.

Barnett and Coate's model provides additional useful observations for us to take account of; they have an intrinsic, 'difficult to refuse' quality to them. Their presentation of tacit notions of curriculum helpfully shows the interplay between content, knowledge, disciplines, and society. This, alongside their assertion that these notions are often tacit beliefs held by individuals demonstrates the complexity of the terrain. However, they are less helpful in thinking through what this may mean from an applied 'academic practice' point of view. It is less apparent how an individual interested in analysing their own work can bridge these statements to something more applied in their own context.

2.5.2.3 Pedagogic Device

Other authors stress the importance of knowledge within the curriculum (Young, 2014). Basil Bernstein (1975 and 2000) wrote extensively over a number of

decades about education and pedagogies related to schools-based curriculum. As a sociologist, he was interested in the pedagogic discourses and the interplay through which knowledge, curricula, and student understanding occurred. Interestingly, what Bernstein's construct offers (which some other curriculum theories do not) is on overt consideration of power (personal and institutional), rooted in sociological theories of Durkheim.

In Moore's (2013, p. 155) discussion of Bernstein's work, he describes the development of the concept of the *Pedagogic Device* which was described as the 'basic regulator of the construction of pedagogic discourse'. He goes on to explain that, 'Bernstein is concerned with the transformation of knowledge into pedagogic communication, not with types of knowledge per se … The pedagogic device controls the form and distribution of the modalities of pedagogic discourse – who gets what and how'.

More recently Ashwin (2014, p.123) has criticised the lack of research 'into the ways in which particular forms of knowledge are positioned in higher education curricula and the ways in which students come to engage with these forms of knowledge'. He goes on to note that 'even the research discussed within the course design category includes very little examination of curriculum instead focussing on the design of the courses, learning and teaching methods, and writing and assessment' (p. 123). He argues that the discussion about curriculum should focus on the *relations* between these aspects and the subsequent understandings that students develop as a result. He draws upon Bernstein's Pedagogic Device as a way to exemplify this, describing how 'knowledge is transformed as it moves from a research context, to higher education curricula, to the understandings that students' develop of this knowledge' (p. 124). This assumes students are consumers of knowledge rather than co-creators or co-constructors of it.

Clarence-Fincham and Naidoo (2013) use Bernstein's three tiered pedagogical device to facilitate deeper discussion about curriculum and knowledge in a

graphic design course. Recognising that minimal time is available for curriculum development initiatives, Clarence-Fincham and Naidoo wanted to develop a model which was grounded in theory but had discursive potential. They argue that 'a model which makes educational theory accessible to academic staff can deepen curriculum debates, discussions and initiatives which seek to facilitate epistemological access for students' (p. 82).

They also argue adapting Bernstein's concept of the pedagogic device helped provide insight into 'how academic staff mediate access to knowledge through curriculum development [because] Bernstein distinguishes between the ways in which knowledge is produced, recontextualised and evaluated in the curriculum' (p. 85). Additionally:

> 'while the model is presented in a somewhat linear way, the production of curricula is a complex, reflexive process involving many rounds of decontextualizing and recontextualising and may involve interplay between shifts in knowledge production, informed by research and industry, and the need to meet different institutional and other stakeholder requirements' (p. 89).

What is interesting about Clarence-Fincham and Naidoo's application of the pedagogic device is the potential of translating Bernstein's theoretical model and using it to facilitate dialogue. I am particularly interested in the latter two processes of Bernstein's Pedagogic Device, recontextualisation and reproduction, as this is where there is interesting potential for co-creation activity. Clarence-Fincham and Naidoo note that there is a 'discursive gap' between the fields of knowledge production and recontextualisation which arises when a discourse is relocated from its original context of production. For Bernstein, (cited in Moore, 2013, p. 37), this is also the site of 'possibilities' within disciplinary knowledge. This raises an interesting way of thinking about where and how to situate co-creation of curriculum activity.

2.5.2.4 Curriculum as Product and Process

Fraser and Bosanquet (2006) offer one of only a few empirical studies which researched academics' 'perceptions, understanding and experiences of curriculum' (p. 271). They wanted to explore the epistemologies and assumptions that underpin the conceptions of curriculum. Their starting point was one similar to mine- a realisation that we talk about curriculum in higher education a lot but use the term in 'inconsistent and multifarious' ways (p. 269). Although this research was carried out in Australia, I include it here as it is one of only a few empirical studies which specifically looks at conceptions of curricula in HE.

They draw upon Stark and Lattuca (1997) extensively to suggest that many academics think of curriculum in terms of syllabus: 'the content of a specific discipline, or the set of units actually offered to the students, and the time frame in which they occur'(p. 270). They also quote Barnett and Coate (2005, p. 24) who argue that 'in the absence of a serious debate about curriculum per se, the tacit idea of the curriculum that is developing is unduly narrow'.

They include a very helpful write up of their methodology for the study, which draws upon phenomenography, using interviews as the main method for exploring participants' conceptions of curriculum. They interviewed 25 academics from various disciplines. In addition to asking them about their understanding of curriculum, they also asked participants "What experiences have you had of curriculum change?" and "What are some of the things you see impacting on the curriculum?" (p. 271). They are careful to note in their analysis that conceptions are constantly being reworked and reinterpreted over time: in different teaching contexts (for example, teaching online), and as a result of external influences (such as access to educational research)' (p.271).

From their interviews, Fraser and Bosanquet identified four categories from the data they gathered (p. 272) which are summarised in the table below:

Table 1: Curriculum conceptualisations from Fraser and Bosanquet (2006)

Category	Conceptual Focus	Descriptive analysis
A	The structure and content of a unit (the subject) [or syllabus]	• Defined by what is taught in individual unit. • Teacher responsible for curriculum. It is a product. • Student is consumer. Can influence through feedback.
B	The structure and content of a programme of study	• Notion of product still evident but bigger than single unit. • Students may influence to change content and how it is delivered but do not play an active role in its construction.
C	The students' experience of learning	• A process that enables learning. • Content takes a secondary role. "I decide my goals then choose my content". • Students are at centre of curriculum process. • Teacher's role is to define process and is within a theoretical framework. • Communication between staff and students is key.
D	A dynamic and interactive process of teaching and learning	• Collaborative process of learning. • Teachers and students acting to co-construct knowledge. • Learning emerges from student need. Teacher does not set framework for students to negotiate within. • Curriculum is not a structural thing.

Importantly, they note that categories A and B conceptualise the curriculum as a product that can be defined and then recorded on paper so, arguably, can

capture what is explicit rather than tacit. In category C, the curriculum is conceptualised as a process and structure that enables student learning, and category D views the curriculum as a dynamic, emergent, and collaborative process of learning for both student and staff. No relationship was apparent between the understandings of curriculum expressed by the participants and the extent of their teaching experience or the contexts within which they teach. Two things seem apparent here: the first is that the nature of the interaction and power dynamic between student and teacher is likely to differ depending on the category and secondly, discipline (or wider context) appears to have no influence on an individuals' conceptualisation of curriculum.

Fraser and Bosanquet suggest:

> 'academics with a product orientation see curriculum as a document and are likely to enact curriculum change through content revision, tinkering with delivery and perhaps up skilling academic teachers. Those with a process orientation, where curriculum is viewed as a social activity, are more likely to engender a change in both the practice and context of curriculum.' (p. 278).

Interestingly, Fraser and Bosanquet apply a different framework developed by Habermas to explore their results – his Theory of Knowledge-Constitutive Interests (1972). They discuss how Habermas's theory addresses three fundamental human interests: the technical interest, practical (communicative) interest, and emancipatory interest. Their application of his ideas in relation to their empirical work is summarised as follows:

- *Curriculum from a technical interest (category A and B)*: 'the function of curriculum is to define and control student learning. The emphasis is placed on the unit outlines and the programme structure emphasises control ….both curriculum and teaching are product-oriented, separate from its structural and sociocultural contexts and therefore value-neutral' (p. 279-280).

- *Curriculum from a practical (communicative) interest (category C)*: 'a practical interest aims at reaching an understanding that enables appropriate action to be taken. It aims to analyse and clarify human experience, uncovering meanings, prejudices and pre-supposition. The student and teacher interact to make meaning of the subject matter, thus equipping students to act on these meanings… Students themselves are an important part of the curriculum' (p.280).

- *Curriculum from an emancipatory interest (category D)*: 'this approach strives for empowerment, rational autonomy and freedom…teaching is a shared struggle towards emancipation and functions to challenge common understandings and practices, and to enable students and teachers to change the constraints of the (learning) environment... the principle of critical pedagogy separates the emancipatory interest from a practical interest' (p. 281).

This study provided a useful framework for my data gathering and was adapted for use in my interviews. This is discussed in greater detail in chapters three and four.

2.5.3 Curriculum and the Importance of Context

Considerations about curriculum in higher education cannot be simply explored in abstract, theoretical terms. Curriculum is understood and mediated within varying contexts, within disciplinary and institutional cultures, and, in the UK specifically, is subject to scrutiny through quality assurance mechanisms. Barnett and Coate (2005, p. 71) describe the 'zones of influence' which act upon curriculum change, including internal and external pressures from the academic community, epistemological, practical and ontological considerations, and managerial, academic, and market orientations.

Jenkins (2009) explores the role of curriculum in supporting student development in and beyond the disciplines. He explores a similar idea to Barnett

and Coate's 'zones of influence' and uses the analogy of an Ouija board to explore the pushes and pulls at play on curriculum at any given time. This has similarities to Fotheringham *et al's* (2012) discussion of curriculum as a vehicle to implement various strategic initiatives, such as employability. He critiques models (such as Biggs's Constructive Alignment) which portray course design as a 'rational purposive process relatively free of context' and argues:

> 'the curriculum, at any point in time, is portrayed as a product of a range of forces: including support for student learning out of class; aims and objectives; changing external quality requirements; institutional requirements and cultures; available resources (including staff time); linkages between teaching and research; and theories of student learning … Faculty seek to control, shape and prioritize these "forces" in terms of their own and their students' interests' (p. 163).

If we are to accept what Jenkins argues here – that a curriculum is subject to a range of conflicting forces that can change over time - then perhaps we also have to accept that what curriculum is (and how we define it) can never be pinned down, as it is temporal in nature.

2.5.3.1 The Role of the Disciplines

Trowler (2014) revisits the influential work of Becher and Trowler (2001) to discuss the role and influence of the disciplines in 21st century higher education. Within his discussion, Trowler (2014) explores several approaches to defining disciplines. In doing so, he voices his agreement that disciplines are to some extent socially constructed and quotes (Young (2008, p. 28) who argues: 'any useful theory of knowledge, and of disciplines, need to see them as being to some extent socially constructed, but at the same time recognise that knowledge is objective in ways that transcend the historical conditions of its production.'

Trowler (2014, p. 20) goes on to present a summary of disciplinary differences in learning, teaching, assessment, and curriculum (adapting Neumann *et al's*, 2002 discussion). I provide the full table of descriptions in Appendix 4, but list extracts from his categorisation on curriculum structure in Table 2.

Table 2: Extract from Trowler (2014): Summary of disciplinary difference in learning, teaching, assessment, and curriculum.

	Hard pure disciplines	Hard applied disciplines	Soft pure disciplines	Soft applied disciplines
Curricular structure	Cumulative, atomistic curriculum. Linear programme design.		Reiterative, holistic curriculum Spiral curriculum	

Trowler's categorisations here provide a specific overlap between discipline and curriculum and provide another dimension to the debate on context and curriculum conceptualisation. This was partially addressed by Barnett and Coate in their 'Knowing, Acting, Being' model. Importantly, Trowler suggests the need to move away from the idea of academic tribes, as argued in Becher and Trowler (2001), to reflect the considerably different context of higher education in 21st century. In particular, he notes the shift in academic autonomy and the rise of what Whitchurch (2010a, b) describes as 'third space' professionals- roles which include elements of managerial and academic responsibilities.

Shulman (2005) presents complementary views on what he describes as 'signature pedagogies' in the professions. His arguments also overlap with Barnett and Coate's (2005) description of curriculum in professional subjects. Shulman (2005, p. 52) describes signature pedagogies as 'types of teaching that organise the fundamental ways in which future practitioners are educated for their new professions. In these signature pedagogies, novices are instructed in critical aspects of the three fundamental dimensions of professional work: to think, to perform, and to act with integrity.'

2.5.3.2 Quality Assurance Mechanisms

As noted in sections 2.2 and 2.3, quality assurance mechanisms play a significant role in the curriculum planning, approval, and monitoring process and have been suggested by Murphy (2009), McLean (2008), and Sabri (2011) as contributing to bureaucratic constraints. However, while quality assurance is a necessary requisite for universities in order to ensure confidence in standards and parity of experience, this provides a tension in curriculum development when also attempting to enable flexibility for local circumstances. This is a tension faced by academics regardless of whether or not they participate in co-creating curricula. The QAA quality code on student engagement attempts to enshrine principles of partnership in involving students in governance, assurance, and enhancement but has yet to engage with the added complexity of staff and students co-creating curricula. In this sense, the quality assurance mechanisms are positioned not as oppositional to co-creating curricula but they are certainly problematic.

2.5.3.3 Curriculum as Planned, Curriculum as Enacted

Lawrence Stenhouse contributed to the debate about curriculum since the mid-70s, and his differentiation between the planned and the enacted curriculum is particularly useful in the context of my study. He advocated a definition of curriculum which highlighted it as a process and offered it as an alternative to the 'objectives model', which was popular in the US in the 1970s (James, 2012, p. 62). Stenhouse felt strongly that there was/is often a disconnect between planned curriculum (as laid out in syllabus or programme guides) and the actual practice in the classroom. He notes in his article, Defining the curriculum problem (1975, p. 107):

> 'The central problem of curriculum is in curriculum change and consists in the task of relating ideas to practice by producing – in whatever form – a specification which shall express an idea or set of ideas in terms of practice with sufficient detail and complexity for the ideas to be submitted to the criticism of practice and modified by practice with due regard to coherence and consistency as well as piecemeal "effectiveness".

Such specifications can only be written from the study of classrooms.'

James (2012, p. 62) notes, '[t]his idea that educational intentions need to be in the form of *principles* open to *critical scrutiny* and capable of *translation* in ways best suited to different contexts of *practice*, was the foundation of Stenhouse's ideas' (original emphasis).

The context and environment through which the process of learning takes place are necessary and influencing factors. Resources provided by Smith (2000) discussing curriculum theory and practice say this of the Process Model:

> 'Curriculum is not a physical thing, but rather the interaction of teachers, students, and knowledge. In other words, curriculum is what actually happens in the classroom and what people do to prepare and evaluate … Stenhouse was not saying that curriculum is the process, but rather the means by which the experience of attempting to put an educational proposal into practice is made available'.

Having acknowledged the lack of debate, it's messiness, and the challenge to define boundaries around what current authors are arguing in the literature, there are two major points on which they all appear to agree: an individuals' understanding of curriculum is nearly always tacit and exploring what curriculum means leads to fundamental discussions about the role and purpose of HE.

These are two important dimensions of the debate. Firstly, tacit knowledge, by its very nature, is difficult to uncover and discuss, requiring methodological consideration when trying to gather data. It is underpinned by our epistemologies; our values. It is informed and reinforced by norms and practices around us, within disciplines, and can often go unchallenged. It is what makes us experts in our fields but it also presents us with a challenge (as researchers): how can we engage in an explicit conversation about definitions and motivations and what kinds of methodologies might lend themselves to 'surface' these tacit assumptions?

Secondly, discussions about the role and purpose of higher education in the twenty first century have been hotly contested through the period of massification of higher education post 1960s. What is interesting is that this debate has not, as yet, explicitly addressed issues of curriculum (as noted by Barnett and Coate above). It is as if the issue of curriculum is the proverbial elephant in the (class)room. Yet it is through the curriculum that key interactions between staff and students, between knowledge generation and learning, takes place.

2.6 Measuring Impact, Articulating Value

Approaches to measuring and assessing the impact of learning and teaching in higher education is the fourth theoretical perspective which informs my study. Building on earlier arguments presented in this chapter, I offer a critique of the 'impact' discourse which is pervasive in higher education and explore the complexity of measuring impact and evidencing value of teaching and learning. I argue the importance of gathering the perspectives of participants on the benefits of co-creating curricula, both in terms of the process and the product of the activity.

2.6.1 Problematising Notions of Impact and Effectiveness

I am interested in the extent to which notions of impact have dominated (and are used to perpetuate) a particular managerialist discourse in HE and how this may or may not influence participants' perceptions of the value of their collaborations. I was keen to explore and open up debate with participants on what *they* viewed as important as indicators of impact from co-creating of curricula, asking them what mattered to them in terms of success as well as what worked in the collaboration.

Jones *et al* (2013, p. 15) argue 'the notion of 'impact' is neither a neutral or value-free concept nor one that can easily be captured by simple measurements'. They go on to note that, conversely, ideas of impact are 'contextual, multiple, layered and long term'. They present Gray and Randolff's (2008) uses of the term impact as rhetorical or conceptual:

> 'The rhetorical use often conflates other words such as achievement, influence, outcome, results, returns, success. This use of the term impact aims to persuade and provide a positive view. The conceptual use is more interpretative and critical, analysing the place of impact [in academic development]' (p. 15-16).

Yet we live in neoliberal times, and arguably, the pervasive measurement agenda is here to stay in higher education. There is an increasing interest in quantifiable and measurable effects of learning in policy and management practices in UK higher education. This can be seen with the recent consultation with the UK higher education sector on the proposed Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and the focus on proposed proxies for measuring Learning Gain from attending university.

At the time of writing, the UK higher education sector is consulting on the proposed Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). At present it is unclear if Scottish institutions will participate. The sector has been consulted on possible metrics to demonstrate 'excellence' in teaching to future and current students. There are concerns about the extent to which the TEF will capture and offer any kind of meaningful data to students about the learning experience and, perhaps more importantly, there are quiet concerns about how the state will use such data to progress state intervention within higher education.

Quality systems operate slightly differently across the UK and Ireland; for example, in the England and Wales, there is oversight from the Quality Assurance Agency. Scotland has a greater focus on quality enhancement, and as such, has an Enhancement Framework. Ireland works within the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Agency. Healey *et al* (2014, p. 10) describe the 'cognitive

dissonance' that arises from using tools of measurement such as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), National Student Survey (NSS), and Key Information Sets (KIS) for creative learning processes such as staff and student partnerships.

So how might we achieve what Murphy (2009, p. 686) describes as 'some form of workable balance [which] is fostered between sets of competing imperatives'? A situation where it is possible to strike a balance between accountability and autonomy, between economic and social agendas, and between research and teaching? All of these agendas are forces which push and pull at the micro-level lifeworld of academics *and* students. The challenge is the use of 'blunt' instruments, such as Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQs), National Student Survey (NSS), and other institutional experience surveys to measure impact and for these to link notions of impact with techno-rational, positivist assumptions about cause and effect. The problematic and limited nature of this is often decried by many academics (Murphy, 2009) and is particularly problematic when considering co-creating curricula.

Murphy (2009, p. 684) argues that 'the increasing prevalence of auditing, inspection, and evaluation has as much to do with the rationale behind new forms of bureaucratisation as it does with mechanisms of quality assurance themselves'. Likewise, McLean (2008, p. 49) argues that quality regimes are an 'invasion of the lifeworld of academics as teachers [impacting upon] values, traditions, practices and ideas of university teachers, individually and as an occupational group'. She goes on to suggest that 'mechanistic, regulative approaches to ensuring and accounting for quality are distorting academics' communications about pedagogic work with the state and public' (p. 53).

To explore the tensions highlighted above, I now highlight three key elements of the debate regarding measurement of the success of learning and teaching activities. These include discussions of the 'implementation staircase' (Reynolds and Saunders, 1987) which sees policy 'reinterpreted' as it is enacted through

change processes, reconceiving impact as a measurement of value, and current approaches to assessing staff and student partnerships.

Drawing upon Morley's (2003) work, Jones *et al* (2013, p. 15) argue that impact 'taken in a linear sense [implies] a direct, causal relationship between action and outcome'. They argue:

> 'this is typical of current discourses in higher education that, within accountable market-led regimes, emphasises product over process. Thus, impact is conceived as the result of a set of carefully planned actions that, within established timeframes, are meant to bring about improvement in a given set of activities'.

Returning to the Habermasian idea of colonisation of the university lifeworld, the language and tools associated with 'measuring impact' serve to not only further impose strategic, macro-level, discourses but also particular values and ideologies of the nature and purpose of learning. It is this inherent belief in causality, underpinned by positivist assumptions, which are problematic in evaluations of creative processes in higher education teaching and learning.

Linked with policy and managerialist interests to demonstrate impact is a concern to identify 'what works' so that practice can be generalised and implemented across contexts. Cousin (2013, p. 20) suggests that such an approach belongs to 'a technicist-training paradigm [which] rests on a settled set of 'what works' general principles'. The problem here, however, is that the learning being evaluated is often so intrinsically linked to the context in which is occurs that generalizable ideas of 'what works' are often limited. She elaborates on this connection:

> 'Training works to a fairly stable script and if such a script could be applied to any context, then the normative thrust determining what we do would be defensible. However, the terrain of teacher [and student] development is layered with empirical and philosophical inquiry that invites a more academic orientation.'(p. 20)

I do not suggest here that exemplars of 'best' practice are unhelpful. Quite the opposite, in fact. Rich, contextualised exemplars which give accounts of impact and value are very much needed. However, I argue they need to be approached and understood in a manner which respects the situated nature of the practice in question, which is a necessary step in refraining from making positivist assumptions about causality and replicability.

2.6.2 The Implementation Staircase

To explore the relationship between policies and practices, it is important to reflect not only on policy content but also policy implementation. How practice is evaluated is linked closely to underpinning ideologies which, in turn, drive policy and change.

Trowler *et al* (2009) discuss the interpretative nature of change in organisations and the importance of context and agency when considering policy. They draw upon the notion of the implementation staircase (Reynolds and Saunders, 1987) to illustrate this. I include it here as it is useful argument for considering the relationship between policy intent and implementation throughout the various levels of an organisation, namely macro, meso, and micro. Trowler *et al* (2009, p. 12-13) argue that:

> '[the implementation staircase] highlights the significance of different levels of policy making and policy implementation by portraying the role played by those who are standing on the staircase: they implement enhancement strategies not as passive receivers, but as agents who affect the process according to the agendas, meanings and values which they bring from their local circumstances and particular location on the staircase'.

This means that the development and implementation of any given policy initiative will be interpreted and enacted differently in any given context. Like Jenkins' earlier idea of curriculum as an Ouija board, where curriculum

development is subjected to pushes and pulls, so too is policy enactment using the staircase analogy.

Trowler *et al* (2009, p. 12-13) go on to propose, as a result:

> '…the enhancement 'ball' bounces up and down the staircase in sometimes unpredicted ways as it meets and is reshaped by these different realities. Any idea that the enhancement policy will look the same at the bottom of the staircase as it looked at the top would be naïve. Instead we find implementation gaps between the changes that are planned in policy, the changes that are enacted in practice, and the changes as they get constructed in the understandings of the students whose learning they were intended to affect. There are differences, invariably, between planned enacted and constructed changes. Any change will be received, understood and consequently implemented differently in different contexts, so departments in the same subject area look quite different in different institutions. In a real sense, enhancements get localised, 'domesticated'.

Trowler *et al*'s (2009) discussion of contingent and localised interpretations of policy and varying modes of enactment suggest we should be wary of technical-rational approaches to measuring impact. Particularly , they are concerned with modes of enactment that are underpinned by the belief that the arrow of policy intent hits its mark as expected, as they often do not take account of such contingency. Instead, we need to find ways of 'working with' evidencing enactment which, as argued by Saunders (2011), demonstrates 'indicators of effect' and places central importance on local context and the process of meaning-making by individuals.

2.6.3 Evidencing Value As well as Impact

I argued earlier that the term 'impact' is not politically neutral; it is, in fact, rooted in an ideology which is informed by neoliberal values which can be problematic for many working in higher education. There are existing models which try to ameliorate the tension associated with measuring impact, accepting the need for public funded institutions to be held accountable and demonstrate

their worth whilst demonstrating nuanced approaches to identifying success and value. Contribution Analysis (CA) is one such approach. Mayne (2008) has written extensively for practitioners in the public sector on how a model of Contribution Analysis can help demonstrate cause and effect by looking at attribution through 'observed results'. He recognises that many programmes are complex and not set up as an 'experimental design' and, as such, one can never guarantee that the results seen are a direct result of the programme's activity.

He additionally argues the need to rethink what 'measurement' can usefully mean: 'Measurement in the Public Sector is less about precision and more about increasing understanding and knowledge. It is about increasing what we know about what works in an area and thereby reducing uncertainty' (1999, p.5). He asserts that his model of contribution analysis can help us 'do the best with uncertainty' and gather evidence which helps 'paint a credible picture of attribution to increase our knowledge about the contribution being made by the programme' (p. 16).

Mayne's earlier work (1999) presents a nine step model for undertaking CA and his more recent (2008, 2011) presents a six stage model which moves from describing the 'logic of the programme' to 'developing a Theory of Change'. I present here the more recent model which subsumes steps from Mayne's earlier work, taken from his 2008 Institutional Learning and Change Briefing Note:

Step 1: Set out the attribution problem to be addressed.

Step 2: Develop a theory of change and risks to it.

Step 3: Gather the existing evidence on the theory of change.

Step 4: Assemble and assess the contribution story and challenges to it.

Step 5: Seek out additional evidence.

Step 6: Revise and strengthen the contribution story (return to step 4 and repeat if required).

Whilst this model presents a step by step process for evaluating projects this model makes certain assumptions about being able to work with/evaluate projects which are clearly defined in terms of expected outcomes. It therefore may have limited applicability to developmental and creative activities such as co-creating curricula. Whilst his work offers a practical way of engaging with the realities of the neoliberal context by recognising the need to demonstrate impact, his assumptions of working with clearly defined, boundaried projects, has little currency within my study given my focus on emergent and developing practices. Co-creation of curricula is, arguably, inherently creative with participants entering into a process where there are significant unknowns.

Cook-Sather and Felten (forthcoming) outline Nixon's (2012a) discussion of shifting from 'pedagogies of technological rationality that require clearly defined objectives, rational planning and observable outcomes...to interpretive pedagogies that recognize plurality, incommensurability and contingency factors that inevitably impact on human understanding'. They quote Hansen (2014, p. 11) who suggests education within this framework 'constitutes an unchartered, unpredictable journey into self-awareness, self-understanding and knowledge in the world in which we live. [It is always] unprecedented because no two individuals are educated alike and this means that education constitutes not replication but creation'.

Cook-Sather and Felten (forthcoming) discuss the tension of working in contexts where differing ideologies exist - where proponents of the neoliberal agenda work alongside those who seek to critique, resist, or disrupt it. These ideological tensions are real and frequently co-exist, (as I reflect upon my own experiences of practice in Chapter three), and it is the tension between policy and practice that influenced my interest in examining macro policy environments of institutions and how they have the potential to influence relationships on a micro level in co-creating curricula. The challenge, then, is to find ways to engage in a constructive way to influence practice which retains integrity, hope, and meaningfulness for both teacher and student.

Bamber (2013) offers an alternative discourse to impact, suggesting we focus on 'evidencing value' in learning and teaching initiatives, drawing upon a range of evidence to do this. This is not merely a shift in semantics; it signifies an important shift in values. Bamber (2013, p. 7) qualifies her position about the impact agenda, stating that, '[we need] to persuade those that resource educational development that 'impact' is a chimera'. Her suggestion to focus on evidencing value by drawing on a range of indicators offers a reframing and possible means of reclaiming the colonised university lifeworld argued by McLean (2008), by providing hopeful and meaningful ways of enabling individuals at the micro-level to assess their work together. Bamber's arguments are in no way about absenting responsibility for being accountable or for providing rigorous evidence. What is persuasive about her argument, I believe, is her advocacy of different types of evidence to demonstrate value and to view the culmination of indicators including judgements of those involved in the activity. Her stance embraces the need to capture context specific data and to triangulate this with other, more quantifiable, measures.

Whilst writing specifically about evidencing the value of educational development interventions, I believe Bamber's philosophy and approach is applicable to critiquing learning and teaching activity more widely, and is particularly relevant to my study. She argues:

> 'reconceptualising 'impact' as 'evidencing value' could release us from inadequate or instrumental approaches ….Evidencing does involve us measuring and evaluating, but it also acknowledges the role of judgement in working out what need to be evaluated and it requires us to think about how we use evaluation data.[….] Conceptions of evidence are complex, and for that very reason, evidencing value is an attractive concept for demonstrating the worth of social world activities, like educational development. The social world is not revealed by unproblematic 'truths' or facts. There is no perfect rationality, but we can form rational beliefs on the basis of what appears to be the case, supported by judgement'.(2013, p.11)

What is most attractive and convincing in this argument is the legitimisation of professional judgement to help attribute value. To do this it requires discussion with stakeholders involved in the activity. Bamber notes that this process is

about 'describing what difference we have made' (p. 10), drawing upon a range of indicators. Saunders (2011, p. 99) describes this mixture of hard and soft indicators combined with professional judgement as 'indicators of effect'. He argues that purposeful evaluation of educational enhancement activity should be approached as a 'courtroom of evidence' rather than a 'laboratory of measurements'. Both he and Bamber argue that when soft indicators (such as measures of confidence and efficacy) are used systematically, they begin to carry more weight, are more trustworthy, and have validity in demonstrating value (that we are "making a difference"). Similarly, Shulman (2013) argues for the dialogue and the exercising of judgement to understand connections between large scale trials, case studies, and personal practice in learning and teaching.

Bamber (2013, p. 39) suggests that the evidence gathered in studies may not 'take the form of certainties'. She acknowledges that we are 'unlikely to agree between contexts about what constitutes viable evidence', but 'acknowledging the complexity of evidence is an important step, as is constructing pathways through that complexity so that we are active in our fate...'. This is a key argument for my study. Acknowledging this complexity of opinions about evidence acknowledges that different epistemologies influence how individuals perceive the validity of evidence. I argue we need data which is both qualitative and quantitative (an 'and/both' approach) rather than suggest one type of evidence is privileged over the other (an 'either/or' approach). In addition, as argued by Shulman (2013), dialogue and professional judgement is needed to make –sense of the evidence in order to ascribe value. For this reason I believe it is essential to ask participants what matters as well as what works.

Bamber presents 'eight pointers for practice' which she describes as 'a desideratum of evidencing value' (p. 39-41). There are three elements of her approach that I wish to note for their usefulness to my study as they inform my analysis of participant debate on the subject of value and impact. They are summarised below:

1. Choose an evidence mix: triangulation. This involves the inclusion of multiple data sources drawn from research, evaluation, and practice wisdom. This is summarised in Figure 5 below. Importantly, this model explicitly argues for the validity of judgement, experience, and context. All of these are accessed at the micro level of practice and differ dependent on participant perspective. This evidence can be collected through the use of an Evidence Grid, a tool to help in planning and evaluating activities, which is intended to help identify the contexts from which evidence will be gathered as well as the types of indicators (outcomes and outputs) that will be included.

2. Take a systematic approach to a non-systematic problem. This ensures the approach has rigour and trustworthiness. Again, this links with Saunders' (2011) idea of a courtroom of evidence rather than a laboratory of measurement.

3. Acknowledge judgement and subjectivity. This is a call for acknowledging subjectivity and, where necessary, application of good professional judgement specific to context.

Fig 5 Triangulation of evidence diagram

Bamber (2013) concludes with the following comment:

> 'Our outcomes will rest on us providing sufficient reason to believe the case we are making. Those who receive our evidence will still exercise healthy scepticism combined with their own judgements, experiences and observations…Our evidence mix, accompanied by a critical dialogue might lead to acknowledgement of value.'(p. 41)

I explore these ideas of trustworthiness of data in detail in chapter three in relation to my own methodology. The work of Bamber and others has strongly influenced my methodological approach in discussing notions of value rather than impact with participants in the study. I have taken this approach, partly to avoid an overly narrow discussion about practice but also ideologically, in order to acknowledge and avoid strategic, technical-rational discourses within my interviews.

2.6.4 Approaches to Evaluating Staff-Student Partnerships

Given that the practice of staff-student partnerships in learning and teaching is a relatively new area of practice, it is perhaps unsurprising to note that there are very few examples within the literature which point to approaches of measuring impact or effect in this area. There are even fewer examples in relation to staff and students co-creating curricula (Bovill, 2013; Huxham *et al*, 2015; Deeley and Bovill, 2016).

Cook-Sather *et al* (2014. P. 195-201) do, however, offer reflections from their own research and a synthesis of some smaller scale qualitative studies in the field, and recommend principles of good practice for assessing staff-student partnerships. They advise that in order '[t]o assess student-faculty partnerships effectively, good practice suggests capturing both the outcomes of this work and the process of partnership (which may, in fact, also contribute to other outcomes'. They go on to quote Ivanic (2000, cited in Breen and Littlejohn (2000), arguing that '[b]ecause these collaborations are so process-orientated, focussing only on outcomes is a mistake' (Cook-Sather *et al*, 2014, p. 195). This latter reference to the process of collaboration resonates strongly with my own

methodological approach, which encouraged participants to reflect on the processes of their collaborations as well as the outcomes and outputs of their work. This explicit promotion of evaluating process as well as outcomes is also consistent with the tensions highlighted by Trowler *et al* (2009) regarding policy implementation in that, 'examining processes provides perspective on context and relationships and, in turn, highlights the constructed nature of the activity. Looking at process enables also us to appreciate the context specific nature of practice, and can help us avoid the often over-simplistic attempts to highlight good practice for implementation across and institution'.

Cook-Sather *et al* (2014, p. 195) outline how students have a role in assessing the outcomes of staff-student collaborations:

> 'In the same way that students can be partners to us as faculty in explorations of teaching and learning, they can be partners with us in assessing the process and outcomes of student-faculty partnership work focussed on those explorations.'

They recommend undertaking formative as well as summative evaluations and taking the time to support and prepare students by introducing 'a range of possible examples, approaches, methodologies, and suggestions in order to stimulate student-generated ideas for assessing shared work' (p. 197).

2.7 Summary

I summarise this chapter by identifying the points of connection between theoretical perspectives and my research questions.

My argument at the start of this chapter states that there is not yet a clearly defined theoretical framework used by other researchers to examine the practice of staff and students co-creating curricula. This is due to the fact that the practice itself is quite nascent. This provides opportunity within the thesis

for me to explore novel ideas for my own conceptual framework, but it has also provided an equal number of challenges, not the least of which is weaving together diverse theoretical perspectives which are grounded in education, sociology, and management literatures to provide a comprehensive and rigorous rationale for my research questions, my methodological approaches, analysis of my data, and my conclusions.

My analysis of literature relating to student engagement in teaching and learning supports my argument that the field is conceptually not well defined (Bryson and Hand, 2007; Buckley, 2014; Kahu, 2013). Healey *et al* (2014), Bovill (2013b) and Cook Sather *et al* (2014) have acknowledged that there are few examples in the student engagement literature that examine the specific practice of staff and students co-creating curricula. This, in effect, has identified the need for examples of practice and identified the space within the literature that my study wishes to address. My focus on the practice of co-creating curricula has required me to understand the theoretical models which frame the wider debate about curriculum in UK higher education. In doing so, I have established that there is a lack of debate on this topic and so it has been necessary to explore this with participants involved in my study to see if and how it influences the co-creation of curricula.

I have designed my study to not only identify a selection of ways in which staff and students co-create curricula, but to also look at the ways this practice is deemed useful and valuable to those involved. A review of the literature related to measuring impact of learning and teaching in higher education has demonstrated that notions of impact are not politically neutral and that the current institutional and national instruments used to measure value offer limited insights into the creative process of staff-student partnerships. Combining the findings from this literature with insights from social theory, particularly McLean's argument for critical university pedagogy, has provided a critical analysis of the political and policy environment (macro-level) in which the practice of co-creating curricula sits (micro-level).

The sum of these theoretical perspectives has enabled me to engage with the complexity of the field, addressing practice and the context in which it occurs.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter gives a reflective and critical account of the methodological approach of my study. I provide here a description of the rationale for my approach and the tools used to collect and analyse my data. Throughout, I attempt to provide an honest reflection on the iterative and messy nature that social science research often takes and my own experiences of this. In keeping with this reflexive approach, I explicitly try to not only discuss what I did and why I did it, but also how this developed and changed during the life of the study. This includes reflection on the practical and pragmatic choices I made along the way which were influenced by constraints such as time, location, and funding.

My study has been inductive and I have made use of a number of methodological approaches in my data gathering. The overarching approach for my study has been Case Study Research (CSR). This has included the use of semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis of institutional strategy statements. I consciously talk about people as participants (rather than respondents). In addition, I have looked at the principles of participatory research, particularly visual methods, to access participant narratives about their perceptions of co-creating curricula, some of which had not been reflected upon or articulated prior to interviews with me. The methodological approaches I have used contribute to the existing field of research by providing a series of rich and situated accounts of staff and students co-creating in higher education which also takes account of the institutional context in which they occur.

The timeline for my study, including my pilot study is indicated in the Table 3 below:

Table 3: Timeline of Research Activity

Pilot study: ethical approval	March 2014
Pilot study: data collection	April-June 2014
Pilot study: data analysis and review for main study	July-September 2014
Main study: ethical approval	February 2015
Main study: data collection	March-April 2015
Main study: transcription of interview/analysis of documents	June—September 2015
Main study: presentation of interim findings	July 2015
Main study: detailed coding and analysis of interview data	September-December 2015

This chapter begins with the epistemological considerations, methodology, research setting, data collection methods, and analysis of my study. The latter half of the chapter provides reflection on ethical considerations of the study, the outcomes of my pilot study, my reflexivity as a researcher, and discussion of limitations. I finish with an outline of presentations and publications that have arisen as a result of my study.

3.2 Research Questions

My research questions for the study are:

RQ1: In what ways do staff and students understand and define curriculum?

RQ2: How is co-creation of curricula defined by staff and student practitioners?

RQ3: What current examples of practice illustrate co-creation of curricula in UK HE?

RQ4: In what ways do practitioners define the impact and value of this work?

RQ5: How do practice and institutional strategies inter-relate?

3.3 Epistemological Considerations and Theoretical Perspectives

Our epistemology (views on the nature of how knowledge is created) and ontology (views on the nature of reality) influence our choice of the methods and methodologies we use to carry out our research. Equally, our epistemological position influences the theoretical perspectives we draw upon to provide the context and analytical frame through which we generate our research questions and analyse our data.

In his discussion about the four elements of social research, namely epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods, Crotty (1998, p. 2) states:

> 'Justification of our choice and particular use of methodology and methods is something that reaches into the assumptions about reality that we bring to our work. To ask about these assumptions is to ask about our theoretical perspective. It also reaches into the understanding you and I have of what human knowledge is, what it entails, and what status can be ascribed to it. What kind of knowledge do we believe will be attained by our research? What characteristics do we believe that knowledge to have?'

Crotty's discussion suggests that the research process often involves us starting with a preference for particular methods and we 'work back' to make connections between methods, methodologies, theoretical perspectives, and epistemological beliefs. However, he notes the methodological choices made by a researcher have to align with the purpose of the research – and associated research questions –in order to ensure the aims of the enquiry are met. The nature of making these connections has been a complex and iterative process for me, and, as noted earlier, certainly not as linear as some of the social science research methods literature would suggest.

My approach to this study is grounded in social constructionism. Crotty (1998, p. 42) defines constructionism as 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'. He goes on to note that '[a]ccording to constructionism, we do not create meaning. We construct meaning. We have something to work with. What we have to work with is the world and objects in the world'. Social constructionism recognises that the meaning-making process is not individualistic. Rather, it is embedded within the social structures and conventions in which we exist and operate. The research questions for my study are centred on exactly these dimensions, namely exploring why individuals collaborate to co-create curricula and how, through these processes, they construct meaning from their interactions with others situated in their specific context.

While admitting that the terms are often used interchangeably, Jones *et al* (2014) and Crotty (1998) differentiate constructionism from constructivism, noting that 'constructivism tends to resist the critical spirit, while constructionism tends to foster it' Crotty (1998, p. 58). Constructivism is often seen as more individualistic.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the conceptual framing of my study draws upon principles of Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy, both of which seek to challenge (and change) the status quo. I believe that staff and students co-creating curricula, through the processes and products of collaborations, challenge the dominant narrative of teaching and learning in higher education- one that is largely occupied with hierarchical views of knowledge, power, and esteem. Generally, staff and student collaborations in teaching and learning - and in co-creating curricula specifically- provide an alternative mode of operating. Put more radically, through these collaborations, staff and students can renegotiate and transform embedded structures and practices related to knowledge and power in higher education.

Interestingly, in his discussion about critical research, Tight (2012, p. 192) argues that higher education research can be rather conservative in its approach, stating '…indeed, perhaps it is becoming more conservative – more concerned with practices and their improvement, rather than seeking to challenge the underlying structures and advance alternative positions'. As argued by Ryan and Tilbury (2013), staff and students collaborating on learning is one of the most radical agenda in higher education at the moment and this study provides new insights into the emerging practices relating to curriculum and its co-construction.

Unlike the culture of positivistic enquiry, which seeks to find explanation, ensure replicability and views data as valid and significant, constructionism (and other interpretivist frames) search for meanings in data. Cousin (2009, p. 8) states that:

> 'Notions of validity are replaced by those of trustworthiness …it is commonly held to be secured through moves such as triangulation (comparing different data sources, and/or through checking accounts with research subjects, demonstrating research reflexivity, collecting and surfacing sufficient data for plausibility and providing rich descriptive and analytical accounts.'

Bamber's (2013) discussion on different data sources is also useful to consider here when acknowledging the range of evidence types which would constitute trustworthy data.

3.4 Methodology: Case Study Research

My choice of methodology has been informed by my desire to explore individuals' experiences of collaborating and to situate this within the broader environment in which practice is located. After outlining my research questions, I explored different methods that could help record personal narratives and access institutional contexts. I was then tasked with situating my choice of

methods within a broader methodological framework. Tight (2012, p. 179) describes 'methods [being] essentially techniques for data collection and analysis ….whereas methodologies may be taken to refer to the underlying approaches or philosophies adopted by researchers'.

There is discussion in the literature on whether Case Study Research (CSR) is a methodology or not. I agree with Creswell (2007, p.73), who argues:

> 'I choose to view it as a methodology, a type of design in qualitative research, or an object of study, as well as a product of the inquiry. CSR is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in depth data collection involving multiple sources of information…and reports a case description and case based themes.'

Cousin (2009, p. 131) describes CSR as being different to cases of good practice in that 'good practice accounts offer a victory narrative through which the issue or problem is defined and the triumphant solution described. In contrast, CSR systematically explores a setting in order to generate understanding about it.' This is reiterated again by Hancock and Algozinne (2011, p.16) who describe CSR as 'generally more exploratory than confirmatory; that is, the case study researcher normally seeks to identify themes or categories of behaviours and events rather than prove relationships or test hypotheses'. This is a particularly important distinction given the critique of 'what works' examples of practice provided in chapter two.

Case study research (CSR) looks to understand or address a problem through the construction of a detailed case – an illustration of the problem through a boundary-defined example. Hancock and Algozzine (2011), Creswell (2007), and Cousin (2009) all note that CSR explores an issue, phenomenon, or experience *in situ*. It gives the researcher a means to collect a rich picture of events through gathering and analysing multiple types of evidence.

Hancock and Algozinne (2011, p. 6-7) argue:

> 'A 'case' is generally a bounded entity…but the boundary between the case and its contextual conditions – in both spatial and temporal dimensions- may be blurred[..] The case serves as the main unit of analysis in a case study. At the same time, case studies also can have nested units within the main unit [i.e. embedded subcases]'.

This definition has been helpful in determining the unit of analysis for my study, as my research examines the instances of micro-level practices of staff and students co-creating curricula *in relation to* the institutional context they operate within. For this reason, following Hancock and Algozinne's definition, the cases (units of analysis) are the institutions, with the examples of practice are the embedded subcases within each institutional case study. Examining the relationship of practice and institutional context is also important in order to understand the importance and possible influence of policy and strategy of Students as Partners on micro-level practices.

Cousin (2009, p. 132) notes that CSR 'provides a holistic approach to the exploration of real life situations'. She goes on to argue 'It is hard to be prescriptive about the design, implementation and analysis of case study research because it is a messy business' and suggests the following considerations for CSR methodology and methods:

- The purpose of the literature review is to help stimulate the formulation of research questions for the beginning of the study.
- As the purpose of CSR is exploratory, it is more appropriate to formulate 'why and how questions' rather than those that are akin to hypothesis testing. Importantly, she notes that it is helpful to make a choice before you start about the extent to which you pre-determine your questions for participants.

- Plan a number of issue questions that prompt good thinking. You need to be confident that the questions can be answered in the research setting.

- Consider keeping a research diary which keeps a note of logistics (timings, contacts, case study rationale) as well as *in situ* field notes. (p. 137)

Merriam (2001, cited in Hancock and Algozzine, 2011, p. 36) suggests CSR may be influenced by a range of orientations, including ethnographic, historical, psychological, or sociological orientation. CSR has flexibility to draw upon a range of methods to help explore and illustrate the complexity of the cases being investigated. The sociological orientation, which Merriam suggests focuses on 'social institutions and social relationships, examines the structure, development, interaction, and collective behaviour of organised groups' resonates with the examination of relationships and meaning-making between individuals in collaborations whilst also acknowledging the importance of structure and context.

There were four main attractions to using CSR as the methodology for my study:

1) it is exploratory and allows for examination of complex scenarios, i.e. meaning can emerge from this process;

2) it enables the researcher to draw upon multiple methods of data collection and evidence gathering. This enabled me to include multiple narratives and participatory tasks as well as review and analysis of institutional documentation;

3) it allows for in-case and cross-case thematic analysis, giving the researcher the option to highlight the importance of findings in relation to individual contexts (of a case) but also flexibility to look across contexts (cases);

4) there are relatively few documented examples of co-created curriculum in the UK, so using CSR provides rich contextual information about the examples explored.

A methodology which provided a framework to explore and develop understanding was crucial for researching co-creating curricula as it is nuanced,

complex, and currently under-defined in the literature. CSR gives an organising framework for methods which help generate full accounts of co-creation activity, including personal narratives as well as organisational and other contextual data.

3.5 Methodology: Visual Methods

The over-arching methodological approach used in my study is Case Study Research (CSR), although aspects of my study have been informed by the principles of visual, participative and reflexive methodologies.

Much of the literature on research methodologies focuses on the use of images of various kinds and film. Banks (2001) wrote over a decade ago about the use of visual methods in social science research and there is growing interest and use of visual methods in researching student voice in schools. Relating to higher education research, Cousin (2009) discusses the range of ways in which visual methods can generate rich understanding. She talks specifically about how the researcher may choose, as I did, to use a visual prompt, noting this kind of visual may be used to 'support some of the process but not the entire event' (p. 218).

It was important for me to understand how participants understood and defined curriculum, both conceptually and in practice, before exploring their experiences of co-creating curricula. This was important because, as argued by Bovill (2013a; 2013b); Bovill and Woolmer (2014) and Bovill *et al* (forthcoming) our understandings of curriculum likely influence what opportunities we invite students to collaborate on. The literature suggests that our beliefs about curriculum are often tacit; I therefore wanted to employ methods that might help surface participants' thoughts and perceptions on this topic. Equally, I was keen to provide space for this discussion, noting Barnett and Coate's (2005) suggestion that there is a 'silence' in higher education about the issue.

It has not been my intention in this study to suggest a normative definition of curriculum. I acknowledge that my own conceptualisation of curriculum relates to the learning experience across a programme, but I am also very aware that my teaching 'input' often occurs at the module (and sometimes even individual class) level. Context and our perceived sphere of influence is key in any debate about curriculum and related co-creation activity. My conceptualisation and practice differ because of the context I am in at any given time. I wanted to explore this in detail with my participants, giving them an opportunity to explore their espoused values and enacted practices.

Exploring participants' conceptions of curriculum was an introductory topic in my interviews. I approached the issue by first inviting participants to share their definitions of curriculum. This allowed them to give their immediate answers to the topic. I followed this with a visual sorting task, a diamond ranking exercise, drawing upon the descriptors which featured in Fraser and Bosanquet's (2006) four conceptualisations of curriculum (drawn from their empirical study with academics in Australia). As a result of the pilot study, I decided to only ask staff participants to undertake the diamond ranking exercise, as student participants found it confusing and it did not elicit responses from them.

Fraser and Bosanquet's (2006) phenomenographic study is presented in detail in section 2.4.2.4.

Staff were presented with the range of descriptors from the Fraser and Bosanquet research but were not given the conceptual categories used to group the descriptors as I did not want to influence participants' responses with a prepared framework. Rather, I wanted them to use the descriptors to generate discussion with the diamond ranking exercise. They were asked to reflect on the original definition they had provided, reflect upon that in light of the descriptors in front of them, and then rank which descriptors they would feel as being most important in their definitions of curriculum. The purpose of this was to provide space for reflection and discussion after they had given their immediate

definitions of curriculum. The descriptors and the diamond ranking exercise worked as a generative tool to explore and debate participant definitions of curricula rather than being a definitive exercise at which a 'correct' or coherent' definition of curriculum would emerge.

My use of visual methods in my study was informed by the principles of Participatory Research Methods in that I explored and discussed the definitions of curriculum. However, the ability for participants to set research goals and 'own' the outcomes (Seale, 2010) was not a feature of my approach but could be adopted in further research.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

After receiving ethical approval and recruiting participants, data collection began in March 2015. All interviews were completed by the end of April 2015, and transcription and early analysis took place between May and July 2015. Analysis of documentary data was an ongoing process from March through December of 2015. Data for my study was gathered from strategy documents, interviews, and field notes.

Yin (2014, p. 105-7) discusses six 'sources of evidence' commonly used in case study research. They include documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation, and physical artefacts. I concentrated on four data sources for each case in my own study. These included 1) institutional strategy documentation (published and available on University websites), 2) reports, articles, and course documentation relating to examples of practice, 3) interviews of staff and students involved in collaborative practice within each case, and 4) field notes which captured my own impressions and insights after each site visit and associated interviews. These field notes did not form a separate part of my data analysis, but rather served to signpost particular areas for follow up when reviewing institutional documentation.

Each type of data gathered informed the analytical approach used for other data sources and vice versa. For example, institutional documentation and published articles provided a context for me to explore in interviews and data gleaned in interviews prompted me to go back and re-analyse data in strategy statements and course documentation.

3.6.1 Strategy Documents, Course Documentation and Published Articles

Data gathering included searching each university's website for strategy statements and policies relating to Learning and Teaching, Student Engagement and/or Students as Partners work, surveying reports available on the Higher Education Academy website which highlighted good practice, and identifying published articles on examples of practice. Once interviewees were identified at each site, I asked them to provide any reports or writing they had completed relating to the example of practice we were scheduled to discuss in the interview.

This provided a useful context to enter interviews with participants and provided a useful source of information to discuss and clarify the focus of their work. All participants were invited to describe, from their own perspective, the collaborative activity in which they had previously, or were currently, participating. Exploring this in detail in interviews not only provided a fuller account of the activities, as I had hoped for, but also enabled me to look for patterns and differences within and across experiences of co-creating curricula.

3.6.2. Interviews

Within each case, I identified examples of practice I wished to investigate further. With the exception of Winchester and Lincoln, where I identified the institutions first, it was the examples of practice which I identified first (usually

through published literature and reports), and I approached named individuals with an invitation to participate in the research. Once participants involved in each collaborative activity had been identified, I arranged to meet them on site to conduct face-to-face individual interviews. These were organised either through direct email to the member of staff running the activity or via institutional mediators based in Academic Development departments. Access to student participants was organised by staff in each institution.

A semi-structured topic guide was developed for interviewing participants. Due to my intention to create space for participants to explore their experiences and understandings of the collaborative process, it was necessary to create open prompts for discussion but to allow flexibility for participants to introduce issues and ideas as well. Hancock and Algozinne (2011, p. 45) note:

> 'semi-structured interviews ask follow up questions designed to probe more deeply the issues of interest to interviewees…In this manner, semi-structured interviews invite interviewees to express themselves openly and freely and to define the world from their own perspectives, not solely from the perspective of the researcher'.

There was no benefit in asking regimented questions when I was looking to explore the meaning that emerged from discussion.

The topic guide (included in Appendix 5) developed over the course of the interviews as it became clear that participants talked about their motivations for getting involved in tandem with talking about the value they saw from working in this way.

The original topic guide included the following questions:

- What is your understanding of curriculum? Diamond ranking exercise (discussed in detail below): What are your key considerations when thinking about curriculum? Can you prioritise these words/phrases in order

of most and least importance? Discuss why you have chosen the order you have.

- What is your understanding of co-creating curricula (with staff/with students)?
- What value do you see in creating opportunities for co-creating curricula? For staff, students, the institution?
- How would you sum up the principles of working in this way and your rationale for co-creating curricula?

I was keen to explore whether a visual exercise within interviews could help to get at the complexity of participants' understanding of curriculum and help avoid collecting what Bagnolli (2009, p. 556) describes as 'clichés and ready-made answers'.

To this end, I first invited participants to share their definition of curriculum. I asked them not to think about their responses for too long, and encouraged them to share their immediate thoughts when thinking about the term.

The second involved a visual sorting task, a diamond ranking exercise, shown in Figure 6 below, which asked participants to prioritise descriptors for curricula as found from similar empirical research conducted by Fraser and Bosanquet (2006). As a result of the pilot study, students were not asked to complete the diamond ranking exercise but were, instead, asked only to reflect on their understanding of curriculum.

Goals	Content
Process	External requirements, such as professional bodies
Institutional strategic requirements	Student motivation
Opportunities to innovate with teaching and learning	Learning outcomes
Fit with wider programme of study	Student involvement/input
Latest research and knowledge within the discipline	Unit outline
Prior knowledge/skills of students	University quality assurance regulations

Note: blanks cards were also provided to enable participants to include other phrases/words.
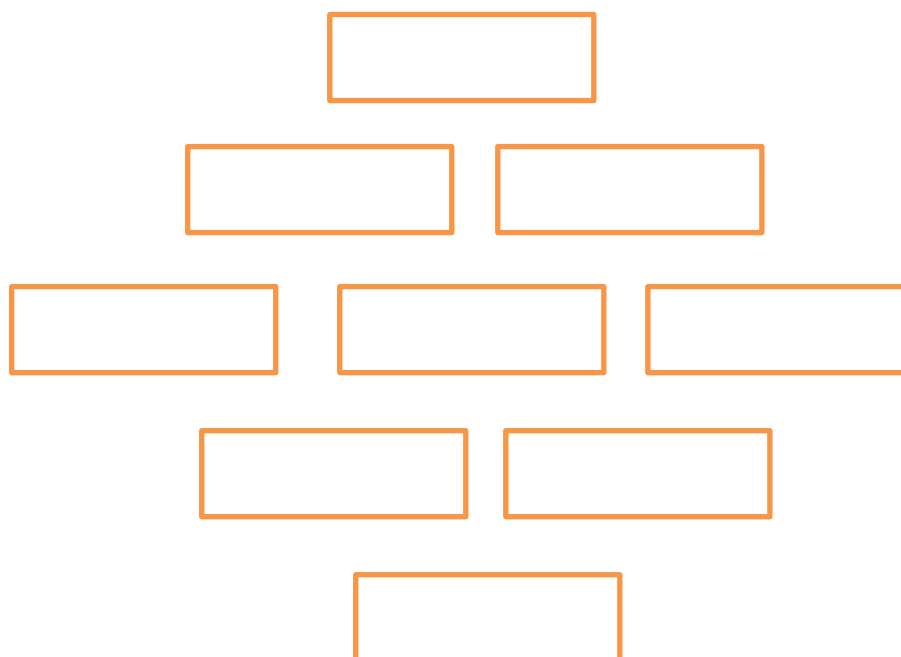
Figure 6: Diamond ranking exercise using Fraser and Bosanquet's (2006) curriculum descriptors

This follow up exercise with the diamond ranking task served as a heuristic device for us to explore and discuss staff participants' own definitions, drawing upon literature, rather than a direct comparison or critique of Fraser and Bosanquet's work.

The intention with the exercise was to encourage reflection and shift 'mode' in the interview. I wanted to explore initial definitions of curricula and see whether access to other descriptors altered a participant's original definition. The rationale for this was influenced by arguments in the literature (Barnett and

Coate, 2005; Blackmore and Kandiko, 2014; Toohey, 1999) that many academics hold tacit assumptions about the nature of curriculum in higher education.

On reflection, the diamond ranking exercise did not work quite as expected but the analysis of the data shows that it did encourage individuals to reflect on - and even revise in some instances- their original definitions of curriculum. Interestingly, a number of participants reflected on how hard they found it to *prioritise* elements of curriculum. See Figure 7 for an example of a completed diamond ranking task.
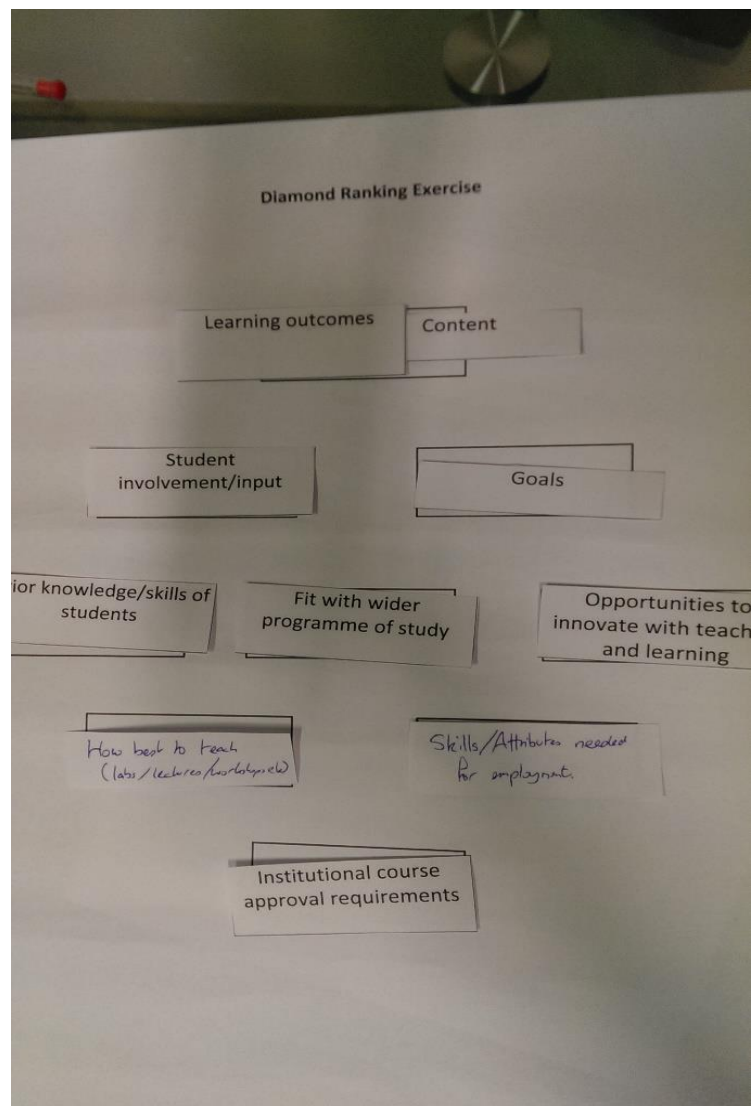
Fig 7: Example of participant response to diamond ranking exercise.

Perhaps this task could have been used more effectively to help categorise descriptors of curriculum rather than prioritise. A number of participants talked about the situated and temporal constraints on curriculum, which resonates closely with Jenkins' (2009) description of curriculum as an Ouija Board. This is discussed in more detail in chapter five.

3.6.3 Field Notes

I kept a research journal throughout my data collection to record my observations and reflections after each interview. These notes provided useful data to inform the iterative analysis between documentary and interview data and aided my own reflexivity as a researcher.

3.7 Research Settings

Denscombe (2007, p. 40) suggests there are four 'types' of case study: Typical, Extreme, Test-site for Theory, and Least-likely Instance. Cousin (2009) suggests the possibility of adding a fifth type, an Exemplary case (citing Yin, 1993, p. 12).

I wanted to access multiple examples of practice with the intention of illustrating maximum variation. This included variation through different contexts, parameters and different intentions relating to impact on practice. Trying to gain a notion of "representativeness" in my sample would have been inappropriate for this kind of study, which placed importance on self-identification of practice.

Yin's suggestions, along with Hancock and Algozzine's (2011) 'organising framework' for CSR, provided a useful means to approach and articulate my recruitment rationale.

Given my interest in (and assertion that) this topic of research is currently under-defined in the literature and in practice, my main priority for case selection was the nature of the activity/collaboration, i.e. whole programme or class, development of content, development of Learning Outcomes, and assessment. Importantly, these examples had to be self-identified as co-creation activities by the primary contacts within each case. My second priority for selection was whether the case involved collaboration with a whole cohort or a selection of students. My third priority was to try to access cases across a spread of disciplines. Although this was not a topic covered explicitly in my interview, I was keen to see if participants raised disciplinary culture and context as an issue.

3.7.1. Recruitment

Recruitment to the study began as soon as ethical approval was received from the University of Glasgow in January 2015. Table 4 provides a summary of the case studies included in the study. I approached five different universities to participate in the main study. With the inclusion of my pilot study, this resulted in a total of seven sites. Within these sites, I identified 17 examples of practice and conducted 21 interviews.

Table 4 provides a summary of the 17 examples of practice I investigated in detail at each of the case study sites. This summary description is intended to provide an overview of the range and type of activities I have included in my study, the year in which the activity occurred, and the names of those who participated in interviews. Examples of practice which were collected in the pilot phase of my study are highlighted with a double asterisk.

Detailed case descriptions are provided in Chapter 4, Part A, and include a description of each example of practice and highlight *within-case themes*.

Table 4: Examples of practice in each case study site.

Site *pilot site	Subject area	Student participants (Selected or whole cohort)	Year of activity (** *in progress at time of interview*)	Interviewees
Case Study 1: **Edinburgh**	Student- Led Workshops in Innovative Learning Week	Selected	2011-12 and 2012-13	Judy Hardy (staff)
	Computer Science	Selected	2015*	Judy Hardy (staff)
Case Study 2: **Edinburgh** **Napier**	Earth Sciences	Selected and whole cohort	2011 and 2013	Mark Huxham (staff)
Case Study 3: Glasgow*	Science Skills (Physics, Chemistry, Geographical and Earth Sciences)	Selected	2013	Peter Sneddon (staff) Katherine Wallace (student)
	Public Policy	Whole Cohort	2010 (and ongoing)**	Susan Deeley (staff) Ruth Brown (student)
	Dentistry	Selected	2014	Niall Rogerson (staff)
	Drama	Selected	2013	Lisa Gaughan (staff)

				Linford Butler (student)
Case Study 4: **Lincoln**	Youth Justice	Selected	2015**	Susan Bond-Taylor (staff) Abi Ogle (student) Kirsty Groom (student) Freya Jeffrey (student)
Case Study 5: **Queen Margaret University ***	Environmental Justice	Whole cohort	1999	Eurig Scandrett (staff)
Case Study 6: **University College Dublin**	Geography 1st year Two tier	Selected and whole cohort	2007	Niamh Moore-Cherry (staff)
	Geography 2nd year and Masters Two tier	Selected and whole cohort	Date undisclosed	Niamh Moore-Cherry
Case Study 7: **Winchester**	Law	Selected	2015**	Laura Hutber (student) Dominic Chapman (student) Chloe Murthwaite (student)
	Liberal Arts x2	Selected	2015**	Thomas Norgaard (staff) Iain (Tid) Tidbury (student)
	Sociology	Selected	2015**	Eli Nixon-Davingoff (student)

	Forensic Studies	Selected	2015**	Holly Alexander (student)
				Lauren Pollington (student)
	Archaeology	Selected	2015**	Georgina Heatley (student)
				Nick Thorpe (staff)

The recruitment process to the study varied from one case to the next. Where there were organising structures focussing specifically on staff and student collaborations, such as Winchester and Lincoln, I was able to email co-ordinators of the schemes to ask if they could forward my request to participate in my study to relevant staff and students. In these two instances, the co-ordinating staff were key mediators in facilitating identification, access, and space in which to conduct interviews. In other instances, I emailed named staff members directly with an invitation to participate. I had made contact with these individuals prior to sending the formal request to participate through workshop and conference sessions.

All staff members were asked to forward on my Plain Language Statement and invitation to participate to students involved in the collaborative activity.

3.7.2 Setting

Nearly all interviews occurred on-site for each case, either in a staff member's office or a meeting room. The only exception was the interview with Niamh Moore-Cherry from University College Dublin, who combined her interview with an existing visit to Glasgow. With Winchester and Lincoln, it was necessary to conduct back-to-back interviews over a two and one day period, respectively. This was due to the distance of travel and the limitation of time available to remain on site at each university. I was able to interview all contacts at Lincoln

during my visit but it was not possible to do so at Winchester. This resulted in me not being able to interview some staff members involved with on-going projects. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 during the analysis of results and is included in my reflection at the end of this chapter.

3.8 Data Analysis Methods

3.8.1 Early Analysis and Presentation of Interim Results.

Shortly after all interviews were completed in April 2015, I had the opportunity to present early findings from my data collection at two international conferences, an internal seminar, and a conference keynote presentation (see Appendix 9). This stage of analysis was drawn from a combination of my field notes, observations, and initial impressions of interviews and was carried out prior to full transcription of interviews.

The initial results, presented in Appendix 6, were framed as discussion points at conferences and workshops, inviting critique and feedback from those audiences, which included experts in Student Voice research, higher education researchers, academics, and students wanting to develop their own practice in this area. This was particularly useful in that it enabled me to share emerging topics and discuss them in relation to the literature whilst also checking for alternate perspectives and/or congruence with others' research and experience in the field. The recommendation to look at the work of Habermas was the most influential aspect of feedback received. It was also interesting to receive feedback that no participants talked about curriculum as knowledge – just as content and process.

3.8.2 Analytic Steps: Documentary Analysis

Yin (2014, p.107) suggests 'the most important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources'. They are helpful in

verifying correct spellings and references and 'can provide other specific details to corroborate information from other sources'. In addition to Yin's suggestions, collecting documentary data was useful in two other ways. Firstly, it provided me with a perspective on institutional context and stated priorities. It introduced me to discourses across sites and terminology being used and promoted in terms of learning and teaching priorities for each site. Acknowledging that stated aims in strategy documents and reality of practice can differ (Trowler, 2008) it was useful to see what and how each institution expressed their values relating to Learning and Teaching and what kinds of activities were being promoted and measured at institutional level.

Secondly, publications, presentations, reports, and quality assurance documentation relating to the examples of practice within each case study (provided by interviewees) enabled me to cross reference and tailor my interview prompts. Whilst interviews occurred in May 2014 (pilot study) and March 2015, collection of documentary data took place on an ongoing basis from April 2014 to December 2015.

When analysing documentation for each case, I applied the following framework:

1. What priorities are listed in the Strategy statements for each Case site? What measures of success are identified?
2. Is Student Engagement and/or Students as Partners written about in any of the institutional documentation? If so, how is the institution measuring success?
3. Does the case site have a separate Student Engagement strategy or policy statement?
4. Is funding available to support staff-student collaborations? If so, how is it being used?
5. What reflections are offered in articles and evaluation reports on the process and product of staff-student co-creation of curricula?

Table 5 provides an overview of all documentation collected for each case study site. In some instances, participants provided additional documentation relating to their specific example of practice and, where this is the case, items have been marked with an asterisk. Some of the participant documentation was not readily available via their institutional website. Where funding had been available to support collaborative work, this has also been indicated in the table. Information obtained from the documentation listed in Table 5 is presented in further detail in chapter four, Part A, which provides an overview of each case study and associated examples of practice. It is important to note that the range of documentation available across case sites differed considerably. This, consequently, influenced the construction and description of each case. Nonetheless, this analysis, in conjunction with my interview data and field notes, intends to create a trustworthy and holistic account of the strategic intent and enacted practices within each case site.

Table 5: Summary of documentation for each case study site

Site (*pilot site)	Summary of Case Study site-specific documentation (*provided by interviewees. Not all publicly accessible)	Funding sources
Edinburgh	a) Strategic Plan 2012-16 b) Edinburgh University Students' Association and University Student Engagement statement 2015 c) Principle's Teaching Award Scheme: funding criteria (PTAS) d) Innovative Learning Week: aims and objectives e) Student-Led Workshops for ILW: end of project report*	Institutional funding for Innovative Learning Week and the Principal's Teaching Award. SLW project funded by PTAS. Includes payment of student bursaries.
Edinburgh Napier	a) Academic Strategy 2020 b) HEA report: Student Engagement 2011	Higher Education Academy

	c) Presentation on module review to PTAS forum, 2015 d) Published article on module redesign 2015* e) Website	
Glasgow *	a) University strategy 2015-2020 b) Learning and Teaching Development Fund: funding criteria c) Learning and Teaching Conference 2014 and 2015 d) Published article on co-assessment activity* e) Co-authored article on science skills module *	Funding provided for Learning and Teaching Development Fund (LTDF). Includes payment of student bursaries. Science skills course funded by LTDF.
Lincoln	a) Strategic Plan 2011-16 b) Learning and Teaching Strategy 2011-16 c) Student Engagement Strategy 2012-16* d) Student Engagement Strategy Biannual progress report 2014* e) HEA report: Pedagogies of Partnership: What works? 2015 f) Module outline for Youth Justice module *	Projects funded by Student Engagement Innovation Fund. Includes payment of student bursaries. Received HEA funding for Pedagogies of Partnership project.
Queen Margaret *	a) Strategic Plan 2012-2015 b) Poster presentation on follow up module* c) Book chapter	Funding provider external to Institution
University College Dublin	a) Strategy 2015-20 b) Fellowships in Teaching and Academic Development, Report 2007-09 c) Published article on co-creation of curricula	Funding linked to fellowship

Winchester	a) Strategic Plan 2015-20	Funding provided to
	b) Learning and Teaching strategy 2015-2018	pay for SFS projects.
	c) NUS/HEA award for SU and Institution partnership	Included payment of student bursaries.
	d) Student Fellows Scheme webpages*	
	e) End of Project reports*	
	f) Skype correspondence	

3.8.3 Analytic Steps: Coding of Interview Data

All interviews were recorded (voice not video), transcribed *verbatim*, and then coded. Coding is a process of highlighting and describing issues of interest picked up from interviews (as observed by the researcher).

Whilst the limitations of space in this thesis prevents discussion of all of the code descriptors in detail, it is worth reflecting on the process by which they were collated and reviewed, and how they have been re-categorised into overarching themes and sub-themes.

I was mindful of not limiting my coding to just the issues outlined in my interview schedule, as I was keen to see what categories and themes emerged from the interviews. The rationale for my study has been primarily about the process of meaning-making and prioritisation of the work carried out by practitioners – staff and students – and so I was as interested in looking at issues the participants identified as important as well as the prompts that I gave them. This required a 'close-read' of each interview as the first step to coding. I identified 55 separate code descriptors (see Appendix 7a) through this initial coding process.

The 21 interviews were initially coded after close-reading using the comment function in Word. A selection of interviews (5 in total) were shared with my supervisors and coded separately. Our respective comments were compared and discussed to help ensure consistency and rigour with coding of the remaining

interviews. This was an important part of the process, as it reflected back to me early on in the analysis phase any assumptions I had in my approach, encouraging ongoing reflection about my own reflexivity.

I maintained an ongoing list of code descriptors throughout this process to help identify the range and frequency of items found in the interviews, and I identified 'points of interest' which, in the first round of coding, I was unsure of where best to allocate.

A second review of the code descriptors was carried out to identify relationships between items, for example where issues were discussed in tandem, such as 'discipline' and 'academic identity'. From this process I was able to identify themes that occurred frequently, themes that linked directly to topics covered in my interview schedule, and themes that either related to, or challenged, aspects of current literature. I originally identified 14 overarching themes which were then revisited, reduced to nine, and then finalised to six cross-case themes. Earlier 'points of interest' were also revisited and reassigned to sub-categories where appropriate at this stage. This iterative process of reflection, discussion, and reconsideration of coding assignment was an important part of revisiting my decision-making processes as a researcher and ensuring my analysis of the raw data was robust and trustworthy. The coding hierarchy from Nvivo for this stage of analysis is included at Appendix 7b.

The coding software Nvivo was used to help store and retrieve interview data. I found the software of limited value in terms of facilitating actual analysis as there are inherent difficulties with the way the Nvivo's architecture links Nodes, Child Nodes, and Sources.

The result of each completed diamond ranking exercise was revisited and analysed in the context of the interview coding for each (staff) participant. I compared the outcome of the sorting exercise with the initial statements about

curriculum conceptualisation from each staff participant. I did not, however, carry out comparative analysis across all diamond rankings as this was outside of the remit of my study. Such analysis could be carried out in further research.

3.9 Ethical Issues

Approaches to ethics in educational research is informed by guidance provided by Research Associations such as the British Educational Research Association (BERA) in the UK, and equivalents in the US and Europe. BERA's (2011) guidelines state that 'all educational research should be conducted with an ethic of respect for the person, knowledge, democratic values, the quality of educational research, and academic freedom' BERA (2011, p.4). Jones *et al* (2014, p. 174), writing in the US context, discuss how ethical issues can emerge in all areas of research, including 'research design, including the statement of purpose and research questions, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, presentation of results, and the role of the researcher'. Suffice to say that the ethical dimensions of a study are not confined to the institutional ethical approval process. Rather, conducting ethical research requires the researcher to be present and reflexive throughout her project.

Jones *et al* (2014, p. 175) go on to suggest there is an ethical imperative to *do good*, rather than simply *do no harm*, noting that this 'in the context of qualitative inquiry significantly increases the obligations of the researcher to understand the ethical principles at stake in conducting research'. In this spirit, I offer the following reflections on three significant ethical issues I have contended with throughout my study: limitations of confidentiality, member checking of interviews, and trustworthy representation of experiences.

3.9.1 Limitations to Confidentiality

As outlined in my Plain Language Statement and the participant consent form (approved by the University of Glasgow's ethics committee and provided at Appendix 8), I offered all participants the opportunity to be identified in the analysis and presentation of results. Acknowledging that this is not necessarily frequent practice in research, I was keen to give participants the choice to 'own' their contributions and, if they wished, to be publically acknowledged for this. This meant my ethical concerns were not primarily about confidentiality and anonymity, rather much more about informed consent from participants and I spent time at the start of interviews discussing the pros and cons of being identified as a participant. Patton (2002, quoted in Jones *et al*, 2014, p. 180-181) describes this tension as:

> '…the norms about confidentiality are changing and being challenged as the tension has emerged between the important ethic of protecting people's privacy and, in some cases, in their desire to own their own story. Informed consent, in this regard, does not automatically mean confidentiality. Informed consent can mean that participants understand the risks and benefits of having their real names reported and choose to do so…'

It would be false to say that I have not questioned the inclusion of real names and locations in my study several times, even though all participants opted to be named. Dealing with the ethical issues of data collection, analysis, and presentation of results when participants are identified felt very raw and sometimes exposing for all parties, including myself. If anything, the fact that participants *are* identified has made me acutely aware of my ethical responsibility to do good as well as do no harm and, at the same time, ensure the presentation of results was done so with care and integrity. In the moments of doubt, when I have considered anonymising my results, I am reminded of the stories and experiences shared by participants and their commitment to develop practice in what is largely a nascent area of pedagogical research. The students, in particular, expressed pride in their achievements and it would feel unethical to anonymise their words after they have given their informed consent to be named.

3.9.2 Member Checking of Interview Transcripts

Cousin (2009, p. 23) quotes Dunscombe and Jessop (2002, p. 11) who argue:

> 'It is clearly impossible [for participants] to give their fully informed consent at the outset of an essentially exploratory qualitative interview whose direction and potential revelations cannot be anticipated'.

This is a healthy reminder that there are still vulnerabilities to all of my participants who gave consent to be named at the beginning of the study. Whilst I situate my research in the constructionist paradigm, I did not attempt to co-construct meaning from the interviews *with* participants, which would be the ideal practice in narrative-informed research, due to the practical constraints of time. However, copies of interview transcripts where shared with participants, giving them an opportunity to 'member check' for accuracy and to identify any elements of the interview they were uncomfortable with. It is important to note that it was not possible to reach some of the students who were interviewed as they had graduated by the time I had completed transcription and no longer had an active email address for me to contact them on.

Of those participants I was able to contact, no one identified any concerns with the content of the interviews.

3.9.3 Trustworthy Representation of Experiences

Jones *et al* (2014) argue that there is an ethical responsibility when analysing and interpreting data to do so in such a way that participants can recognise their story and that this is particularly important when the researcher claims a constructionist or interpretivist approach. Making decisions about how to interpret interview data is challenging and is a reminder of the powerful and privileged position you are in as a researcher when taking these decisions. There is a balance to be struck between representation of an individual's experience

(as a particular perspective) against the wider context, which sometimes may or may not concur with an individual's experience. To give context to this, I was faced with an interview narrative that highlighted tensions and differences of opinion within the collaboration. The student who shared this view described the relationship as 'not being on the same page'. I was unable to access the staff member involved in this collaboration. 'Doing good' in this context meant not sanitising or silencing her experience whilst acknowledging the 'other' views were not represented.

3.10 Pilot Study

I conducted a pilot study in May-June 2014 for the purposes of testing out my research questions and chosen methods in order to define the object, or unit of analysis, for my research. Acknowledged by Healey *et al* (2014) there are few examples of other empirical research on staff and students co-creating curricula in higher education within the literature (with the exception of Bovill, 2013a; Mihans *et al*, 2008; Cook-Sather *et al*,2014) and so it was difficult to compare or model other approaches. The pilot study also allowed me to test if my methods generated the discussion and exploration I was hoping for with participants.

3.10.1 Recruitment to Pilot Study

Due to limitations of funding for travel, I restricted the pilot sites to the local area, focussing on examples of practice in University of Glasgow and Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh. This provided examples from two very different institutions, one a large, ancient, research intensive institution, and one a small post-1992 institution. The examples of practice I explored were identified through the Learning and Teaching Conference at Glasgow, my supervisor's existing network, and through published articles. Staff were emailed directly with a copy of the Plain Language Statement and invited to participate. Staff were also asked to forward information to the students with whom they had worked, inviting them to participate in the research.

I examined four examples of practice (three in Glasgow and one in Queen Margaret). This involved interviewing four members of staff and two students related to the science skills and public policy courses, respectively. No students were available to interview for the environmental justice module or the dentistry module (the former due to the cohort having graduated and the latter due to students being away on summer placements).

Table 6. Summary of examples from the pilot study

Site	Subject area	Student participants (Selected or whole cohort)	Year of activity (** *in progress at time of interview*)	Interviewees
Glasgow	Science Skills (Physics, Chemistry, Geographical and Earth Sciences)	Selected	2013	Peter Sneddon (staff) Katherine Wallace (student)
	Public Policy	Whole Cohort	2010 (and ongoing)**	Susan Deeley (staff) Ruth Brown (student)
	Dentistry	Selected	2014	Niall Rogerson (staff)
Queen Margaret University	Environmental Justice	Whole cohort	1999	Eurig Scandrett (staff)

Interviews occurred either in a staff member's office or a meeting room on campus. Interviews lasted between 40 minutes to one hour, recorded, and later transcribed. Staff and students were interviewed separately, and all were asked to undertake the diamond ranking exercise, which asked them to explore their conceptualisations of curriculum and to prioritise defining features.

3.10.2 Findings from Pilot Study

The outcomes of the pilot study were reported and discussed in a supervision meeting. These discussions focussed on the extent to which I felt the pilot study had generated interesting data and the extent to which the data answered my initial research questions and/or identified additional topics for inclusion. Discussion also considered the ethical and practical dimensions of undertaking my main data collection.

The use of semi-structured interviews worked to generate discussion. As I carried out more interviews, I became more confident with handling interviews in a flexible way. Asking respondents to describe 'what does co-creating curricula look like in the classroom' did not generate the responses I had hoped for whereas discussions about the nature of the relationships did. Similarly, the topics of impact and value did not occur without prompting and so I decided to include this topic in the interview schedule for my main study.

The diamond ranking exercise needed clearer introduction but, once this was accounted for, it proved to be a generative tool to explore in more detail participants' definitions of curriculum. However, student participants struggled greatly with the exercise and, as a result, I decided not to use the task in interviews with students.

Managing the logistics, particularly the time of year, was important. It was difficult to arrange interviews with students involved in the elective dentistry

module, due to their schedules for placements. It also highlighted for me that there are practical constraints in accessing staff AND students as some projects were completed and some ongoing. I decided, as a result, to aim for collecting data for my main study in the spring semester of 2015. This would enable collaborations to start but also leave time to access students before exams.

There were additional ethical issues that arose from the interviews. All participants were given the option to be identified in the study (and all participants opted for this). However, I was aware that participants showed awareness of the fact that other members of the collaboration were to be interviewed. This resulted in 'hedging' by some participants of some comments, conscious that others involved in the collaboration may have a differing view or contradictory version of events.

Staff talked about the macro and meso (i.e. institutional and departmental) context that influenced their work. This highlighted the need to gain more institutional data to construct cases, but I decided that I would not have the time and resources to include interviews with colleagues at the meso level (departmental) of institutions.

In light of the volume of data collected in my pilot study, I decided to restrict my main study to five case sites.

3.10.3 Refinement of Study

Upon reviewing the pilot study, I was able to judge not only the usefulness (or otherwise) of my approach, but also the volume and type of data I would likely collect in the main study. The following refinements were made to the main study:

- More contextual data was required to help illustrate the institutional and, if possible, context that participants were operating in. Staff had been

asked to provide any background information about the collaboration that they deemed relevant before the interview. This included course documentation and, in one case, a published article. I decided that I would gain copies of institutional strategies for Learning and Teaching and Student Engagement (where they existed) in the main study.

- The diamond ranking exercise was retained only for staff in the main study. Students were, instead, asked to talk about their understandings of curriculum in a more general, open ended sense. The pilot study helped me finesse how I introduced the diamond ranking exercise and confirmed the potential it had to explore tacit assumptions about curriculum with staff.

- Asking respondents to describe 'what co-creating curricula looked like' did not generate the responses I had hoped for, whereas asking about the nature of the collaboration did. This was included as a prompt in the main study.

- The time frame for each example differed, in some cases, considerably. This highlighted a practical constraint for the study in that it would be unlikely to find examples that were either all in progress or completed.

- I decided to keep the option for participants to identify themselves in the main study.

- As my research questions and methods did not change significantly after the pilot, I decided to include my pilot data alongside my main study and have analysed results together.

3.11 Researcher Positioning and Reflexivity

Acknowledgement of researcher position, or reflexivity, is an important aspect in qualitative research as it 'brings in' to the discussion the researcher's values, experiences, assumptions and prejudices. Consideration of our positionality not only acknowledges that values and assumptions impact on our daily lives but also that they explicitly influence the way we approach, engage with and analyse the research we undertake. Creswell (2007, p.178) states 'No longer is it acceptable to be the omniscient, distanced qualitative writer'. Our positionality is reflected

in the way in which we write ourselves in to the discussion and presentation of our work. Jones *et al* (2014, p. 3-4) discuss the importance of the language we choose as researchers to communicate our work and the ways in which our worldview is portrayed in the words we use. I have tried to be conscious of this throughout all of my writing but this feels of particular importance to note when writing about one's epistemological and ontological views of the world. I actively avoid what Law (2004) describes as 'method talk' – where words from quantitative approaches to research, such as validity, rigour, significance and reliability, are mistakenly used in a qualitative research context. Cousin (2009, p. 12) suggests that 'the rhetorical nature of this talk is concealed beneath an underlying claim that the research is value free'.

Jones *et al* (2014, p. 5) explore this further suggesting that 'words communicate the nature of the relationship between those being studied and the person conducting the study' and draw upon Arminio and Hultgren's (2002) work to argue that 'words such as illuminate, explore, discern and meaning represent an openness to mutual construction and enlightenment'. Finding one's voice in this sense is an ever evolving process. For these reasons, I have actively chosen to author my thesis in the first person and explicitly include my reflections throughout.

My research design has purposefully foregrounded practitioner experiences and has explored their own meaning-making processes of co-constructing curricula. In keeping with a constructionist position, I wanted to create an approach that gave space for participants to articulate their experiences and discuss their motivations and ideas of success whilst also developing an understanding of the context of their practice and their interactions in this environment.

Jones *et al* (2014, p. 27) use the analogy of a journey to describe the ways in which we situate a research project. They talk about the fundamental elements of a research 'journey', equating 'destination' to the contribution our study makes, 'map' as the philosophical and theoretical framing of our work, the

'specific route to take' being the methodology/ies we operate within and, finally, 'mode of transport' being the choice of methods we employ. They go on to suggest that '[t]here are several means and routes that will take you to the same destination. However, some routes are appropriate for some modes of travel'. To reach a decision about 'routes' and 'modes of transport' has required me to explore the map of potential theoretical frameworks, delve into unknown territories and explore some dead ends. My experience as a novice researcher has felt quite different from the often sanitised and linear literature on research methods and methodologies.

My personal and professional experiences and insights have influenced the research process in numerous ways: through my choice of methods, the conceptual framing of the issues, and the perspective which informed the data analysis.

My connection and interest in staff and student collaborations is born out of personal interest as much as my intellectual curiosity for the topic. As the first person in my family to progress beyond post-16 education, attending university was a truly transformational experience for me. Key to this were the opportunities to work with academics who provided me the space to develop my 'new' student identity, including involvement in student representative committees and eventually as a Sabbatical Officer in the Students' Union. Whilst not co-creating curricula, these roles were my first experiences of working in partnership with staff to influence teaching, learning, and the wider student experience.

I have worked in higher education for 15 years and all of my roles have involved an explicit commitment to developing partnerships and collaborations between people, departments, and even institutions. Prior to starting my PhD, I worked for six years as an educational developer in a Scottish University. Much of my professional practice concentrated on developing and supporting cross-institutional programmes which enabled undergraduate students to work with academic staff on research projects. Latterly, this focussed on supervising

students undertaking quality enhancement research projects, including reviewing institutional approaches to Personal Development Planning, delivery of co-curricular activity, and evaluating the impact of undergraduate research activities. These experiences took me closer to working in collaboration with students on teaching and learning initiatives.

A large part of the educational development role involved me mediating between colleagues delivering practice 'on the ground' and senior managers responsible for the development and monitoring of the Learning and Teaching Strategy. This provided insight into the challenges of representing staff and student's views about the value of their work alongside requirements to measure impact via Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which were often experienced as crude proxies for measuring effect. I experienced an increasing frustration from the academics I worked with about the limitations of this approach. At the same time, I was interested to see the meaning-making process my colleagues and I went through when collaborating at the micro level of teaching development and delivery. This, in turn, developed my interest in the relationship between strategy and practice and a desire to research the micro level experiences of staff-student collaborations. These experiences strongly influenced how I developed my research questions from the original funding proposal agreed by the Higher Education Academy (Appendix 1).

Returning to the idea of the research 'journey', my past experiences strongly influenced the starting point from which I approached my study. My openness about my professional experiences with participants was an integral part of the research design, data collection, and analysis process.

My confidence as a researcher developed through formulating the research, piloting it, discussing early findings, and presenting my work. It has also given me space to reflect on my research practice on a continual basis. There have been three key events that have been crucial points in my own development: 1) the pilot phase which enabled me to test out and affirm my approach, 2)

publication of a peer-reviewed article from my pilot study (Woolmer *et al*, 2016; see Appendix 8 for full details of papers, publications, and keynotes given in relation to my study), and 3) receiving feedback on my interim findings that I presented at various conferences and workshops.

3.12 Limitations

This chapter has primarily focussed on providing the rationales I used to construct and conduct my research. In doing so, I hope to have provided a trustworthy account of the process. It would be possible to critique my approach using positivist values, for example, querying the representativeness of my cases, not finding definitive answers, questioning the generalisability of my results. However, as I have argued throughout this chapter, the rationales for my study and the framework I have used for my research design rejects these values about truth and objectivity as appropriate for this kind of exploration. However, I do offer a critical evaluation of the challenges and limitations of my approach in the final section of this chapter.

The aim of CSR is to gain a range of data sources to help construct and illustrate the case/s in question. Working within the constraints of my PhD, I was able to collect data through interviews, documents, and my own field notes. Whilst these have served to provide a rich picture of events, especially of first person accounts, it could be argued that my study is missing evidence of action. By this, I take cognisance of the critique given by Arksey and Knight (1999, in Tight 2012, p.186) that interviews capture 'what people say...rather than what they do'. This critique suggests that interviews are useful for capturing perspectives on meaning and beliefs but that the researcher should be mindful of this difference when triangulating data.

If more time and resources were available, I would have liked to include observations of practice – as Cousin (2009) describes; instances of action, either of meetings or classroom sessions - to add to my repertoire of data. It would also

have been beneficial to be able to have interviewed staff and students for each example of practice. As noted in Arksey and Knight's critique, interviews can only ever be partial records of events, and I was conscious in my analysis that some perspectives were missing, highlighting the constraints of access and timing in the research process.

It would also have been interesting to conduct a longitudinal study of the collaborations that were ongoing at the time I met with them (at Winchester and Lincoln). Capturing the development process as the collaborations matured would have given a different complexion to the data and the personal narratives I collected. It would have been particularly interesting to see how definitions and understandings of the collaborations changed over time.

Finally, it is worth noting the constraints of conducting research with students within the timeframe of the academic year. I consciously targeted the timing of my interviews for the spring term. This allowed for new collaborations to get underway before speaking with me. However, the lengthy process of transcription meant that some students had moved on or graduated when I was at a position to member check transcripts.

3.13 Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodology and methods used for my study. I have demonstrated how my study is grounded in social constructionism and have presented my rationale for case-based research. To develop rich and contextual pictures of each case and the associated sub-cases of staff and students co-creating curricula, I have gathered a range of sources of data. I have explored in depth the ethical considerations for my study, being guided by the principles of 'do good' in my research.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Introduction

My study includes seven case studies comprising universities across the UK and Ireland. Across these seven cases, 17 examples of practice have been investigated across a spectrum of disciplines. Accessing examples of practice across disciplines and across institutions was desirable to show variation and, where possible, inform my approach to recruiting participants. As outlined in chapter two, co-creation of the curricula is an emergent area of practice; therefore I was opportunistic in how I approached my sampling of case sites and the associated examples of practice. Cases and examples of practice were identified via published articles, relevant conferences and workshops, existing professional networks, and through the Higher Education Academy's Students as Partners publications on good practice.

Details of the seven cases are constructed through a range of data sources. These include institutional documentation, published articles, and interviews with staff and students. Where available, I made contact with staff who have a dedicated institutional role to facilitate staff-student collaborations. Collecting this range of data, written and oral, helps provide the context in which individual examples of practice have occurred. This is important when examining the relationship between macro, meso and micro levels at which staff and student collaborations occur and the extent to which they converge or diverge from institutional strategy.

This chapter introduces the results of the data collected in my study. It presents my data analysis in two parts (A and B). In terms of format, I identify each case (university), the examples of practice and whether participants involved in my study were staff or students.

Part A of my data analysis provides a holistic analysis (Creswell, 2007, p. 75) of each university (case) and associated examples of practice. This stage of analysis draws upon all four data sources outlined in chapter three with the intention of providing a rich picture for each specific case, including:

- The macro environment for each site, such as age and size of institution number of students, stated strategic priorities, institutional schemes and funding to support staff-student collaborations in learning and teaching
- The micro level descriptions of practice, illustrating what each collaboration sought to address, how it worked and what it produced
- Summaries of in-case themes that emerged from interviews with participants

Part B of my data analysis focusses on cross-case themes identified from interview data gathered from participants. These include:

a) Definitions of curriculum
b) Definitions of collaborative activity
c) Establishing collaborations: processes and products
d) Motivations
e) Value and impact
f) Institutional context

4.2 Part A: Case Descriptions

4.2.1. Case 1: University of Edinburgh

Institutional Overview

The University of Edinburgh, founded in 1583, is one of four Ancient Universities in Scotland and has approximately 35,200 students. Edinburgh's Strategic Plan 2012-16 states its strategic goals as being 'excellence in education, excellence in research and excellence in innovation' (Strategic Plan, 2012-16, p. 6). The aims

and objectives for achieving excellence in education focus strongly on students engaging in co- and extra-curricular activities in addition to experiencing teaching informed by globally-leading research (p. 7). Specifically, the aim relating to education states:

> *'To stimulate in our students a lifelong thirst for knowledge and learning and to encourage a pioneering, innovative and independent attitude and an aspiration to achieve success within and beyond the University'* (Strategic Plan, 2011-16, p. 7).

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and other measures of success are comprised of quantifiable scores relating to leaver's destination statistics and an increase in student satisfaction with developing employability and graduate attributes (Strategic Plan, p. 24).

Although neither the term Student Engagement nor Student as Partners appears in the University's Strategy, it is interesting to note that Edinburgh has recently produced a statement on Student Engagement, in partnership with Edinburgh University Students' Association (EUSA). The statement, agreed upon in October 2015, states:

> 'We recognise the important role of our students as co-creators of their own academic experience. [.....] Crucial to this is the engagement of our students at every point in the student journey, at every level of the University, and in both the formal curriculum as well as in co-curricular activities'. (Student Engagement Statement, 2015).

The above processes and activities to address engagement focus predominantly on quality assurance, representation, and review, with no mention of input to curriculum development. However, this statement could indicate a growing interest at institutional level to address explicitly issues of Student Engagement with Learning and Teaching.

This point is echoed by the availability of funding for academics through the Principal's Teaching Award Scheme (PTAS). PTAS has been operating at Edinburgh since 2007 and currently runs with an annual budget of £110,000. Whilst student partnerships are not explicitly stated in the funding criteria for PTAS, a number of projects have been funded where staff and students have collaborated on curriculum development projects.

In 2011, PTAS provided funding for students and staff to develop a series of interdisciplinary Student–Led Workshops (SLW) offered within the university's Innovative Learning Week Programme in 2011-12 and 2012-13. The Innovative Learning Week (ILW) takes place annually, usually in February, and offers time and space for staff and students to 'collaborate and explore their teaching and learning experience in a new way'. All teaching is suspended during this week to free up time for participation.

I identified the ILW example of practice of students co-creating workshops at the PTAS annual forum in June 2014. The original staff member responsible for the project had left the university and the students involved had also graduated. I was able to interview the author of the end of project evaluation report, Professor Judy Hardy, who leads the Physics Education Research Group at the University of Edinburgh. In addition to sharing her understanding of the SLW activity, Judy also shared reflections and examples of working with students in her own teaching practice. This resulted in a further example of collaboration with students in reviewing course content for the Computer Science degree which has been included within the University of Edinburgh Case material.

4.2.1.1 Student-led Interdisciplinary Workshops (SLWs) during Innovative Learning Week (co-curricular) *Judy Hardy (staff)*

PTAS funding paid for the appointment of an SLW coordinator in Physics. Students worked with the co-ordinator and other staff 'sponsors' to develop co-

curricular workshops for students as part of the University's Innovative Learning Week in 2011-12 and 2012-13. The model of student-led workshops was developed from practice seen in North American universities. Student co-ordinators were responsible for identifying a topic for development, developing learning resources, working in partnership with the academic sponsor to set parameters, and agreeing on what could be delivered in the time allocated. Student co-ordinators applied to be involved and received training from colleagues in the Institute for Academic Development. Four workshops were developed and delivered in 2012. These included the topics: 1) Build your own time machine, 2) Life after science, 3) Ten billion (analytic approaches to big problems) and 4) Biotechnology- an interdisciplinary approach to the role of microbes in our lives. The ideas for the workshops were generated by the students and the SLW coordinator helped to find staff sponsors/facilitators. Only one application to run a workshop in 2012-13 was received and did not actually take place. The evaluation report for the entire project was not able to identify why there had been a drop in interest for year 2 but acknowledged the lack of funding for the SLW coordinator post was likely to have been an influencing factor.

4.2.1.2 Involving Students in Deciding Programming Content to teach in Computer Science: *Judy Hardy (staff)[2]*

Students and staff participated in a new departmental teaching and learning forum in the College of Science and Engineering. In February 2015, the Forum met to discuss and review which computer programming language should be taught on the Computer Science degree. An open invitation was sent to all of the students studying the current degree programme, asking them to participate in the discussion either by attending the Forum meeting or via email contribution. Judy was keen that the invite be made to all students as well as existing course

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[2] This example was given during interview with Director of L&T in Physics department at University of Edinburgh.

representatives. A group of students participated in the Forum discussion and influenced the outcome of the curriculum review.

It is expected that student participation in Forum discussions will continue.

In-case themes from interview:

Judy Hardy
• Curriculum often defined as content by colleagues
• Described teaching as a private yet public activity "We [academics] do not share information about our teaching"
• Knowledge in science disciplines is hierarchical
• Belief of transparency in decision making
• Argued collaboration with students does mean equal responsibility of all partners
• Staff had a responsibility to gate-keep some information to ensure students are not left vulnerable or unsure
• Funding was crucial in extra staffing to run SLW
• Principles of collaboration include transparency, trust, and respect

4.2.2 Case 2: Edinburgh Napier University

Institutional Overview

Edinburgh Napier University is a post-1992 University and has approximately 12,700 students. Its Academic Strategy 2020, approved by University Court in March 2014, contains four key objectives, including a commitment 'to deliver an excellent, personalised student experience' (Academic Strategy 2020, 2014:3). It expands on this further identifying a commitment to develop:

> *'Inspirational teaching that is based on active engagement and participatory learning, exemplified by: student-centred approaches that provide intellectual challenge and engage all students as co-creators of transformational learning experiences'* (p. 5)

The Strategy outlines a range of delivery strands in relation to this commitment. Whilst not explicitly mentioning student engagement with co-creating curriculum, it does reference the intention to deliver 'a strong pedagogic

framework that places students at the centre of learning with an active learning and conceptual change model that focuses on shaping the student learning experience rather than content delivery in curriculum and programme design' and developing a 'close partnership with the Napier Students' Association, especially in relation to student engagement, programme representatives and volunteering' (p. 6).

This perhaps infers a commitment to student engagement more in representation and quality assurance rather than partnership work. However, at the time of interview, the Academic Strategy and Practice Team at Edinburgh Napier (ASPEN) was piloting a new project called Students as Colleagues[3], whereby students would work with academics to peer-review teaching, mirroring the SaLT (Students as Teachers and Learners) programme coordinated by Alison Cook-Sather (2014) at Bryn Mawr in the US. This demonstrates a growing institutional investment in the Student as Partner agenda and could indicate a development of strategic intent to work more with students in co-creating learning and teaching.

Indicators of success include 'graduates who are confident, enquiring and possess the skills for employment and enterprise that are valued internationally' (Academic Strategy 2020, p.6). This will be quantifiably measured via leaver's destination statistics, NSS satisfaction levels, high completion rates, and a large proportion of good (degree) awards.

The example of practice investigated at Edinburgh Napier is a completed activity where staff and students worked together to redesign and co-create an Environmental Science module. This development took place in two phases (2011 and 2013) and was led by Professor Mark Huxham with input from a colleague who was, at the time, in the university's academic development team. This

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[3] Round table discussion at Improving University Teaching conference, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. July 2015.

example was included in my study as a result of a keynote presentation given by Mark at the PTAS annual forum at the University of Edinburgh in summer 2014. Mark and his colleague have published their collaborative work with students to redesign a fourth year honours module and much of the detail about what the team did is well documented (McArthur and Huxham, 2001; Huxham *et al,* 2015). This allowed additional space in my interview with Mark to explore his reflections on lessons learned from the collaboration and his views regarding the sustainability and scalability of this kind of work.

At the time of interview, Mark was Director of Academic Strategy at the University and had moved from the context of individual academic in his discipline to a senior leadership position. Since taking on this role, there has been a reorganisation and merger of ASPEN (Academic Strategy and Practice at Edinburgh Napier) and the Office of the Vice Principal (Academic) to form a new Department of Learning and Teaching in October 2015. Mark's role has since further developed to lead the establishment of a new Academy for Research, Innovation and Scholarship in Education (ARISE), which will be a forum for pedagogical research at Edinburgh Napier. Mark's research interests remain focussed on developing assessment and feedback as a dialogue rather than a judgement, and working in partnership with students so that staff and students can work together to shape the learning and teaching experience.

4.2.2.1 Environmental Science *Mark Huxham (staff)*

Mark and his colleague from education development worked together to review and co-create an existing fourth year honours module at Edinburgh Napier called 'Advances in Ecology'. They refer to this process of working as 'co-navigation' (Huxham *et al,* 2015) and draw strongly on mountaineering metaphors in their published work to describe the process and product of this collaboration. Mark's role in the collaboration was to provide subject expertise. Mark's colleague's role, who was from outside the discipline, was to provide perspective, expertise from education literature, and facilitation.

The collaboration with students progressed in two phases. In 2011, Mark and Jan worked with students who were due to take the Advances in Ecology course the following semester. This phase of the project was called 'Sharing Control' (McArthur and Huxham, 2001) and was supported by modest funding from the Higher Education Academy. In Phase 1, an open invitation was given to students to be involved but only a small number of students were able to participate over the summer period. A conscious decision was taken not to pay students for their input. The outcomes of this first phase of the collaboration focussed on changing the assessment for the module and the teaching and learning methods of the course. The participating students proposed a change to the existing assessment of the module to a take home exam and to 'collapse the traditional lecture-tutorial format and having "classes" that mixed and moved between lecturer input and group discussion' (McArthur and Huxham, 2001, p. 10). These proposals were put to the larger group of students who intended to take the module later in the semester and there was a class vote. All of the recommendations were agreed and adopted for the delivery of the module in the following semester. Much of the discussion between academics and students happened via social media, particularly Facebook.

Phase 2 of the collaboration took place with a new cohort in 2013. The whole cohort was asked to keep individual reflective diaries discussing their ideas regarding co-navigating the course. Students opted for fewer but longer blocks of contact time, resulting in an increase in contact hours. Alternative spaces were also used for this contact time, including outdoor 'sand walks', which provided opportunities for 'walk and talk' about advanced theory (Huxham *et al,* 2015, p. 534).

Three students volunteered to be co-researchers in the second phase, reviewing the data collected from ongoing feedback, evaluation, and reflective diary entries about the course and the process of co-navigation (detailed extensively in Huxham *et al,* 2015).

When interviewed, Mark's reflections focussed heavily on his motivations to work in collaboration with students, which correlated to his interest and commitment to critical pedagogy. He noted that the students involved in both phases were explicit about not wanting to develop content, because they felt it was 'his job' to do that. The recommendation from Phase 2 to introduce reviewing a published scientific article as part of the assessment was a choice considered by Mark to be much more difficult than the original structure yet he has found students have risen to the challenge.

In-case themes from interview:

Mark Huxham
- Motivations to collaborate relate to principles of critical pedagogy and to increase student engagement with teaching. Viewed co-creating curriculum as public discourse   - His academic identity and teaching philosophy explicitly informed rationale for collaborating with students   - Viewed curriculum as vehicle to carry learning and deliver strategic priorities   - Felt learning outcomes often used poorly   - Collaborations require time and space for dialogue and development of relationships   - Students involved in collaboration were uncomfortable discussing principles of collaboration   - Used continuous 'boot grit' (short and immediate feedback) evaluation throughout collaboration   - Student input was of a very high standard   - Impact of the collaboration was captured in student grades and student progression   - Scalability and sustainability of activity includes mapping across programmes

4.2.3 Case 3: University of Glasgow

Institutional Overview

The University of Glasgow, founded in 1451, is classed as an Ancient University in Scotland, and has approximately 27,400 students. All of the interviews conducted at this university were part of the pilot phase of my data collection. Individuals were identified through a mixture of internal workshops, existing collaborations with my supervisor, and in response to dissemination of my own research and the University's annual Learning and Teaching Conference in April 2014.

At the time of the interviews (in 2014), the University of Glasgow had pockets of activity of staff collaborating with students to co-create curricula. Since the interviews, the Students as Partners agenda has become more prominent and features in the University's Strategy 2015-2020, which states:

> 'Students are the lifeblood of our University: they are our partners in learning, our future colleagues and our ambassadors worldwide…We value our students as partners in their learning and development. We will…involve students thoroughly in programme design, enhancement and evaluation' (p.15)

The University also chose to focus on Active Student Participation in Learning and Teaching for the annual Learning and Teaching conference in April 2016 and has a newly developed network for staff and students focused on active student participation in learning and teaching. The Strategy outlines Institutional level targets for success relating to improving student satisfaction in the NSS.

I conducted interviews with students involved with two of the three examples of practice included within this case. Susan Deeley had published her results of working with students on co-assessment, and it was possible to review this before her interview. Peter Sneddon had presented his work on collaborating with students and staff across science disciplines to develop a science skills course. This interview led to me working with Peter and the rest of his team to co-author a journal article on the experiences and outcomes of their work (Woolmer *et al*, 2016). Both of these examples were completed at the time of interview. Niall Rogerson was working with selected students in the Dental

School to co-research and review the elective options available to fourth year students. This formed part of his own Masters research.

4.2.3.1 Public Policy: *Susan Deeley (staff) and Ruth Brown (student)*

Susan developed opportunities for Honours level students in a Public Policy degree programme to co-assess their oral presentations about their course placements. The co-assessment activity has taken place for the last three years on a Service Learning module (where students undertake placements in the community). All students in the class participate (from 7-24 students, depending on the cohort group) and they have both formative and summative assessments of their presentations.

Students are required to grade (and justify their grade and work) prior to meeting with their tutor, Susan, to compare and negotiate the final grade. Grades count towards their final degree mark and are a 5% proportion of the overall grade given.

In-case themes from interviews:

Susan Deeley	Ruth Brown
• Academic identity and teaching philosophy motivating factor to collaborate • Senior position enables influence in university process to ratify co-created module • Developing trust in collaboration was key and took time • The activity required negotiation of power	• Defined curriculum as outline and content • Defined co-creation should be flexible and creative • Impact of collaboration developed ability for self-reflection • Motivation for involvement included employability, 'sounded interesting', previously worked with tutor • Being involved gave opportunity to question and take ownership

• Curriculum includes literature, aims, learning outcomes, assessment; not how students are taught • Co-creation is defined as working together and sharing power • The collaborative process requires scaffolding • Impact of collaboration included developed student confidence • Experience and confidence of teacher important to be spontaneous in response to collaboration and manage risk	

4.2.3.2 Science Skills (Physics, Chemistry, Earth Sciences): *Peter Sneddon (staff) and Katherine Wallace (student)*

Peter and two other colleagues (one from chemistry and one from Geographical and Earth Sciences) received University funding (from the Learning and Teaching Development Fund) to develop an interdisciplinary science skills course. This was in response to evidence that students would benefit from additional input to develop their skills base. He (and colleagues) worked with three undergraduate students from each of the disciplines to identify and develop numerous examples and resources which form the basis of the course content and exam material for the course. The students responded to a recruitment advert and were selected in a competitive process.

The course ran as an optional 10 credit second year module in 2013-14 and then, due to positive feedback, was increased to a 20 credit module, available as an option to all first year students in the Science Faculty.

In-case themes from interview:

Peter Sneddon	Katherine Wallace
• *Funding enabled collaboration to happen* • *Interdisciplinarity was key to model of working* • *Defined and prioritised curriculum as course content* • *Time demands of collaboration require front loading* • *Limitations of what students can co-create. Not able to contribute to theoretical physics* • *Main motivation for collaboration was to gain student perspective* • *Challenge to engage with educational literature* • *Collaboration developed wealth of material, improved employability of students, developed a better course*	• *Motivation for involvement related to employability and becoming a teacher* • *Felt students do not think about meaning of curriculum* • *Impact of involvement has been an appreciation of what is involved in curriculum development* • *Enjoyed the autonomy to shape and deliver collaboration* • *Valued the trust that was developed in the collaboration*

4.2.3.3 Dentistry: *Niall Rogerson (staff)*

Niall redesigned the elective element of the Dental School curriculum in 4th year. Three level 4 students co-researched the student expectations about the electives programme in the school. Niall and the students co-designed the research questions, gathered data and, at the time of the interview, were analysing the outcome to inform the following year's elective programme.

In-case themes from interview:

Niall Rogerson
• Students worked as co-researchers   • Inclusive language was important to establish joint ownership   • Gave time to discuss roles and responsibilities in the research

- Impressed by student enthusiasm in being involved
- Collaboration had prompted learning and reflection about own teaching practice

4.2.4 Case 4: University of Lincoln

Institutional Overview

The University of Lincoln is a post-1992 university, changing from University of Lincolnshire and Humberside in 2001. It has a student population of approximately 13,400. Outlined in Lincoln's Strategic Plan and Learning and Teaching Plan, it is aiming to position itself as a sector leader in Student Engagement activity, building on the work of Professor Mike Neary (2008) which examines the conceptual ideas of Student as Producer. This site was chosen for inclusion in the study as it has received national recognition, through the HEA and through publications, for its work on Student Engagement and the conceptual notion of Student as Producer.

Lincoln's Strategic Plan (2011-16) includes a strategic objective to facilitate co-production of knowledge through research-engaged teaching:

> *'Strategic Objective 1: To continuously improve our learning environment based on personal engagement with all students through quality research-engaged teaching and learning where students create and develop new knowledge in collaboration with their lecturers.'* (p. 7)

This message is echoed in the institution's Teaching and Learning Plan (2011-16) which elaborates:

> *'At the University of Lincoln, our response is to adopt and implement the concept of Student as Producer as the central organising principle for teaching and learning, for both undergraduate and post graduate students. Student as Producer recognises that undergraduate students, as well as postgraduate students, have a key role to play in development of the academic culture and practice of higher education.'* (p. 1)

Whilst these strategic documents are coming to the end of their planning round, it is clear that the University of Lincoln has dedicated time and thought in

collaborating with students in teaching and learning for at least the last four years. Further still, the University also has a stand-alone Student Engagement Strategy (2012-16) and is the only university within my study to do so.

The University has published a Student Engagement Strategy and has invested in a Student Engagement Manager, Mr Dan Derricott, and a growing team of staff and graduate interns. The Student Engagement Team has recently (2014) moved, within the university structure, from the Vice Chancellor's Office to the Educational Development Unit. It holds a budget to support projects identified by staff within the university. The Student Engagement Team works predominantly with staff, supporting them to make contact and collaborate with students, rather than the team making that contact directly. This has been a strategic choice to help build capacity at local levels and reduce reliance on central support teams.

Analysis of the Student Engagement Strategy 2012-2016 highlights the next iteration of Lincoln's focus on Student Engagement. It moves away from the discourse of Student as Producer and introduces the concept of Student Engagement. This document focuses on actions that will enable 'engagement-ready students' (p. 4) and 'engagement-ready staff' (p. 5). It goes on to acknowledge the institutional desire to 'change the conversation':

> *'Consultation is a valid approach to student engagement in some cases, but often the quality of education will be most enhanced when students are actively involved in developing and implementing solutions alongside staff as partners and producers. We will work towards new models of student engagement and launch a number of projects that support students to demonstrate the value of their engagement.'* (p. 6)

The Student Engagement Strategy is supported by a Student Engagement Innovation Fund, providing seed-funding for small development projects. The biannual progress report for the strategy provides a comprehensive overview of the range of activity underway at Lincoln. This includes designated Student Engagement Champions for each academic school and professional service.

Time is allocated to individuals to perform this role in departments. The champions act as intermediaries between the central Student Engagement Team and staff and students within the department who may wish to set up collaborative projects. It is often the case that the champion is also developing and delivering the collaborative activity itself.

The Student Engagement Team facilitates opportunities for the champions to meet and share practice as a network of practitioners. There are reporting and accountability mechanisms in place for projects which receive funding. Upon further discussion with the Student Engagement Manager, the university is currently measuring success and impact of its Student Engagement activity through NSS scores. It was acknowledged in these discussions that there is a strong desire within the Student Engagement Team to look at other ways of measuring impact of work in this area, especially given the limited proxy of impact provided by the NSS. This has been identified as a priority area of work in the biannual progress report with an aspiration to support departments in their evaluation work via a research agency service which could 'facilitate face to face research sessions as an alternative to student surveys' (Biannual progress report, 2014, p.11).

The University of Lincoln actively rejects the notion of the student as consumer, influenced strongly by the work of Professor Neary (2008, 2012). To date, the University has focussed predominantly on student involvement in research and quality enhancement processes throughout the University. It is now expanding its focus to include students participating in curriculum development and review. This has been enabled by the recent alignment of the Student Engagement Team with the Educational Development Unit.

Examples of staff and students co-creating curricula were identified by the University's Student Engagement Manager, Mr. Dan Derricott. He and his team

have a key mediating function in developing and delivering the University's Student Engagement Strategy.

4.2.4.1 Drama: *Lisa Gaughan (staff) and Linford Butler (student)*

A team of staff and students was set up to review the first year curriculum for Drama and Dance programmes at the University in 2013. In response to student feedback that there were difficulties with transition into the programmes, the collaborative review was instigated by the Head of School.

Terms of Reference were written by the Student Engagement Champion, Lisa Gaughan, for the team, which was made up of staff and students from across both programme areas and across year groups. Students were sent an open invitation to participate and were latterly approached to be involved; Linford Butler was one of the students asked to be involved. He was a School Student Representative at the time and known to Lisa.

The team researched programme structures from other universities and produced a recommended model for redesigning the first year curriculum, which included streams of activity and the development of academic literacy skills. The outcomes of the collaborative initiative have not been implemented due to further restructuring within the Faculty, and there is scope to revisit the work of the team. The model needs to be revisited as a result of this restructuring.

In-case themes from interviews:

Lisa Gaughan	Linford Butler
• *Academic identity and teaching philosophy was important motivator to collaborate* • *Drama as discipline is collaborative and risk taking* • *Close relationship between staff and students in Drama already exists due to nature of 'making things together'* • *Strong sense of ownership of the course already exists amongst students* • *Wants student to know lecturers are human and approachable* • *Time constraints caused process to "fall apart" and not complete* • *Felt like the team of staff and students were 'all even'* • *Collaboration has influenced her approach to other areas of her teaching* • *Wants to work harder to engage students*	• *Motivated to join collaboration to develop a better first year to help transition* • *Wanted to leave a legacy after graduation* • *Is a student rep. and engaged with Students' Union* • *Drama as discipline requires collaborative working and listening to one another so informed how the team worked* • *No discussion about the process of collaborative working. Implicit expectations set by previous working in the discipline* • *Felt joint ownership of the collaboration but that final decisions should be made by staff* • *Motivated by the scope of work (whole programme review) and not just being asked to address small changes*

4.2.4.2 Youth Justice: *Susan Bond-Taylor (staff) and Abi Ogle, Kirsty Groom and Freya Jeffrey (students)*

A team of students (Abi Ogle, Kirsty Groom, and Freya Jeffrey) are working with a staff member (Sue Bond-Taylor) in Criminology to develop a new module on Youth Justice. The intention, at the time of interview, was for this module to be offered as a 2nd year optional module from semester 2, 2016. The co-development of this module was instigated by the staff member involved and relates to her research interests. The module had received approval from the School of Social and Political Sciences, and Susan had received funding from the university's Student Engagement Innovation Fund to collaboratively design the

module with a team of students. Susan is also the School's Student Engagement Champion.

Students were invited to apply to join the module development team. This was managed through a letter of application and interview process. As a result, students from 2nd and 3rd year were involved in the development team.

The development team are also working with a third party, external to the university – the Youth Justice Team. This external relationship added another dimension to the collaborative relationship involved in developing the new module.

At the time of the interview, the team of staff and students had been working together for approximately three months and were still exploring examples of similar modules at other universities. The students are particularly keen to draw upon site visits to community settings (including a secure unit) and to explore how the student learning from these visits can be developed into learning resources for the module. The staff and student team had met a number of times to brainstorm ideas, share findings from desk research, and collate priority tasks for future development.

In-case themes from interviews:

Susan Bond-Taylor	Abi Ogle, Kirsty Groom and Freya Jeffrey
Academic identity and teaching philosophy informed approach to collaboration *Opportunism, funding, timing* *Awareness of inclusivity in process* *Students motivated to put theory in to practice* *Desire to hand over more to students*	*Motivated to develop links, improve employability* *Want learning that is applied* *Process is slower than expected* *Different opinions on decision making processes* *Additional development opportunities*

• *Students already confident* • *Meetings are informal and collaborative* • *Process takes up more time but outcome will be better* • *Motivated by interest in youth empowerment* • *Curriculum development is a reflexive process* • *Highly impressed with students* • *Process of collaboration not discussed*	• *View curriculum as subject matter and content* • *Reflected their work was looking at 'how it is taught as well as what is taught'* • *Greater understanding of curriculum development process* • *Process not discussed* • *Approaching on learning differently as result of collaboration* • *Impact: an interesting course that others want to take* • *Impact: gives you an edge on your CV*

4.2.5 Case 5: Queen Margaret University

Institutional Overview

Queen Margaret University (QMU) is a small, post-1992 university based in Edinburgh. It has 5,200 students and received full university title in 2007 although it has had degree awarding powers since 1992. The University's Strategic Plan 2012-15 describes how QMU has developed around three academic flagship areas: health and rehabilitation, sustainable business and culture, and creativity. Within these flagship areas, QMU has a particular focus on inter-professional practice. The University's Strategic Plan consists of eight strategic objectives. There is no mention of student engagement within the strategy but objective 1.v states the university will:

> 'Involve students, employers, external peers and other stakeholders at an appropriate level in programme design, monitoring, assessment and audit' (Strategic Plan 2012-15:1).

This objective will be measured by student satisfaction scores from the NSS.

The example of practice investigated in this case was identified through existing literature and was included as part of my pilot study. Eurig Scandrett is a lecturer in Sociology and joined the University from Friends of the Earth after collaborating with them to develop and deliver the Environmental Justice module. Eurig and his colleagues in Sociology base much of their teaching around the principles of popular education, drawing on ideas from critical pedagogy.

4.2.5.1 Environmental Justice: *Eurig Scandrett (staff)*

Eurig developed a new Environmental Justice course with learners who were also community activists and leaders (Scandrett, 2010). At the time of developing the module, he worked for Friends of the Earth and delivered the course in collaboration with academics at QMU. The course was grounded in principles of Popular Education and therefore foregrounded learner knowledge and experience within the curriculum.

The course focussed on developing skills of community activists to enable them to challenge inequalities within their living and working environments. Staff and students worked together to identify the priorities students would need to address in their community leadership roles. Through discussion and negotiation, the curriculum content was agreed upon. The project did encounter disagreement on what content to focus on, requiring staff and students to take time to revisit the rationales for decisions on curriculum content and agree how to move forward. Where possible, decisions about curriculum were reached by consensus, but Eurig did note that staff exercised a veto to retain a portion of the curriculum which students felt was unnecessary.

Eurig and colleagues received lottery funding to develop and deliver the course, and so was not replicable once this funding ended. Much of this approach now informs a new module at QMU about Gender, Masculinities, and Violence, which currently runs in partnership with Women's Aid, Scotland.

In-case themes from interview:

Eurig Scandrett
• *Principles of popular education informed course design*
• *Academic identity and teaching philosophy motivator for collaboration*
• *Creating space in bureaucracy of course approval process to work in collaboration*
• *Co-creation of curricula involves working with different knowledges*
• *Learning outcomes can seem overly deterministic and can be counter-educational*
• *Defined curriculum as being created from different perspectives and personal experiences*
• *Curriculum developed by students, pedagogy developed by staff*
• *Co-creation has to be dialogic. Market forces in HE are a threat to this*
• *Appropriateness of lectures should not be abandoned*
• *Impact for students includes asserting authority and challenging systems*
• *Student resistance to co-creation is an issue: comfortable with 'banking' knowledge*

4.2.6 Case 6: University College Dublin

Institutional Overview

University College Dublin (UCD) is Ireland's largest university with over 32,000 students. The University was founded in 1854 and received a Royal Charter in 1908 and is considered to be a research intensive university. The University's Strategy 2015-20 states its mission to:

> '…contribute to the flourishing of Dublin, Ireland, Europe and the world through the excellence and impact of our research and scholarship, the quality of our graduates and our global engagement; providing a supportive community in which every member of the University is enabled to achieve their full potential.' (p. 7)

The University's Strategy 2015-20 further describes its vision for UCD students:

> 'Our graduates will be imbued with a knowledge of the past, and will be capable of critically interrogating the present and of imagining the future. Through a holistic student-focused and research-led educational experience which has both breadth and depth, they will be equipped with

> the knowledge, skills, experience and attitudes they need to flourish in present and future Irish and global societies.' (p. 20)

Of the ten objectives listed in the strategy, one objective relates explicitly to the student learning experience. The objective states that UCD will provide:

> '…an educational experience that defines international best practice …. a UCD education will be further enriched by the quality of our research and innovation and will develop our students' capacity for critical enquiry and original thinking. This approach will extend across all of our student cohorts, occasional, flexible, undergraduate and graduate, whether in taught programmes or in research. Recognising the value of diversity in the University community, we will systematically build on this diversity for student learning and institutional excellence. Our inclusive approach to student learning will extend into the wider University and community life.' (p.14)

Whilst the university strategy does not provide any overt commitment to work in partnership with students on learning and teaching issues, the University offers Fellowships in Teaching and Academic Development. These Fellowships offer a reward and development mechanism to 'support key academic staff with both the pedagogic expertise and the leadership capacity to effect transformational change in teaching, learning and assessment practices both in discipline-specific areas and thematically, across the institution.

Although UCD is out-with the UK, I was keen to include the work of Niamh Moore-Cherry as an example in my study, as she was a recipient of the University's Teaching Fellowship in 2007, and more recently, Senior Fellowship award in 2009. Her approach of developing curricula with large cohorts of first year students as well as working with senior and junior levels of students to co-create curricula is quite unique in the existing literature.

The example was identified through published materials and a conference workshop delivered by Niamh at the 2014 QAA Enhancement Themes conference in Glasgow. I had originally only intended to discuss Niamh's co-creation of her

first year geography module. Within the interview, however, Niamh also discussed a more recent example of collaborating with Masters and second year geography students to co-create curricula, which is included as one of the 17 illustrative example of practice. It was not possible to include participating students in interviews for either of these examples.

4.2.6.1 Geography Example A: *Niamh Moore-Cherry (staff)*

Niamh worked with third and second year Geography students to redesign the structure of a first year introductory human geography module, including the redesign of the virtual learning environment (VLE). This was in response to Niamh actively working to increase student engagement in the course and re-energise her own teaching of the course. Niamh and another colleague received university funding to pilot activity with the class and used the funds to recruit and pay students (who had previously taken the module one or two years earlier) to review and redesign the module.

The selected students were asked to design the course they would like to take. They worked over the summer and developed four case studies based on contemporary issues within human geography – globalisation, migration, contested landscapes, and power. The students designed new learning materials for each case study by developing written and video materials for the VLE. The first year class (of approximately 400 students) interacted with these VLE resources in small groups (online and face to face). The output of these small group discussions was then used by Niamh as a basis for further discussion in lecture material and tutorial groups.

4.2.6.2 Geography Example B: *Niamh Moore-Cherry (staff)*

Niamh teaches a second year geography skills course that includes a fieldwork component. She worked with Masters level students and second year students taking the course to co-develop field work for the second year group. Further

discussion has been published in Moore-Cherry *et al*, (2015). Niamh was particularly motivated for undergraduate students to see how their specific skills training fitted in with wider teaching, learning, and research in geography.

The group of Masters students developed field trip proposals and presented them to the second year group. The undergraduates were then asked to choose the field trip of most relevance to them and then collaborate with the Masters students in the field. This approach was intended to empower both cohorts. Niamh collected mid-term feedback from the second year group, asking them about their experiences of co-creating curricula in this way. Student responses were mixed. Many found the approach exciting, but there was also significant resistance from elements of the group, with some describing this as a 'cop-out'. This midterm feedback was a crucial point in the collaboration as it enabled open discussion and dialogue about the purpose and value of working this way whilst also acknowledging points of resistance within the class community. The Masters students were overall very positive about their experiences of co-creating curricula, noting that it was the first opportunity they had been given to work autonomously and given such responsibility.

In-case themes from interview:

Niamh Moore-Cherry
• *Defined co-creation as a bridge between perspectives*
• *Wanted to re-energise teaching and align with goals of module*
• *Faced challenges of working with large, first year classes*
• *Defined curriculum as quietly contentious and 'unseen'*
• *Few spaces in HE to discuss curriculum*
• *Funding enabled collaboration to happen*
• *Need for inclusive partnerships*
• *Staff scaffolded process but gave flexibility*
• *Requirement for student 'readiness' to work in collaboration. Need to plan for this*
• *Curriculum involves everything: content, interactions*
• *Academic identity and teaching philosophy are motivators to collaborate*

- *Academic autonomy gives flexibility to be creative*
- *Prefers term co-creation to partnership*
- *Student resistance occurred in working with whole cohorts*
- *Socialisation to higher education is important to prepare students for co-creation*
- *Impacts included 'students blossomed', 'became leaders in their group', and developed autonomy. Whole cohort more engaged*
- *Impact: developed research profile, influenced promotion*
- *Scalability and inclusivity*

4.2.7 Case 7: University of Winchester

Institutional Overview

The University of Winchester is a small, post-1992 university with a small student population of 6,800. It has a Christian foundation and retains a strong identity as a values-driven institution. Their current Strategic Plan 2015-20 focuses on sustainability – of the university and of the planet. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the history of the University, the Strategic Plan feels quite different to those analysed for other cases. The Vice Chancellor's introduction discusses how the University's 'students are right at the heart of [the] institution: we treasure them all and will work in partnership with them, ever more creatively, in shaping their education and their future' (p. 1).

To deliver on their commitment to 'world-leading values-driven higher education', objective 1 commits the university to 'be one of the leaders in the university sector for student engagement' (p 6). The University Strategy is further developed in the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2015-2018. Shorter than other strategy statements, it still includes student engagement as one of the key development themes for the strategy.

Winchester has received recognition from the Higher Education Academy and, like Lincoln, it was chosen for inclusion in my study because of this external reputation for student engagement and collaboration. It operates the Student Fellows Scheme (SFS), which is a partnership between the University's

Educational Development Unit and the Students' Union. The Student Fellows Scheme grew out of the Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment (TESTA) initiative, started in 2013. In its second year of operation, the SFS scheme funded 60 projects. The scheme's website describes the programmes:

> 'The purpose of the SFS is to recruit, train and empower students who can work alongside academics and professional staff on educational development projects. SFS projects address a range of topics which vary in scope and size but must be relevant to enhancing the student learning experience. The Student Fellows themselves have to be highly committed to their projects. In return, they receive experience and insight about academic processes in Higher Education, project management skills, research training and experience, dissemination opportunities, and a bursary of £600.'

In addition to the bursaries offered to students, the scheme also provides training in social science research methods and provides opportunities for students and staff to discuss and disseminate their work.

Dr. Stuart Sims, Research and Teaching Fellow and one of the co-ordinators for the Student Fellows Scheme, was the primary contact to help with identifying and contacting interviewees. Part of the selection process involved informal discussions with Stuart to identify appropriate examples which would correspond with the focus of my research. I co-ordinated my interviews to take place around the time of the SFS annual dissemination conference. This provided a useful insight into the programme as a whole and the range of collaborative activities taking place at Winchester.

The examples of practice at Winchester differ from the other cases included in the study in that they are all student-initiated projects, and all of the examples of practice investigated here were ongoing at the point of interviews. End of project reports have been obtained where available.

Due to the distance travelled to undertake interviews, my data collection at this site was quite compressed. This resulted in me being able to only interview those available during my visit; therefore some examples of practice presented below only captured one perspective of the activity even though the collaboration was current.

4.2.7.1 Law*: Laura Hutber, Chloe Murthwaite, Dominic Chapman (students)*

Laura, Chloe, and Dominic are working with the Programme Leader in Law to develop new resources to be included in the Law curriculum. Laura instigated the project in 2013-14 in response to her desire to make Law, a traditionally text based subject, more interactive and accessible.

At the time of interview, the students were in the process of refining two resources with academics – a problem booklet and a card game – to supplement the existing curriculum. In addition to the development of these resources, the students were working hard to ensure sustainability of their resources and future co-creation of curricula. To this end, the students were exploring the possibility of establishing a Student Consultancy Board which would be a 'go to' point for future collaborations on learning resources once the students had graduated. The end of project report indicates that this mechanism has been established.

Chloe will enter her final year in 2016-17 and intends to stay involved as a Student Fellow and will be evaluating the usefulness of the resources developed.

In-case themes from interview:

Laura Hutber, Chloe Murthwaite, Dominic Chapman
• *Perception of discipline: too text based*
• *Accessibility for students with dyslexia motivated focus of collaboration*
• *Addressing sustainability by establishing a consultancy panel*

- *Identified as super-engaged students*
- *Saw staff members as gatekeepers in decision making, require negotiating skills. Power and decision making*
- *Time commitment was big*
- *Enjoyed the development of relationship with wider academic community*
- *Developed academic identity: challenging perceptions of what a student is*
- *Impact: Increased understanding of opportunities and challenges in curriculum development*
- *Impact: Increased confidence, new conversations with academics, employability*
- *Impact: valued the process as well as product of collaboration*

4.2.7.2 Archaeology: *Nick Thorpe (staff) and Georgina Heatley (student)*

Georgina is investigating the added value of the field trip experience in archaeology. Working in collaboration with Nick Thorpe, Georgina is investigating how the theory of preferred learning styles helps us to understand how and why students benefit from practical learning experiences. She is highly motivated by the idea that higher education should involve active learning.

Due to time constraints, this interview was carried out with Nick and Georgina at the same time. Nick and I met for 30 minutes before Georgina joined. For this reason, I have analysed Nick's comments separately.

Nick discussed how this collaboration was providing new insights into his own views about the value of field work. He acknowledged how interesting it was to hear about student 'first impressions' of visiting sites, with which he was very familiar.

At the time of the interview, Georgina and Nick had worked together to undertake focus groups, interviews, and questionnaires to gather student views on the topic. The end of project report indicates that all students surveyed would prefer more opportunities for practical, field based learning. Georgina has

proposed the University considers how and where experiential learning opportunities can be offered across different degree programmes.

In-case themes from interviews:

Nick Thorpe	Georgina Heatley
• *Discipline was fragmented due to BA and BSc degree routes* • *Required to manage student expectations about what can be offered* • *Staff are gatekeepers to conversations and decision making* • *Working with students gives perspectives on familiar (dig) sites* • *High impact of learning for students through fieldwork* • *Time demands to supervise student* • *Product of collaboration provides useful data to justify funding for fieldwork in post fees environment*	• *Investigating learning styles and applied learning* • *Time demand felt manageable* • *Process of working with staff was supervisory and respectful* • *Received training for social science research from Student Fellows Scheme* • *Impact: research methods, insight to other disciplines, communication skills, insight to own learning* • *Want to make a difference to the course for future students* • *No discussion about process of working in collaboration*

4.2.7.3 Sociology: *Eli Nixon-Davingoff (student)*

At the time of interview, Eli was surveying other students in Sociology to explore perceptions about contact time throughout the programme. The motivations for the research topic came from Eli feeling concerned with a discrepancy between contact hours listed in the course handbook and the actual contact time students received. Although contact hours were intended to be a notional number of hours, Eli wanted to explore whether students believed they were receiving an appropriate amount of contact time. Eli was part-way through analysing her data and was unsure about her next steps with her recommendations at the time of our interview. The findings from her data showed that the majority of students surveyed were relatively happy with the amount of contact time they received

on the course and did not wish for any changes to be made to the existing timetable. In parallel to this, nearly half of all respondents indicated they felt they received less contact time than the notional three hours listed in course handbooks.

The end of project report suggests the university should address the disparity between what is described in course handbooks and the actual number of formal contact hours. Eli acknowledged both in her interview and her end of project report that these are notional hours, but highlighted the need for greater transparency and dialogue between staff and students about such codified information in higher education.

Eli was working with a member of staff who was not available on the date I visited the case site to conduct interviews. Acknowledging that Eli's comments present only a partial view of the collaboration in this example collaboration, it is worth noting that she talked about how she and the staff partner 'were not on the same page'. This was due to different understandings about the nature of contact time (being actual or notional) and Eli feeling as though her concerns were not entirely listened to.

In-case themes from interviews:

Eli Nixon-Davingoff
• *Frustrated at discrepancy in listed contact hours and practice*
• *Discussed students as customers*
• *Described being 'Not on same page' with staff partner*
• *Links with Student Fellows Project to discuss progress*
• *Involved in dissemination of research*
• *Impact included gaining a wider understanding of university, developed confidence, gained authentic insight into research process*
• *Valued access to community of other student fellows*

4.2.7.4 Modern Liberal Arts: *Iain Tibury (Tid) (student) and Thomas Norgaard (staff)*

Iain, known as Tid, is developing a 'hypothetical' module to be delivered as part of the university's new Modern Liberal Arts (MLA) programme. The module looks to address the relationship between the body and the mind in higher education, which is influenced by the Tid's extensive professional background in the Performing Arts. Tid's research is exploring how education has come to privilege the mind as the primary focus of learning. At the time of the interview, Tid was working with his academic partner, Thomas Norgaard, to turn his hypothetical ideas into an elective module for the Values Studies programme for the next academic year. This has resulted in the development of potential reading lists as well as module aims and learning outcomes.

An end of project report was not available for this example of practice and no further information about the completion of this project has been provided.

4.2.7.5 Using Response Papers to inform seminars (*Thomas Norgaard, staff)*

During my interview with Thomas, he discussed his use of student response papers[4] in his classes as a means to co-create curricula with his students. Thomas provides weekly reading for each seminar on his 'Values Studies' course (an interdisciplinary course which addresses moral issues within society). Students are required to write 'response papers' to the reading provided by the tutor and submit these to the tutor 40 hours before the seminar. He uses the material and ideas from the students' response papers as the basis for discussion in the seminar sessions. All students participate each week and the submissions are compulsory.

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[4]   (*note: this example was given during interview with staff member involved in MLA new module, see above)

In-case themes from interviews:

Iain Tibury (Tid)	Thomas Norgaard
• *Academic identity rooted in liberal arts and co-construction* • *Previous experiences of co-creating curricula* • *Defined co-creating curricula as Informal and respectful relationship with staff partner* • *Values permeate all of course content* • *Passion for subject and enjoyment to engage in discussion with student to co-create module* • *Value for student is Insight into university processes* • *Student Fellows scheme gives legitimacy to the collaboration* • *Future aspirations to work more collaboratively with other students*	• *Defined collaboration as staff role is to stand on side line and guide* • *Timeframe too tight to deliver new module* • *Set high expectations of what he wanted to deliver* • *Enjoys the space to be creative in education and to explicitly discuss values* • *Talked about curriculum as the embodiment of ideals. Can't cover everything* • *Interested in interdisciplinarity and the purpose of higher education*

4.2.7.6 Forensic Studies: *Lauren Pollington and Holly Alexander (students)*

Lauren and Holly, along with the Programme Leader for Forensic Studies, are exploring a number of different strategies to introduce more practical and experiential forms of learning in forensics. Drawing upon focus groups with current cohorts of first year students, Lauren and Holly worked with their staff partner to discuss the outcomes of their data collection. Their data showed that students had identified other aspects of their programme curriculum where practical experiences could be introduced, and showed nuanced understandings of opportunities for experiential and problem-based learning in and outside of the classroom environment.

It is unclear from the end of project report exactly how the outcomes of the research will be carried forward beyond Lauren and Holly's statements of student interest to have more opportunities provided.

In-case themes from interview:

Lauren Pollington and Holly Alexander
• *Desire for more practical learning in programme*
• *Authority*
• *Super-engaged*
• *Impact: confidence, influence in wider university, greater engagement in learning*
• *Time demands*
• *Ownership and belonging*
• *Want to make difference and leave a legacy*
• *Respect*

4.3 Part B: Cross Case Themes

"It's very easy in many environments to lose touch with your students. Never really talk to them properly, you know, actually find out what they're interested in and where they are. It's really easy for you to go off and create syllabi according to your particular research interests …"

Thomas, staff, University of Winchester

4.3.1 Introduction

Part B presents cross-case analysis of data collected via interviews with participants involved in co-creating curricula. These examples of practice illustrate the micro level of collaborative activity, or what Michael Fielding has called the 'actualities of encounter' (Fielding, 2015) of entering and navigating such partnerships. This section of analysis is a 'zooming in', a close up investigation of what takes place that is nested in the 'bigger picture' analysis of the macro level environment of each case presented in Part A.

Within the seven cases included in my study, I identified 17 examples of practice across these sites. I conducted 21 interviews with a total of 25 participants, and of those participants, 12 were staff and 13 were students.

It is important to note that it was not possible to interview staff and students for all examples of practice due to access constraints. Some of the examples of practice had already finished and students had graduated prior to my interviews. Where it was possible to interview staff and students involved in the same activity, this is highlighted in Table 4, chapter 3. Student and staff views on co-creating curricula are presented and discussed in cross-case analysis arising from the interviews. Participants are identified in discussion by first name, role, and institution.

Each interview was recorded, transcribed, coded separately, and analysed using Nvivo software. This process identified a total of 55 code descriptors and

allowed for in-case analysis (described in Part A). After assigning all of the code descriptors for each interview it was possible to identify relationships *between* descriptors (i.e. topics that were discussed together in interviews such as motivation and impact), identify repetitive themes, and group these 55 descriptors into emerging, cross-case themes. Six themes were eventually identified through this iterative process and are discussed in detail below.

In arriving at these six themes, I was consciously looking for the following in my analysis:

- topics I had specifically explored in my interviews, as identified in my interview schedule, namely issues of definitions, and perceptions of value and impact
- topics that occurred frequently
- topics that emerged that I had not predicted or outlined in my interview schedule
- topics that either confirmed or contradicted elements of current literature

The cross-case themes emerging from analysis include:

a) Definitions of curriculum
b) Definitions of collaborative activity
c) Establishing collaborations: processes and products
d) Motivations
e) Value and impact
f) Institutional context

4.3.2 Definitions of curriculum

Giving staff participants the time to explore their definitions of curriculum provided a rich and complex set of responses. Providing descriptors from other empirical research proved useful for participants to revisit, pick apart, or affirm the original definitions they had provided about curriculum. They explored a

wide terrain on this topic and talked about curriculum in a number of ways, using terms such as *content*, *process*, *a link between theory and practice*, as *public discourse* and as being *of relevance to the learner and to society*. Many participants found articulating a definition quite challenging, with several commenting on how this was the first time they had been asked to do such a thing.

In some instances, it seemed that staff participants found it easier to articulate what they did not consider as curriculum. Niamh from UCD argued:

> *"I think it's everything. I think it's not the course syllabus, it's not what I hand out in the first class. I think that is a framework for…I see the syllabus as the sort of scaffolding, if you like… but the curriculum for me is everything that goes on".*

Mark from Edinburgh Napier goes as far as to almost reject the term, noting

> *"…I don't often use the term because either people interpret it as content or it's almost everything else in which case often it's more useful to be a bit more specific about what you mean."*

A small number of staff participants were clear that their personal views on curriculum encapsulated the idea of the wider learning experience and the importance of context. For example, Judy at Edinburgh described curriculum as being *"everything associated with teaching, whatever that might be, a course or a programme"* and Thomas at Winchester talked about the curriculum being fit for the time and place in which it was being taught: *"….when I create a curriculum I try to come up with something that will fit that particular place and time and that will do something meaningful for the here and now."*

There was extensive discussion with participants about the issue of content and knowledge within the curriculum. Often these terms were used interchangeably in the interviews, but further exploration revealed a more nuanced interpretation of the relationship (and difference) between content of syllabi

and knowledge production. For example, Peter from Glasgow gave his initial definition of curriculum as being "… *the course content. It means 'what am I going to teach?* During the diamond ranking exercise, Peter went on to explore the importance of student involvement in shaping the course and the influences quality assurance and subject benchmark statements had on his teaching.

Sue from Lincoln talked about the importance of knowledge production and the processes involved. *"We are in the process of knowledge production here …I'm interested in the processes of power relations and how that constructs facts, so I want our students to be involved in that process of producing the facts that we then share…"* Her view of knowledge is confined to facts and does not explore constructionist ideas of knowledge being co-constructed. In contrast, Mark at Edinburgh Napier explored the tension of defining curriculum as content by noting his concern with fixed or narrow definitions of curriculum. *"I don't really like narrow conceptions of curriculum around content because if we think about teaching and learning in that way it inevitably limits what we're able to do..."*

Whilst staff participants did not use the conceptual language identified through Fraser and Bosanquet's (2006) research (outlined in chapter two), they did articulate the nuances and relationships between the process and product of curriculum, albeit in slightly different ways from each other. Eurig from Queen Margaret described his definition of curriculum as including *"the generation of knowledge through debate, through experience, through self-investigation, through research…"* noting that *"…the pedagogy is designed to have at least some of that knowledge generation come from the students"*. Acknowledging that her first response to defining curriculum was to focus on content, Sue from Lincoln later reflected: *"I would probably think of the curriculum as the content of the programme that we teach.... But when I start thinking about what I do involves more than just the content. It involves.... The learning process as well..."*

Whilst I did not ask for participants to identify disciplinary conventions in relation to curriculum conceptualisation, it did occur spontaneously in several staff responses. This includes participants outlining how disciplinary knowledge is a key part of their definition of curriculum. Niamh talked about the link between geography and personal experience being integral to the curriculum, noting "*…for me, you can't leave geography at the classroom door. It's like your life is…you know, geography's everywhere. So for me, that's how I would define curriculum.*". Judy at Edinburgh reflected on how disciplinary conventions within science often lead to a dominant focus on content "*… particularly the physical sciences, syllabus and content are very, very important [because] the discipline is in many ways hierarchical [and] most of our degrees are externally accredited and that pretty much defines what we teach in the first three years*". Thomas at Winchester reflected on the new Liberal Arts programme at his institution in comparison to other programmes at different universities noting that it "*[invited] the students most fundamentally to participate in shaping the curriculum*".

Perhaps the most striking response to this topic in interviews was the fact that nearly all staff participants reflected back to me that they had never really thought about defining the curriculum (nor had they been asked the question). This suggests that the silence about curriculum that Barnett and Coate discuss in their work was the reality for most of the participants I interviewed. Niamh described curriculum as being "*quietly contentious*" and Judy reflected that teaching was "*one of the most private public activities that we do*". Sue at Lincoln admitted in her interview that it was "*something I've never been asked before*".

Additionally, participants talked about there not being time and space to have these conversations with colleagues. Niamh talked about a lack of interest in, and distance from, discussing curriculum in a research intensive university and her need to create spaces for this dialogue outside of formal committee structures. Judy and Mark both talked about the need to discuss curriculum

across the whole programme and, again, the difficulty they experience in achieving this.

> *"...we have this explicit focus on programmes when trying to get teams to come together to think about things from a programme perspective rather than a modular perspective.... I'm hoping people will have more time to engage in this kind of conversation actually."*

> Mark, staff, Edinburgh Napier

Offering the space to reflect on original comments about curriculum was useful. When carrying out the diamond ranking exercise using the Fraser and Bosanquet descriptors, *s*ome staff participants, (Judy, Mark, Niamh, Eurig, and Susan) reflected upon their original definitions during the exercise. Others revised their definition of curriculum as a result of the exercise.

For example, Susan at Glasgow originally offered *"Curriculum to me is a kind of broad, all-encompassing term that includes all of the literature and the aims and the learning outcomes; the assessment. ... I don't know whether I would include the way in which it was taught"*. Noting the challenge of the sorting task, she reflected later in the interview*: "I did say earlier that it is not about the "how to" and that it is more about the content but in actual fact, ...I suppose I've had quite a narrow view of what curriculum is..."*.

This example of discussion with participants reaffirms the importance of my decision to avoid normative descriptors of curriculum. Had I presented any one particular view or definition of curriculum and not provided the diamond ranking exercise, I may have missed the rich, reflective discussion that participants engaged in.

The diamond ranking exercise also prompted participants to reflect upon the role of departmental, institutional, and sectoral regulation and quality assurance measures. Nearly all staff participants talked about finding ways to operate within institutional frameworks without feeling constrained by them. Eurig at

Queen Margaret talked about his experiences of *"finding space within the bureaucracy"* and being practical about the constraints within the system. Others described the value of writing a module outline that was open enough to enable co-creating curricula with students at a later/future date.

Eurig at Queen Margaret's and Judy at Edinburgh went on to discuss how the dominance of focussing on learning outcomes can have unintended consequences and has potential to inhibit the collaborative process. Judy commented that *"Learning outcomes,… if they are done properly then they are great but they are often not done properly"* and Eurig described the misuse of learning outcomes as *'counter-educational'*:

> *"The idea of how deterministic learning outcomes should be, seems to be a default position in module descriptors which seem to be about protecting yourself in a market. […] So it is counter-educational. It defeats the point of education as an exploration, as an exploratory process."*
>
> Eurig, staff, Queen Margaret

Mark at Edinburgh Napier has elaborated on this idea in Huxham *et al* (2015) arguing that co-creation of curricula requires a more fluid, creative process to learning and, in doing so, offers a potential challenge to the dominance of learning outcomes and Biggs'(1996) concept of constructive alignment.

Student reflections on what the term curriculum meant to them varied. Most responded in a way that reflected a view of curriculum as content that could be codified and described in course handbooks and syllabi. Linford at Lincoln was the only exception to this in his description of curriculum as the wider learning experience, including co-curricular activities. This was particularly important, in his view, for drama students who were expected to attend and participate in productions in local theatres.

It was not possible to interview the students who worked with Mark at Edinburgh Napier as they had graduated. However, he offered his own reflections on how students responded to co-creating curricula, summarising their perception that Mark was the 'expert' in terms of content on the course and they did not wish to engage with that. Rather, they wanted to focus on the processes involved in redesigning the module.

4.3.3 Defining Collaborative Activity

Following discussions about curriculum, I invited participants to explore their definitions of collaborations between staff and students. A key rationale of my approach has been the intention to see how practitioners describe their work; I wanted them to respond in a space where they were free to express their narratives without me, as researcher, prefacing the discussion with current policy narratives or normative definitions taken from the literature. For this reason, I was careful not to begin discussions with references to current policy discourse such as the substantial work focused on 'Students as Partners'.

4.3.3 The Use of Proxies and Metaphors

It is interesting to note that, with the exception of my discussion with Dan Derricottt at Lincoln, the phrase 'Students as Partners' was not mentioned by anyone. Judy and Niamh actively rejected the notion of partnership in their discussions, describing an unease with the suggestion that it implies equality. Also of importance, there was no particular definition or description that came up more frequently than others.

In the absence of consensus around terminology, I was interested in my analysis to reflect on the range of descriptions given by participants throughout interviews. The descriptions of collaborations given by staff and students included *'working together', 'co-creation', 'co-navigation', 'working with colleagues', 'a bridge between perspectives', and 'working in a relational way'*.

Sue from Lincoln described the process of working with students as providing opportunities to relate:

> *"...you can only effectively teach them if you have good relationships with them, and so this project is an opportunity to work in a relational way with students in a way that I'd love to in the rest of the curriculum but there are too many of them that you don't get the opportunity to."*
>
> *Sue, staff, Lincoln.*

Participants used proxies and metaphors to describe their collective efforts and terminology was used interchangeably. Participants seemed less interested in what to call the activity and more interested in talking about the principles and values that underpinned their work (whether implicit or explicit). This did not appear to inhibit the progress or success of collaborations. It offers an interesting challenge to the current research literature (and researchers) concerned with defining terms surrounding co-creation of curricula; in practice, this doesn't appear to be as crucial as I had anticipated. It certainly does not indicate an emergence of consensus around definitions and language. If anything, it highlights that practitioners are working within the 'messiness' of terminology quite successfully.

4.3.3.1   Principles in Practice

A more generative route to discussing the definitions of collaborative activity seemed to be through participants reflecting upon the principles of how they worked together. Although most participants stated they had not had any explicit conversation about the processes of the collaboration, it was striking how many participants stated the importance of the dialogic processes involved in their work. Students, in particular, talked about the value they felt from opportunities to discuss ideas.

The principles of transparency, trust, and responsibility occurred frequently in discussions with both staff and student participants. This very much reflects the

literature and other research about the underpinning principles for staff and student partnerships in learning and teaching.

Participants did talk about issues of power within the collaborations, but this manifested in different ways. Susan at Glasgow and Sue at Lincoln both reflected on their awareness of the power imbalance between them and the students they were working with. However, they both noted that they had not discussed this issue with individuals or within the team. Mark at Edinburgh Napier was the only staff participant who reported having had an explicit conversation with the students he worked with and, interestingly, noted that this did not have the intended impact he had hoped for. Rather than allaying fears, he felt the students grew suspicious of his motivations for having the conversation.

There were two examples where staff had approached students to talk explicitly about the purpose of the collaboration. Mark commented on how students in their collaboration appeared uncomfortable having discussions about trust and power. Niamh resorted to an explicit conversation about purpose and rationale of co-creating curricula when she met resistance from students in her 2nd year Geography class.

Eurig at Queen Margaret's talked about power in the context of exercising responsibility and judgement as the academic in the collaboration and making unilateral decisions to make changes when co-creation of curricula is not working. This perspective is particularly important as it reflects not only the reality of the process but also the need to be flexible and responsive 'in the moment' if co-creation of curricula in the classroom is not working or needs to be supplemented and supported by transmission of information and knowledge.

> *"There have been times when I've abandoned that task because it has been too difficult, you know, when I've thought 'These students need to mug up on Durkheim' and I've given them a lecture on Durkheim and shown them where the books are."* Eurig, staff, Queen Margaret

Students primarily talked about issues of power in collaborations in terms of staff use of veto on ideas or as gatekeepers to discussion.

When probed on this, students could describe ways in which they had navigated and worked through power differentials in the collaborations. For example, Laura, Dominic and Chloe talked about how they collected extra data to support a case for developing hardcopy materials when staff had expressed their desire to have learning resources on line. This particular example shows that students were not only aware of power differentials but had the opportunity to navigate and persuade staff of a different way forward through their ongoing dialogue.

4.3.4 Establishing Partnerships: Processes and Products

This aspect of analysis describes the range of experiences of establishing partnerships. This includes describing the focus of activities included across my case study sites, recruitment and selection of students, decision making, setting and managing expectations, and addressing scalability and sustainability.

4.3.4.1   Types of Co-creation Activity

I was keen to enable participants at each case site to self-identify an activity that they felt illustrated staff and students co-creating curricula. The purpose of this approach was in acknowledgement of the broad range of activity currently described as co-creating curricula within the literature, such as Problem Based Learning (PBL), Enquiry Based Learning (EBL), or co-curriculum activities which are not necessarily about curriculum in a broad, over-arching sense. This enabled me to see how practitioners identified it in their own practice. This methodological approach was also intended to help avoid discounting examples by determining criteria myself.

The range of activity included in the 17 examples of practice can be categorised into five types of activity. These are outlined in Table 7 along with the characteristic features of each example.

Table 7: Types of co-creating curricula activities

Description of activity	Characteristic features	Student involvement: consultation, participation, shared responsibility
Review and redesign of existing module/programme	Students reflect on previous experience of module; parameters for review discussed, survey of wider student cohort views, changes discussed and implemented for following year group. Students involved in redesign typically do not take the module themselves.* *With exception of example at Napier where students redesigned course which they took in following semester	Participation (and periodic consultation with wider student cohort). Shared responsibility.
Development of new module	Module descriptor agreed with flexibility in LO, desk research of other examples at other universities, proposals discussed, developed and implemented.	Participation.
Research into teaching and learning	Co-designed research tools to investigate.	Participation. Shared responsibility.

	experiences/perceptions of learning experience. Usually inform quality enhancement discussions through university committee structure	
Development of content in class	Content for class decided on basis of: -Students prior learning/professional experiences -Student responses/material generated from reading or group work	Shared responsibility and participation.
Development of teaching processes of existing programme/course	-Negotiation of assessment regimes (type and timing) -Negotiation of length and frequency of classes	Shared responsibility and participation.

4.3.4.2   Recruitment, Selection, and Working with Whole Cohorts

14 out of 17 examples worked with a selected group of students in the collaborative activity. Niamh at UCD, Eurig at Queen Margaret's, and Susan at Glasgow were the only participants to provide examples of curricula co-created with entire cohorts of student in a class or module. Other examples were given of working with small groups of students but taking opportunities to consult with the larger cohort before taking final decisions. Niamh at UCD gave an example of working with a selected group of Masters level students who then consulted with a whole undergraduate geography class to co-develop resources for a research methods class. This showed a complexity of engaging students with elements of consultation as well as participation and co-creation. In all examples, participants were mindful of trying to ensure wider ownership and responsibility for the agreed changes and developments which were to be put in place.

All of the participants in the study who worked with selected groups of students talked about recruitment processes, the particulars of how opportunities were advertised and how students were selected. Around half of staff participants talked about how they were very conscious about the process needing to be transparent and inclusive. Niamh at UCD, Sue at Lincoln, and Mark at Edinburgh Napier all commented on this and their desire not to allow their preferences or existing knowledge of students to influence which students were recruited. In describing the recruitment process, Sue at Lincoln noted:

> *"I held a number of information meetings…and that was an opportunity for me to meet the students [applicants] as well…although I knew some of them because I had taught them in the past, I didn't know all of them and I didn't want that to sway my decision."*

Interestingly, some students reflected on the need for recruitment processes for such opportunities to be advertised more widely, in order to attract students who are not currently engaged. This showed their awareness of the need for inclusivity in the process of recruitment and engagement.

Student participants talked about a variety of recruitment practices, with some being approached or encouraged by staff to apply for positions that were advertised. This was in part largely due to these students being known within a department. Indeed, many of the students I interviewed could be categorised as what Bryson terms 'super-engaged' (Bryson, 2014). They were often involved as class or school representatives, leaders in department clubs and societies, or had participated in previous research internships in the school. Laura, Dom, and Chloe at Winchester all reflected upon this noting levels of engagement in the Law School:

> *"Chloe: I think it helps that we do the mooting society and some other stuff as well…*
>
> *Laura: we are keener than your average students [all laughter]*
>
> *Chloe: there is a really big lack of engagement in the law department student wise … we are doing this, we are doing the societies as well…..*
>
> *Laura: but like 80% of the rest of the year group...*

> *Chloe: yeah, you either do all of it basically in Law or you don't do anything. There is no middle ground is there?"*

Staff also commented on perceptions of super-engaged students. Niamh at UCD shared that *"the students that engage with this - I'm guessing, in some ways our three interns would fall into this category - they're students who have a very strong sense of their own identity and where they want to go already. But also, often they're the ones that have quite a lot of social capital."* Sue at Lincoln echoed this sentiment, observing that *" …they are really engaged students. They're very confident. Some of the others are less confident speaking, a little bit quieter. Perhaps still confident in their ideas but less confident about speaking in front of the group…"*

This raises interesting challenges for inclusivity. The continued working with super-engaged students could potentially make divisions between the super-engaged and unengaged worse.

4.3.4.3   Decision Making and Ways of Working

I asked participants what discussion, if any, occurred about the process of setting up and running the collaboration between staff and students. Healey *et al* (2014) and Cook-Sather *et al* (2014) discuss the need for explicit attention to be paid to the processes of partnership. In the majority of examples, as noted above, participants admitted that they had not had any explicit discussions about the processes prior to their work together. Like discussions about curriculum, it seemed there was a general silence amongst participants in terms of this and my probing of the issue found that a number of staff and students felt it was simply implicit.

The lack of explicit discussions in collaborations occurs in a number of themes and it is explored here in relation to the lack of clarity about decision making processes and the relationship to power in collaborations.

Abi, Kirsty, and Freya at Lincoln shared contradictory understandings of how decisions would be made in the development of the Youth Justice Module at Lincoln. Whilst they discussed the issue in hypothetical scenarios it illustrates the difference of understanding about the issue and the potential for misunderstandings to arise.

> *"Freya: …. I've just sort of assumed if there was ever a disagreement that the staff would just… Sort of, they have the last word sort of thing. Even though this is a student collaboration I do have a feeling that if the students were still saying one thing and the staff were saying another I still think they'd go with the staff. I don't think we've ever had to speak about it really.*
>
> *Kirsty: no. I see it more of majority rule. If more people agree with 'let's do this' whereas there's only two people saying 'no let's do this'.…I think if they can't make the case for it then the majority will go.*
>
> *Abbey: I think Sue is definitely open to ideas".*
>
> Abi, Kirsty, Freya (students, Lincoln)

A number of students also talked about staff exercising authority and their right to veto decisions. Holly and Lauren at Winchester talked extensively about the positive and inclusive nature of their collaboration with their staff partner but acknowledged that *"although she is our lecturer, you know, she is that authority figure, and if we need a rollicking then she'll give it"*.

Some student participants shared their reflections on the process of negotiating ideas and suggestions. Laura at Winchester described negotiating the development of online materials with her staff partner in a way that demonstrated an understanding that she required further data to overturn a decision regarding online materials. This was described as a dialogic process rather than an adversarial one.

> *"I think the only thing we've had to convince [staff partner] of was that she was determined this [problem questions handbook] should be an on line resource and we all hated the idea of it being an online resource. Trying to tell her that when she was so convinced was quite hard. Especially being dyslexic I knew that being online, like, I knew I wouldn't like it like that and we've had other students say that."*

Laura (student, Winchester)

Lisa at Lincoln and Mark at Edinburgh Napier also talked about how the students in their examples argued articulately for the changes they were suggesting and negotiating, resulting in changes being incorporated into the final outcome. In the review of the first year Drama programme at Lincoln, students felt strongly about reordering content and moving a module to second year. This was a point of negotiation in collaboration and the students' views influenced the final recommendations for the project. Lisa noted in her interview:

> *"…Because their argument was so good we had to say well actually, yeah, you are right. If that's how you feel it shouldn't be there".*

Lisa, staff, Lincoln

Similarly, Mark reflected on how students were keen to revise the examination for the module and how they argued for a move from an unseen exam to a critique of a published article.

> *"They were very insistent and eloquent and had good reasons to move to a harder form of assessment which was a critique of a published science paper which is really quite hard to do that. …So I was really impressed with the students who did that and I find it really helpful to have that as a reminder if we ever get caught in that discourse of students dumbing down… It was dialogue."*

Mark, staff, Edinburgh Napier

4.3.4.4   Scalability and Sustainability

A small number of participants offered reflections on the opportunities and challenges of sustaining work beyond the initial collaboration. Although the topic of sustainability was not a specific focus within my interview guide, a selection of staff and students who had been working in collaboration for some time were keen to discuss the issues of sustainability and scalability in co-creating curricula.

At the time of interview, Mark had recently moved into a senior position at Edinburgh Napier. In addition to reflecting on his experience of redesigning the

module with students, he also offered reflections on the challenges of scaling up partnership working across programmes. Interestingly, Mark argued for a need to have reflective discussions between staff and students about partnership working across programmes, advocating that partnerships may be possible and/or appropriate in some places within the curriculum and not others. This raises interesting debates about finding the appropriate place and time to collaborate with students, but also offers a challenge to institutions to be better at facilitating programme-level discussions. This resonates with other debates going on in the sector (such as interest in more programme-level assessment) and the difficulty in having these conversations due to structural and time barriers. Difficulties in having programme-level discussions could be one of the unintended consequences of increased modularisation of learning in higher education.

A number of students discussed sustainability in terms of 'leaving a legacy', but, on the whole, did not discuss their own thoughts in great detail about this issue. This is perhaps understandable given the time bound nature of 'being a student'. The one exception to this was with Laura, Chloe, and Dominic at Winchester, who offered a very concrete example of how they were addressing sustainability of their work. They were exploring the possibility of establishing a Student Consultancy Board and the end of project report provided after interview indicated that this has been agreed. This Board will be made up of three students whom staff, interested in co-designing learning resources in Law, could approach for future opportunities to co-create curricula. The students were keen for this Board to sit separately from the representative functions provided by the Staff Student Liaison Committee.

Niamh at UCD reflected on the challenges of creating an institutional ethos so that partnership working can be scaled up. Her rationale for wanting to scale up activities was in response to her feeling uncomfortable working with selective groups of students:

> "So one of the things I'm kind of interested in is how can we scale this up so that this becomes embedded. So it's really the ethos of the institution I

think need to change, and it's that level that need to change…, if we're so convinced of the benefits pedagogically and in terms of skills that students get from this, do we not have a duty to make that opportunity available to the broadest range of students possible?"

4.3.5 Motivations

At an early stage in my interviews, I noted that participants were choosing to share their views on why they entered into and stayed involved in their collaborations. This was not a topic I had included in my semi-structured interview schedule, but following the participants' leads, I explored their interest in discussing reasons for entering and staying involved with collaborative activity. From these discussions, the theme of participant motivation emerged. This was the benefit of adopting a methodological approach that allowed space for such themes to be identified as important by participants rather than solely by the researcher.

Participants expressed varied motivations for entering into collaborations and talked about how their motivations altered as the nature and extent of their collaborations unfolded. Unlike the other themes in this analysis, staff and student motivations are presented separately here as there are marked differences between the groups that are useful to draw out in the analysis. It is interesting to note that staff offered their views on what they thought motivated students to get involved in collaborations but not vice versa. This is also highlighted in the analysis below.

4.3.5.1   Student Motivations

Over half of student participants were motivated to collaborate with staff as they saw it as an opportunity to rectify or unify disconnects they had experienced in previous learning experiences. They often talked about the collaboration as an opportunity to 'fix' and 'influence' the curriculum design process in a way they were unable to do when asked to provide feedback in end of module evaluations or via representation in Student-Staff Liaison committees.

For example, Abi at Lincoln expressed this by saying she was motivated to design a new module because *"we can make the course we want, not what the academics think we want."*

A small number of students also commented that they were often asked to give feedback at a point when the course was finished, meaning any improvements made would not be experienced by them. They expressed some frustration at not seeing what happened with their feedback. There was a sense that helping develop a new module (for example, in the case of the Youth Justice module at Lincoln) would make a difference for other students and be a legacy that students could influence directly. The idea of leaving a legacy, in fact, and having a greater impact in the University was cited by a number of student participants. For example, Georgina at Winchester stated: *"I hope we're making a difference of course, I'm gaining looking at my own learning, and how I can improve how I'm learning myself, as well as everyone else."* Holly at Winchester also reflected *"Just knowing that I'm making a difference, you know? Doing something that's going to be…it's not just now, it's not just while I'm here, but when I leave I can say, it will still be going on, and hopefully, just ever improving."* For some, the ability to see the potential legacy of their work was not apparent until they were in the collaboration itself.

A majority of students talked about their interest in creating more opportunities to link theory with what they described as applied learning. This was discussed in terms of 'applying things to the real world' and 'seeing the value of learning from practical experiences'. This particular issue seemed to be a motivation across the range of disciplines and subject areas, and raises interesting questions about student expectations and active learning environments. In addition to this, Tid at Winchester expressed a desire to 'bring in' learning and experience from previous professional roles and life experiences; he wanted to find a space to contribute new or different knowledges and to feel that this experience was valued and respected alongside new learning that was taking place. Tid stated *"I think there is a genuine recognition of the stuff that I've done before and that it's relevant to what I'm doing now. There is also a genuine recognition that I'm*

learning about a whole new world of knowledge and that learning is being recognised." This recognition experienced by Tid relates directly to the theme of establishing partnerships which explores the values and principles underpinning collaborative activities.

Overwhelmingly, the student participants talked about their enthusiasm and passion for the courses they were studying. This included an interest in the subject knowledge and content but, in one instance (Forensic Studies at Winchester), Lauren and Holly expressed a strong sense of investment in the success and growth of the new course. Linked with this issue were statements of enjoyment and enthusiasm, such as the process was 'interesting and fun'.

All students expressed motivations to improve their CV and employability skills. This manifested in students discussing links between the course content and future aspirations, for example working in Youth Offending or progressing into academia. Tid at Winchester described how he had already talked with his staff partner stating that he "*ultimately want[s] to end up in academia somehow and do a Masters and a PhD.*" Others felt that collaborating on curriculum design was an 'unusual' activity for a student to be involved in and would 'give an edge' to their CV compared to other forms of student engagement. Abi, Kirsty, and Freya at Lincoln were very keen to engage with an external partner as a way of developing their own networks as well as ensuring the course they were co-developing had external value and credibility.

A small number of students expressed interest in the access such collaborative activity gave to senior management and other gatekeepers within the institution. This indicates an awareness amongst some students of the social capital gained in these types of collaborations. This is discussed further in terms of impact and value of participating in this type of work, but it was also seen as a motivation to other students. The wider cohort could see that being involved gave those students certain privilege and access to influential institutional people and debates. Interestingly, this access for students is a privilege that

some staff do not have – a reflection that can be said of Student Representatives who sit on senior academic committees, for example.

The following items noted as motivations were only mentioned once by different participants; however, I believe they are interesting reflections, as these issues also appear to receive less coverage in existing literature. All of the following students were based at Winchester but worked on different collaborative activities.

Holly talked about how she was unable to engage in student life in more traditional ways (for example, through evening events, clubs, and societies) due to caring commitments at home. She saw co-creating curriculum through the Student Fellows Scheme at Winchester as a means of providing her with a legitimate space to contribute to improving the learning environment for herself and for others.

Eli expressed her motivation to get involved in her research on contact hours within her course to address her frustration about her perception of lack of contact time and her desire to do something active with it. Again, whilst this motivation was only mentioned once throughout the interviews, it is worthy of mention as it exemplifies the potential for students to channel and challenge institutional conventions in an active and constructive way.

Laura described her motivation to work on co-creating curricula materials in Law as being directly linked to her own experiences of being a student with dyslexia and finding much of her text-based subject difficult to engage with. This issue is noteworthy because it shows another example of student self-determinism in effecting change.

Although not explicitly asked in interviews, some staff participants offered their perceptions on why they thought students were motivated to get involved. There

was a recognition that students can sometimes have quite instrumental motivations for getting involved with collaborations, and that staff were keen for students to understand the benefits of developing skills that would benefit them in further study and work. Susan at Glasgow acknowledged that student motivations to engage can change over time and that staff have to be mindful of this when working in collaborations.

4.3.5.2   Staff Motivations

A small number of staff participants talked about their frustration that existing feedback mechanisms, such as end of module evaluation questionnaires, are not providing useful or timely information about student engagement with existing modules. Mark at Edinburgh Napier expressed frustration with the contradictory comments he receives from course feedback, and Niamh at UCD discussed a lack of congruence between the end of module feedback she received which was generally positive and a 'feeling' that the course could be more engaging. She noted that her motivation to collaborate with students *"came out of just being frustrated, going into a classroom and seeing a bunch of students, and going to myself, this should be making them look more interested than this. And seeing the sea of blank faces and none of what you're saying is having an impact."* Similarly, Sue at Lincoln described her interest in working with students to design a new module that would be of real interest and value to them.

Nick at Winchester commented on the credibility that collaborating with students offers. This was shared in the context of needing to justify requests to the university for funds to cover field trips. Since the introduction of tuition fees in England, the funding for such trips now has to be paid for from central top-slicing rather than a direct charge to the students. This has created limitations for the archaeology department in terms of what they can organise. Conducting research in collaboration with Georgina to investigate student demand for field trips has proven useful politically (in arguing the case with senior management for more funding) as well as personally (to provide new and fresh insights into his own teaching practice and fieldwork).

Many staff referenced the benefit of new insights that students bring to collaborations. Nick at Winchester and Peter at Glasgow talked about how they are unable to see things as a novice now and they recognise that they can make implicit assumptions about the benefit of things. Peter also commented on how students who are closer to the learning experiences themselves can offer insights and solutions to things that have or have not worked previously, and that he would not have considered on his own.

Building on the above reflections, Niamh at UCD explained her desire to align pedagogy with learning outcomes and perceived a gap between the two in the existing first year geography module which she redesigned with students. She wanted to re-energise her teaching and improve student engagement as she perceived there was a lack of connection with her students, even though this did not bear out in the class feedback forms. She deliberately sought to work with a diverse group of students to engage with multiple perspectives in the collaborative redesign.

A proportion of staff participants articulated their motivations to collaborate with students as being aligned with their beliefs about the socially constructed and contested nature of learning and a perception that their role was to facilitate dialogue with students and provide opportunities for them to co-construct knowledge. Mark at Edinburgh Napier and Eurig at Queen Margaret described this with specific references to critical pedagogy and popular education.

Staff also commented on their experiences of seeing how students were invested in taking ownership of their learning. Many of the students were engaged in other activities and enthusiastic about the opportunity to co-create curricula with staff. This resonates, again, with the idea of super-engaged students, noted in the establishing partnerships theme above.

Niamh at UCD and Susan at Glasgow who were both working with whole cohorts of students, talked about having to engage with mixed levels of motivations to co-create curricula across a whole class of students. Niamh reflected that collaborating with students "*just gives them a sense that they actually have something to offer. Because I think, very often in large groups all the time I think they feel a lack of power maybe in that everything is coming at them, but they've no opportunity to give anything back, their opinion's not being asked.*"

It is also interesting to note that Niamh and Susan reflected on experiences of students who were not motivated to co-create curricula and were vocal, in some instance, about their resistance to this way of working together. Niamh described receiving resistance from students:

> "*It's a particular way of learning. It's a particular understanding of what roles should be. So I've had comments like 'it's a copout', 'this is you not wanting to work', 'how are we supposed to learn something when you're not teaching it?*"

The idea of resistance has been discussed in relation to establishing partnerships theme but it is worth noting here that the comments received by Niamh from her students portray important ideas from the students about the role of the teacher to be the expert and to deliver their knowledge to them.

4.3.6 Value and Impact

I explored perceptions of the value and impact of co-creating curricula at the micro level, namely the views of individual participants. This sits alongside the data analysed and taken from institutional documentation outlined in Part A. As discussed in chapters 2 and 3, I have critically reflected on the discourse of 'impact' at a more macro level, in the context of neoliberalisation of higher education and the politicised nature with which impact measures are used to influence the nature of learning and teaching practice. Drawing upon my own professional experiences of working with macro-level impact measures and the

limitations these often have in capturing the full experiences of teaching and learning initiatives, I was keen to give space for participants to talk about the value (as well as the impact) of their collaborative activities.

Participants explored this topic widely in interviews and offered their views on how collaborative activities had value to them personally and institutionally, demonstrating an awareness of the interplay between the micro and macro level. Participants also distinguished between the value and impact of collaboration as a process and the products that occur as the result of the work.

These dimensions are explored through four aspects that emerged from the data: development of academic identity, valuing different and new perspectives, professional development and employability, and increasing transparency of the curriculum development process.

Nearly all participants included improvement to student participation as one of the main values of staff-student collaborations. This included impact on wider learning, increased ownership, desire to leave a legacy, and improved grades. In addition, staff participants talked about improved student engagement not only for those involved in the collaboration itself, but for future cohorts engaging with the co-created curricula as well.

4.3.6.1   Academic Identity

Reflections and comments relating to perceptions and development of academic identity for staff and students came across in a number of interviews. Comments relating to this topic were multifaceted and, in some ways, quite disparate.

The discourse about developing academic identity (and the factors that influence it) receives considerable attention in the context of staff in higher education. Arguably, this is less so for students. Whilst staff and students talked

about the impact of collaboration on their academic identity in different ways, a significant number of participants recognised that the collaborative spaces, and discussions that were occurring (or had occurred) within them, required a renegotiation or affirmation of identities.

A number of staff participants articulated their motivation to collaborate with students to 'practice what they preached' and saw this as integral to their teaching identity. Around half of staff participants talked about the moral imperative to democratise education and their responsibility to contribute to the development of students and society. For some, this manifested in very explicit links with the principles of popular education and critical pedagogy as discussed above. Mark at Edinburgh Napier described how his motivations to collaborate with students resonate with his own experience of transformational learning and a belief that education should be used to enact social change. Susan at Glasgow articulated it in terms of social justice and recognition of power differentials in learning (which are elements of critical pedagogy but were not expressed in that way). For others, it was a part of how they viewed their role within the department. For example, Lisa at Lincoln described herself as the 'go to' person for all students and valued being perceived in this way. When reflecting on her role as the departmental Student Engagement Champion, Lisa at Lincoln reflected:

> *"...it was always seen as I would be the go to person for anything that was about students or pastoral care…..That was always where my focus was. So when [new Head of Department] came along he crystallised that into a proper role for me and then student engagement really started to take off here at Lincoln so it became the perfect fit for me."*

There were numerous interesting reflections from staff participants relating to the difficulty of knowing if and how one's teaching is going well. Niamh at UCD and Mark at Edinburgh Napier talked about the difference between their own intuitions on how well a course was going compared with the feedback given by students. Often, they felt frustrated or uncertain about the success of a course even if the feedback was positive. This influenced their perception of their teaching practice. Niamh at UCD talked about how neither she nor her colleague

"felt happy with the way [they] were teaching because [they] felt it was very compartmentalised". She goes on to describe how *"the feedback was no worse than any other module but it could have been a lot better… [that was] the motivation for trying something different"*. Similarly, Mark at Napier reflected: *"It's a great topic and it's that feeling that despite no matter how much enthusiasm you attempt to put into a performance …that doesn't manifest itself in 100% student engagement."*

This raises interesting questions about the importance of intuition and expertise of staff and the value they get from having dialogue with students above and beyond module evaluation questionnaires.

Niamh talked on numerous occasions in her interview about developing her confidence and identity as an academic as partially resulting from the experiences, results, and recognition for her collaborative work with students. As outlined in Part A, Niamh worked in a complex, two-tier set of collaborations with her students, involving work with selected and whole cohort groups. This is a particularly interesting reflection from someone who felt less confident about her academic identity yet instigated complex activities involving significant risks. When this was reflected back to her, Niamh commented that she would not have felt as confident to enter into the collaborations without the support of a colleague with whom she planned aspects of the activity. Niamh has since been promoted and received recognition for her innovation in this area, positioning her as an influential voice in her School and in University level-forums. This, again, illustrates the relationship between micro and macro level impacts resulting from such collaborative activities.

Linked with Niamh's discussion about confidence, a small number of staff participants talked about needing the confidence to take risks with teaching and being prepared to work with the creative and unknown processes related to co-creating curricula. This is an important reminder that engaging with this work involves risk and elements of exposure – to students, to colleagues, and to others

in the discipline. Many reflected that they felt they would not have had the confidence to do this early in their teaching career. I logged in my field notes how Susan at Glasgow talked after the interview about having the confidence to engage with the risks of co-creating curricula and how, for her, it probably would not have been a risk she would have been willing to take at the start of her career.

Fewer students discussed how the collaborations impacted explicitly on their academic identity as a student. This is unsurprising given this type of discourse would be unlikely to be familiar to them. However, Laura at Winchester did talk about her experience of attending a conference where no distinction was made between staff and students, reporting how she had found this a positive experience.

> *"[It] was the most interesting conference I've ever been to because it was literally 50 % staff and 50 % student and you couldn't tell who was who with the way they did it. That is the first experience of me really being exposed to being on the same level as the staff members […] That helped shape how I see this. I never thought that would be a good idea, having that. I never thought of it but I really enjoyed not being seen as a student…"*

Abi at Lincoln expressed the importance of being given a voice through the process of disseminating the work achieved through the collaboration:
"I think the conferences are good as well to see how other universities have done. And get to voice what we've done and shout about what we are doing. I think that's good to build confidence to attend conferences as well as put on your CV".

For Lauren at Winchester, her involvement with her collaborative project had helped her to develop her confidence and exceed her own expectations. *"I never thought that I would come this far at university, and I'm excited with that fact I got the opportunity to be a part of it."*

4.3.6.2   Professional Development and Employability

Students frequently discussed the value and impact of the collaborative activity as developing confidence in their own opinions and abilities and developing their employability skills. In some ways, these developments are intrinsically linked to development of academic identity as well as employability and, as such, I do not wish to suggest an artificial separation here. However, student participants did talk about the value of their experiences particularly relating to the application of their learning beyond university. For example, Linford at Lincoln talked about how the insights he gained have helped him understand academia better:

> *"It was valuable for me in terms of my experience for that role but also experience as somebody who would like to work in higher education at some point. Understanding the way that a single year could be restructured, those kinds of conversations, that was a really valuable experience."*

Kirsty, also at Lincoln, reflected on the uniqueness of the opportunity to co-create new curricula, noting *"This is something that not a lot of students can put on their CV and say that they've done and have that experience. I think that's pretty good."*

Participating in the practice (and research of) co-creating curricula had opened up new networks for discussion outside as well as within the discipline. Niamh at UCD described this as one of the values for her in her career development:

> *"it's given me a chance to meet people, like-minded people like yourself and Cathy, and people in different contexts that I wouldn't otherwise meet. It's given me opportunities to write and be published in peer review journals …it's really helped…this sounds bizarre, but it has really helped my research profile."*

4.3.6.3   Valuing the Process as well as Product of Collaboration

Student participants talked positively about the value of co-creating curricula and the impact this had on their own learning.

> *"I just read before my essays because I know that's how you can pass the module. Whereas actually thinking about it with this you know why they're doing it and you can see the broad subject and why you need to learn everything."*

<div align="right">Kirsty, student, Lincoln</div>

> *"…what I would define as a success…it's what we were talking about, it's the process. If it ends up with a module and I start teaching a module, then great… For me though it's the process of just learning and having conversations really."*

<div align="right">Tid, student, Winchester</div>

Students did, however, acknowledge the need for tangible outputs from their collaborations. For some, such as Laura at Winchester, this would include completed learning resources which were used by staff and students:

> *"Personally I think we get more benefit from the process but I think looking at the project as a whole from other people's view without something to present at the end then it wouldn't feel like a success...".*

<div align="right">Laura, student, Winchester</div>

Freya at Lincoln held similar views related to tangible outputs but expressed them in terms of seeing her contribution in the finished module: *"I think if I was to measure success, if I had suggested something and had actually made it in the module. I think that shows it successful."*

4.3.6.4 Insight into Curriculum Development Processes: Making the Implicit Explicit

Student participants involved in either designing or redesigning a module or in developing course content all reported a change in their perceptions of what is involved in curriculum development. These insights included a greater awareness of time demands, dealing with institutional bureaucracy, the relationship between intended and enacted curricula, and the scope to challenge

conventions (disciplinary and institutional). Dom at Winchester reflected on this, stating:

> *"If anything, the amount of work we have had to put in to doing something like this it does make a lot more sense why a lot of our materials …having put all of the work into this you can see [academics] probably don't have the time to be making the resources like this."*

Abi at Lincoln stated *"At least you can have a bit more student input and make it like what we would want rather than what the academics think we want [Laughter]."* Abi, student, Lincoln

4.3.7 Institutional Context

The importance of institutional context, in terms of enablers and obstacles to co-creation, was identified by nearly all staff participants. In the main, discussion related to the provision, or lack of, institutional support through funding and mediating programmes. However, in addition to this, participants also discussed issues relating to gatekeeping and the importance of support from influential individuals in each institution and structures and processes that could support scalability and sustainability of collaborative activities. Staff and student participants talked about the pressures and constraints on availability and time and working within institutional timescales for development and review of programmes.

4.3.7.1   Funding, Recognition, and Rewards

Nearly all examples of practice received some form of funding to enable and support the development of the collaboration. The amount of funding available varied from one activity to another but most activities were supported with funding). The majority of examples were funded through university funds, usually earmarked for teaching innovation and/or enhancement projects, such as the Learning and Teaching Development Fund at Glasgow or the Principal's Teaching Award Scheme at Edinburgh. In the case of Eurig's Environmental Justice module, the Friends of the Earth Team received funding from the

National Lottery. Mark's Environmental Science module at Edinburgh Napier was supported by an educational researcher who had received seed funding from the Higher Education Academy.

Funding was essential for paying student bursaries for the projects working with selected groups of students. Often students were working over holiday periods and/or during term time. Staff provided this income as a way to recognise the opportunity costs for students who would have to give up other paid work to be involved. In the examples of practice where staff worked with selected groups of students, students' input was in addition to their scheduled contact time. Payment of bursaries recognised a commitment over and above that expected in their stated contact time and bursaries were granted for a number of notional hours. In some instances, students felt they were working over and above the number of hours they were being paid. For Laura and Dom at Winchester they noted the substantial volume of work they had carried out:

> *"Cherie: Are you all receiving a bursary through the Student Fellows scheme?*
>
> *Laura: I think it says something like 100 hours or something….*
>
> *Dom: Which I'm pretty certain we've done…*
>
> *Laura: I think it is working out about two hours per week.*
>
> *Dom: It feels like we've done quite a lot".*

> Laura and Dom, students, Winchester

Where projects worked with whole cohorts, funding would not have been possible nor appropriate. These activities, such as Niamh's second year geography class at UCD and Susan's co-assessment of her Service Learning module at Glasgow, were completed by students who were co-creating the curricula within class time.

Interestingly, Mark at Edinburgh Napier decided not to pay the selected group of students involved in phase 1 of the module redesign in Environmental Science as he and his co-researcher thought this signalled to the students that they were only 'helping out' on a temporary basis. This is discussed in detail in McArthur and Huxham (2001, p. 3) where they state:

> 'We made a deliberate decision not to provide students with incentives to participate (such as Amazon vouchers) because we did not want our relationship to be one of them 'helping' us out. It was important to the project to try as much as possible to realise a relationship of equal but different partners contributing to a common goal.'

4.3.7.2   Gatekeeping

Gatekeeping, and the role of gatekeepers, was raised in a number of different ways by both staff and student participants. Associated often with discussions about funding, staff participants identified important interactions with others in a position of influence within the institution. Gatekeeping, in this context, was discussed as an enabling factor. In interviews with participants at Winchester and Lincoln, it was clear that staff-student collaborations were known and supported by Vice Chancellors. This is also reflected in the strategic plans of both of these institutions as discussed in Part A of this chapter. Having support of influential gatekeepers was also important for Niamh in her work at UCD. She commented that:

> *"…we were approached - because I was the school head of teaching and learning - I was approached by our Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning, and asked could they use our first year module as a pilot for doing something with a large class that would actually get the students more engaged in learning."*

Gatekeeping was also discussed as necessary by some participants, particularly regarding feelings of needing to buffer what students were exposed to within the institution when they are participating in collaborative projects. Nick at Winchester and Judy at Glasgow both mentioned this in their interviews. Nick talked about sensitivities of discussing staffing appointments in front of students. Judy at Edinburgh, on the other hand, talked about the need to

manage uncertainty to a certain degree and avoid making students feel unnecessarily vulnerable.

> *"Personally I think it's quite good sometimes for students to see how these things happen. Sometimes, I think you have to be quite careful. If there were major curriculum changes which involve lots of uncertainty that is much harder. You don't want students to feel vulnerable."*

Finally, gatekeeping was also discussed within the collaborations themselves, usually in the context of individuals exercising power and authority in decision making. This aspect of gatekeeping is discussed in more detail in section 4.3.4.3 with regards to decision making.

4.3.7.3   Mediating Structures: Schemes, Teams and Associations

Universities of Winchester and Lincoln were the only case sites to operate dedicated programmes to instigate, support and evaluate staff and student collaborations in Learning and Teaching. The Student Fellows Scheme (SFS) at Winchester is co-funded by the University and Winchester's Students' Union. Staff who co-ordinate the scheme are based in the University and Students' Union. The Student Engagement Team at Lincoln is made up of staff and graduate interns. Both schemes have close links with the Educational Development functions within the universities.

Participants in examples from these institutions talked about the training, support, and communication they had with staff in each of these teams. This included provision of research methods training, networking and dissemination events for students and staff to share their progress and hear about what others were doing across the university. Importantly, the teams at Winchester appear to differ in their focus slightly from teams at Lincoln. At Winchester, the primary focus is working with students. This included the development of project ideas, training provision and dissemination events. In contrast, Lincoln focusses mainly on supporting and developing the staff network of Student Engagement Champions.

One of the participants at Winchester, Tid, described how he felt the Student Fellows Scheme gave legitimacy to staff-student collaborations. He stated that *"the Student Fellows Scheme says that's okay and that's appropriate…it allows me the space and the permission to go okay, I know you think they [staff] are brilliant but you do also know some stuff so you can challenge in that domain."*

Eli at Winchester also talked about how the Student Fellows Scheme acted as a sounding board for her ideas and dealing with differences in opinion about the focus of the collaborative research she was undertaking with her staff fellow. She stated *"Stuart always says to me don't be afraid to say that you're not happy or if you've got different aims or perceptions about your project…."*

For Judy's work at Edinburgh, it was the institution's Innovative Learning Week team, based in the Institute for Academic Development that provided the infrastructure for funding and delivery of the student-led workshops.

4.3.7.4   Time

The issue of time was raised frequently and is consistent with themes that have come from other studies, for example Werder *et al* (2010), Bovill (2013a), and Bovill *et al* (2011). It was discussed in a literal sense, i.e. the chronology of how slowly or quickly activities were taking place, and in a more abstract sense, i.e. time and space for discussion about values and principles relating to curriculum development and collaborations with students.

Staff members often reflected the feeling of time pressure and how it can inhibit or disrupt the opportunities to work with students to co-create curricula. However, even though this was acknowledged by many as a difficulty, it was one they were managing to negotiate. Examples of needing to get module outlines approved prior to starting the redesign and in a sufficiently flexible format were cited by Susan at Glasgow and Sue at Lincoln. Fitting with institutional

requirements and timeframes was important to allow for the outcomes of the co-created curricula to be delivered on time.

> *"The very first thing we needed to do was validate the module because we were undergoing a revalidation of our programme anyway. So it was an opportunity for me to say this is a module that I want to do. Timescales for that were very tight and obviously very rigid in terms of the module specification that you have to be put together…There wasn't an opportunity to get students involved at that point but I tried to make it as loose as possible so that we could do something with it a bit later on"*

<div align="right">Sue, staff, Lincoln</div>

Others cited how they had originally thought collaborations were likely to save time but, in reality for many, it was felt that it instead produced a better quality result. No staff participants mentioned that they felt co-creating curricula with students took more time than they would usually spend but acknowledged that the focus of attention was more focussed on the preparation stage.

> *"So we did frontload a lot of time and I don't regret that. I think it's much more rewarding doing that. I'd like to be able to say the good news story is that you save so much time on this but I'm not sure that's quite true [laughter]. I'm not sure it's a zero sum in that way. You do save time in other things, you know, people failing afterwards as a result of lack of engagement. If you want to really go for something and enjoy it and do it thoroughly …it can take you some more time…"*

<div align="right">Mark, staff, Edinburgh Napier</div>

> *"It's inevitably going to take up way more time[laughter] but it will produce something better in the long run I think. I think from me on my own to create what I hope we're going to create I wouldn't have had the time to do that. If I'd sat down on my own to write a module I could have done it in less time but it wouldn't have been half as interesting"*.

<div align="right">Sue, staff, Lincoln</div>

Mark at Edinburgh Napier and Peter at Glasgow reflected how the outcomes perhaps saved time later on as, for Mark, he was grading fewer resit exams as student performance improved on the module and, for Peter, the students over-produced the amount of learning resources required when they designed the science skills course. This resulted in him and his teaching team having enough

material to cover the next three years' worth of resources for teaching the science skills module at Glasgow.

Judy at Edinburgh and Niamh at UCD reflected that there is little, if any, time and space afforded by institutions to discuss definitions and priorities for curriculum design in a general sense, and a number of staff participants talked about the lack of time and opportunity to explore the rationale for (and processes involved with) co-creating curricula.

An interesting difference of perspectives was reported by participants involved with developing the new Youth Justice module at Lincoln. Sue talked about the collaborative process feeling 'chaotic' and moving quickly, while students Abi, Freya, and Kirsty reflected that the process was moving much more slowly than they had expected.

Student participants offered different reflections on issues of time within the collaborative activities. This is to be expected given the different context and deadlines they are working within, albeit these deadlines are often no less demanding. The majority of student participants were engaged in many other institutional activities, including acting as student representatives and leading clubs and societies. Where time commitments were raised by students, it was often in the context of them spending more time than expected (or paid for) on their collaborative activity. This was not, however, raised as a grievance. Rather, it seemed a reflection of the ownership students felt about the collaborative activity.

4.4 Summary

This chapter has presented in-case and cross-case data analysis from the seven cases in my study. The themes I have identified and discussed have resulted from a collection of varied types of evidence, including documents, participant

narratives, visual data, and my own field notes. The breadth of data has helped to collate a rich picture of each case and the respective sub-cases of staff and students co-creating curricula.

I now turn to the discussion of my data whereby I synthesis the findings from my study with the theoretical perspectives presented in chapter two.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

Building on my data analysis presented in the last chapter, I now critically examine my findings and discuss their meaning in relation to my research questions and the existing literature presented in chapter two. In doing so, I present five major discussion items in this chapter. These include:

- Exploring process: relationship between policy discourse and practice
- Moving beyond outcomes-focussed curricula
- Proposing a new model of co-creation
- Evidencing value
- Reviewing the role of institutional support

It is inevitable and appropriate when gathering rich data in qualitative research to form decisions on which items are of most importance to focus on in the discussion of the research. I have arrived at the above topics by looking inward to my research questions, conceptual framing, and data analysis and by looking outward to the intended audiences of my work and the environment in which my study will be considered. Deciding on my focus for discussion has required me to evaluate the extent to which my study supports existing research and offers new insights or challenges. It has also been necessary for me to be mindful of what is likely to be of most interest (and use) to the audiences who may wish to use my findings to inform policy and practice. Meeting these expectations has also had to be tempered with the reality of the constraints of what can be explored in the confines of this thesis.

The chapter examines each discussion item in turn, outlining my interpretations of my findings and making theoretical and empirical connections throughout. The format of this chapter and the discussion items follow a similar pattern to the themes identified in parts A and B in chapter four. As a result, the discussion

items cut across my research questions. I am conscious that this is perhaps a less traditional format to discuss findings and as such, I conclude this chapter by specifically returning to the research questions for my study, and suggest the extent to which this study has enabled me to answer them.

5.2 Exploring Process: Relationship between Policy Discourse and Practice

Earlier in the thesis, I presented literature which offered different perspectives on the relationship between policy and practice in higher education teaching and learning. The critiques of policy enactment in higher education and the lack of literature on staff and students co-creating curricula provided the starting point for my research questions. It was one reason for wanting to explore the meaning-making processes for staff and students engaged in co-creating curricula and to avoid the use of prescriptive terminology in my interviews. However, I have also highlighted the competing ideologies of neoliberalism and critical pedagogy which frame this practice in different ways. Research which analyses practice and takes account of this critique is essential.

McLean (2008) critiques the colonising effect of policy discourse in higher education, arguing the need to 'reclaim' professionalism and intellectualism in teaching. Her arguments are heavily influenced by Habermas's (1984) argument to reject managerialist, positivistic views of change, to reject neoliberal ideology, and to strive for critical university pedagogy. In McLean's view, macro-level policies undermine the ability of teachers to exercise professional judgement and operate with autonomy.

In parallel, Bamber *et al* (2009) and Trowler (2008) argue that policy enactment is often messy, involving reinterpretation and repurposing of policy as it encounters different levels of an organisation. They use the metaphor of the policy implementation staircase (building on Reynolds and Saunders (1987) to illustrate this) and suggest that policy implementation is always countenanced

by temporal and contextual factors. Their critique also challenges technical-rational ideas of policy formation and execution but is perhaps less rooted in ideological critique when compared with McLean's argument.

In my discussion of literature relating specifically to the co-creation of curricula (and, more widely, teaching and learning in higher education) I illustrated the lack of clarity regarding definitions of terms, both in policy and practice, (Healey *et al,* 2014; Cook Sather *et al,* 2014) but also noted the growing policy discourse of Students as Partners in the UK higher education. In Fielding's (2015) reflection on Jean Rudduck's legacy of student voice work in schools, he suggests that student voice has received much greater attention in schools' policy compared to higher education. However, Fielding reiterates Rudduck's caution about the growing interest of policy makers and agencies in student voice work in all levels of education. He cites Rudduck's (2006, p.113) caution:

> 'as more and more agencies become involved (which is of course a good thing in itself), as more and more pupil voice websites are set up, and as more and more 'how to do it' resources are produced, we may have 'mile wide' promotion with only 'inch thick' understanding.'

Rudduck's concerns about enactment of student voice policy in schools is a stark warning to those working to achieve the same aims in higher education. As an advocate for, and a researcher of, co-creating curricula with students, I have been very aware of the tensions highlighted by Fielding and Rudduck.

By applying the critiques of McLean (2008), Bamber *et al* (2009), Trowler (2008), and Fielding (2015) to the co-creation of curricula in higher education, my study argues the need to bring criticality to the formation and implementation of policy relating to Students as Partners. An awareness of the ideologies that influence and perpetuate the idea of student as consumer is essential if practitioners who co-create curricula wish to avoid and reclaim this practice as a radical pedagogy. The practice of co-creating curricula is sufficiently nascent (and, arguably, emergent and 'grass-roots') that practitioners have considerable

influence in shaping how this work is defined and understood, including the values which underpin it. I believe this is a crucial outcome of my study as it provides rich, discursive accounts of co-creation of curricula in ways defined by participants themselves. My analysis of their insights offers opportunities and addresses challenges.

Some staff participants expressed their values and motivations for co-creating curricula as being explicitly linked to critical pedagogy, but this was not expressed by all staff participants. Nor was it expressed in this way by any of the student participants. I argue that a crucial outcome of my findings shows that whilst participants did not adopt the policy discourse of Students as Partners or show consensus on how they labelled and described their practice of collaboration, neither was there much discussion about critical pedagogy. Essentially, this means there is no evidence of a particularly influential ideology informing the ways participants talked about the practice of co-creating curricula. However, whilst not a major topic of discussion in interviews, it is worth noting that just under half of staff participants discussed the political context of higher education and the growing discourse which positons students as consumers. Many saw the principles and values underpinning staff-student collaborations as a positive challenge to this and as providing an alternative discourse to the status quo. Explicit discourse on the values informing this practice is important.

The variability in participant discourse is perhaps symptomatic of the co-existence of neoliberal and critical pedagogy agendas, which influence the practice of co-creating curriculum. I consider there is much about these agendas that is contradictory, and each has the potential to appropriate the practice of co-creating curricula for different purposes. Sometimes staff and students use critical pedagogy in an attempt to counter the worst excesses of neoliberalism, despite both agendas sharing an interest in co-creation. However, to equate macro-level policies with neoliberalism and micro-level practice with critical pedagogy would be too simplistic. Rather, I propose they exist simultaneously, an uncomfortable but real co-existence, which requires an ongoing

interpretation, adjustment, and critique for staff and students engaged in co-creating curricula.

5.2.1 Students as Partners: Guidance or Policy?

The extent to which the language of Students as Partners should be seen as 'policy discourse' or as guidance is perhaps worthy of further exploration at this point. *Student Engagement* as a term has certainly influenced national higher education policy (through inclusion in the white paper, Quality Codes, and monitoring frameworks such as the NSS, KIS and possibly TEF). The QAA quality code B5 is dedicated to Student Engagement and requires institutions to explicitly address engagement as part of quality assurance processes. As a result, the term Student Engagement serves to further strategic investment and direct institutional strategies.

However, the terminology of Students as Partners is currently less evident in these frameworks. The Higher Education Academy and educational researchers have elevated the term to a particular status. The language of Students as Partners appears increasingly in the literature as well as research funding programmes (such as those offered by the HEA). It therefore has influence but does not appear, at this point in time, to be used as a directive which places obligation on institutions to address or adopt this way of working, specifically when compared with other policy initiatives such as student engagement, widening access, employability, or disability, where funding councils have used ring-fenced funding to develop activity and have required institutions to provide reports on their progress and/or compliance. Students as Partners activity, whilst not a formal requirement which universities must address, is an initiative across the UK sector (and internationally) which is gathering pace and has a growing status. In this sense, I argue it has a quasi-policy status.

Recognising this distinction, however, I will continue to refer to Students as Partners as policy, as it is intended to (and has) influenced sector level debate

and practice. It has all the features of policy intention without the political compulsion on HEIs to adopt or develop this practice.

Given this distinction and lack of compulsion upon higher education institutions, it is perhaps unsurprising that none of the institutions included in this study referred to Students as Partners in institutional or learning and teaching strategies. The majority of strategies did, however, make reference to student engagement and, in some instances, had separate student engagement policies.

This could be due to a number of factors, not least of which is the institutional cycle of (re)writing strategies. However, I was surprised to see the absence of Students as Partners terminology in the strategies of Lincoln and Winchester, given the significant investment and profile of the collaborative initiatives in those respective institutions and the relatively recent publications of their respective strategies. Conversely, the University of Glasgow was the only institution to refer to students as 'partners in learning' (University Strategy, 2015-2020, p. 16) but yet does not have an institutional initiative to develop this approach.

5.2.2 Practice Discourse and Dialogue

As described earlier, participants did not appear to have adopted or internalised the current policy discourse of Students as Partners. Perhaps more strikingly, the data from participants did not show any convergence on terminology for defining or describing co-creating curricula. Acknowledging that the sector is at early stages of this type of practice, this is perhaps to be expected. The ways in which participants talked about their collaborations showed considerable variation. The use of proxies and metaphors such as 'working together', 'co-creation', 'co-navigation', and 'a bridge between perspectives' all provided powerful and meaningful expressions of relationships and activities; what it was called seemed less important to participants than the way in which it worked and the values which guided it.

This scenario could be analysed in three different ways. If one was to take a technical-rational view of policy formation and implementation, this lack of consensus could seem alarming and chaotic. It could be argued that key messages of policy guidance have not yet 'filtered down' nor yet been understood. In contrast, using the Policy Implementations Staircase analogy, one could argue that the diversity of descriptions is a manifestation of how guidance has been reframed and 'owned' by the varying contexts of practice. Finally, returning to McLean's ideas of colonisation, one could argue that this area of practice has, so far, resisted being colonised by policy narratives, and the diversity of responses demonstrated the evolvement of communicative action. I do not feel it is possible to claim a particular 'truth' from any one of these interpretations. What I do believe is important to note, however, is that an individual's interpretation of policy enactment is likely to influence the extent to which that individual is comfortable with this lack of convergence and will likely influence perceptions of success and impact.

I would argue that the diversity found within participant interviews should not necessarily be seen as worrisome. Indeed, it would seem the lack of burden of 'policy talk' provided some freedom and creativity for staff and students to explore and co-create. All participants talked about the experiences as worthwhile and positive, regardless of what term they used. The adoption of 'Students as Partners' terminology may change as we see it increasingly used and appearing more and more frequently in conferences, literature, and funding criteria. It would be interesting to see if there is greater convergence on the way this practice is talked about in one or two years' time and whether this influences the nature and practice of co-creating curricula.

Although there was divergence about how the participants named and defined their practice, there was an apparent convergence in the principles which underpinned their collaborative practices. This very much resonates with existing literature (for example Cook Sather *et al*, 2014).

What came across powerfully in interviews was the dialogic nature of collaborations. Staff and students talked about the benefits of creating opportunities for conversations that they would not ordinarily have had through existing structures, such as Student Staff Liaison Committees and module feedback questionnaires. This relates directly to Werder *et al's* (2010) argument for conversational pedagogies who suggested the need for: 'structured informality, shared ownership, reciprocal benefits, broad-based proportional representation and recognition of individual and collective expertise'. Participants articulated principles which underpin these collaborations, such as honesty, transparency, and trust, many of which resonate with existing literature (Cook-Sather *et al,* 2014; Bovill, 2013a; Healey *et al,* 2014). Student participants talked frequently about how much they valued being given the space to express their views, and for these to not only be heard but to be taken seriously and acted upon. They valued the opportunities to articulate the rationale for their ideas and to negotiate how activities developed. The value of participating appeared to come from seeing their agency *in action.*

Staff equally expressed the value of making the time and space for these conversations with students, often expressing how impressed they were by the high levels of insight and engagement from students. This was not only in terms of time and effort on task but the levels of sophistication, critique, and engagement they all brought to the work as well. This reaffirms the argument that students, when invited, often rise to the task, (see Bovill *et al* 2014, for example). The power of spaces for dialogue is reflected in Asghar's (2016) review of Dialogue Days in her own institution. She notes that 'the communication exchanges in a dialogue day appeared to break down barriers and permit both parties to share their concerns in a way that does not normally happen in the everyday classroom' (p. 442). She goes on to cite Gergen's (2009, p. 245) idea that effective education requires effective relationships and that these are achieved through 'circles of participation' which require relational pedagogy. Asghar (2016, p. 442) argues that 'It does not follow staff and students should be best friends but that trust, respect and appreciation are

preconditions for powerful learning'. This idea of relational aspects of collaboration was also voiced by Sue at Lincoln.

Werder *et al's* (2010, p. 18-19) discussion on Conversational Scholarship and Pedagogy of Dialogue offers useful reflections from their own staff-student collaborations on teaching and learning, and suggests five overarching principles for enacting conversational scholarship. These include:

- create structured informality
- provide shared ownership
- ensure reciprocal benefits
- invite broad-based and proportional representation
- recognize individual and collective expertise and contributions

Building upon Shulman's (2005) idea of Signature Pedagogies, Werder *et al* (2010) reflect upon how the model of conversational scholarship embodies a signature pedagogy from communication studies: 'the development of a culture of scholarship relating to teaching and learning which is co-constructed by staff and students alike, is a pedagogy of dialogue'. They go on to quote Huber and Hutchings (2005) who argue the central importance of this when they call for 'more and better occasions to talk about learning [and that] students need to be a part of that discussion'.

I argue here that in the absence of macro-level influence of policy discourse, the language used by participants at the micro level is fluid and interchangeable. Rather than label the particular pedagogies at play, staff and students talked more clearly about the principles of interactions in their collaborative activities. Whilst I was surprised to hear of very few instances of explicit *conversations* about setting up 'ground rules' for running the collaborations, I was struck that staff and students talked about the positive aspects of the processes they were involved in. Rather than problematise this lack of consensus, a small number of

staff participants talked about the possible detrimental effects of explicit conversations about power and decision making processes.

That said, it was reflected back to me numerous times that the opportunity to sit and reflect on the implicit elements of the processes with me (through the research interview) offered time for reflection and articulation which was seen as useful by participants. This illustrates the benefit of my methodological approach which is not possible with approaches to staff and student collaborations such as that taken by Pauli *et al* (2016).

This leaves me in a somewhat conflicted space as a researcher and an educational developer. It raises particular challenges for me when thinking about the implications for practice and how to translate the principles underpinning these collaborations into practice or guidance that could support others who wish to adopt this approach in their own environments. McLean (2008, p. 161) echoes this tension with observations about her own suggestions for developing critical university pedagogy:

> 'I have been at some pains to show how general pedagogic principles might be formulated which do justice to student capacities and which will equip them to act for good in society; at the same time, I have wanted to stress that prescriptions about how to teach well counter these goals'. To offer such prescription would be technical-rational in approach and, as such, would add to the further colonisation of the university lifeworld.'

I think it is clear that articulations of the principles underpinning the work is useful. It helps to illustrate the motivations of staff and students for entering into these collaborations and, to a certain degree, the intentions and expectations associated with them.

5.2.3 The Role of Facilitation in Co-creating Curricula

From analysing the examples of practice within their institutional contexts, I believe the role of a mediator or facilitator is a powerful and enabling factor for

co-creating curricula. This was the case for all activities at Winchester and Lincoln where cross-institutional teams, based in respective Educational/Academic Development Units, were available to support and promote this work. In the example of Edinburgh Napier, Mark Huxham and students were supported by a single colleague from educational development rather than a team.

At Winchester, the programme facilitators offered more than a practical role in terms of administering the programme and running training sessions. Participants talked about the team as a 'go to' point for guidance, debate, and discussion. Equally, at Napier, the educational developer there was able to formatively evaluate the process (Huxham *et al*, 2015) as well as act as facilitator at group meetings. Mihans *et al* (2008, p. 3) reflect on the importance of a facilitator in their own experience of co-creating curricula, noting 'We invited him to join us on the project since his presence and facilitation might change the power dynamics in the collaborative venture between faculty [staff] and students in the same department'. Woolmer *et al* (2016, p. 24) suggest:

> 'Academic developers have a role to play in bringing staff together, and sometimes bringing staff and students together, to facilitate dialogue which helps identify areas of collaboration, enhances confidence and develops trust between individuals involved. Similarly, academic developers have a key role in contributing to developing staff knowledge of education theory and practice to support them in planning, development, delivery and evaluation. This has to be tempered with enabling staff and students within the disciplines to retain their sense of ownership and draw on the variety of knowledge and experiences in a way that they see fit.'

Involvement of educational developers in staff-student collaborations has the potential to address several related dimensions. They can act as a facilitator and evaluator as demonstrated in data collected in my study. In addition to this, I argue that educational developers could play a key role in bringing criticality to research on student engagement in learning and teaching, and co-creation of curricula, specifically. By this I mean educational developers could have decisive roles in developing the theoretical underpinnings of student engagement, engaging with debate which positions the student as a consumer and focusses on

satisfaction, and providing alternative theoretical perspectives. I would also argue that educational developers not only have a role to play *within* collaborations between staff and students but also *across* levels of an institution. Drawing on my own professional experience, I know that educational developers are often in positions where they act as conduits for implementing aspects of Learning and Teaching strategies. Equally, they play a key role in helping individuals, usually staff, to develop teaching and learning in context-specific scenarios. This experience and position within universities could help achieve what McLean (2008, p. 161) calls for non-prescriptive, context-specific guidance to support staff.

5.2.4 Principles of Co-creating Curricula

Analysis of the data shows overwhelmingly that matters of process were important to participants and this confirms findings in the literature. I was surprised, though, to see how few had addressed these issues explicitly, and that it was only through participating in the research that they were able to reflect on this. This suggests that the interview space itself provided an important means to pause and reflect on practice. Equally, I was surprised to see how many participants felt they did not need to have explicit conversations about process at the start. Mark, at Napier, who was one of the few to do this, noted that it felt very awkward trying to discuss power relations in the collaboration. In doing so, Mark talked about how it had the contrary effect of raising suspicions amongst the students. Others noted that they felt constrained by the idea of having to discuss 'ground rules' at the start of a collaboration.

There was a strong sense from participants that the process is creative and that staff and students are working with a range of unknowns when co-creating curricula. This added to the excitement and energising nature of the collaborations (which, in turn, helped keep participants motivated and engaged).

Whilst there was little evidence of explicit discussion, there was a lot of discussion from those interviewed about the principles of collaboration. For students, there was a strong sense of feeling valued and increased levels of agency and ownership over their learning. Again, this resonates with findings in other literature (Cook-Sather *et al*, 2014; Bovill, 2013a).

Cook-Sather (2014) and Felten (2015) suggest staff-student collaborations share similarities to Threshold Concepts. Participants enter into a liminal space when co-creating curricula. In doing so, there is an encounter with and mediation of risk. This raises interesting questions about participants' orientation to risk-taking and dealing with uncertainty and warrants further investigation. Developing the principles of partnership are, arguably, a foundational requirement to managing the associated risks of co-creating curricula.

5.3 Moving beyond Outcomes-focussed Curricula

Co-creating curricula is an inherently creative process. Participants talked about the dialogic and negotiated process of collaborations. This dialogue, as discussed in chapter four, part B, was powerful and meaningful. In discussion about curriculum, a number of staff participants challenged the usefulness of learning outcomes (LOs) and the accompanying assumptions relating to intention and transparency.

Staff participants voiced concerns that learning outcomes were sometimes misused and overly restrictive when co-creating curricula. These comments relate to co-creating curricula but also a broader reflection on, as they saw it, the narrow ways in which learning outcomes have come to dominate curriculum development and learning and teaching in a broader sense.

Dobbins *et al* (2016) discuss how the rise of learning outcomes has come about in international higher education. They highlight findings from a QAA survey in

2007 which found varying engagement with learning outcomes across 70 higher education institutions. Dobbins *et al* (2016, p. 1218) argue that the extensive application of learning outcomes can be related to two significant developments: 'the Bologna process and the growth of managerialism'. These are separate developments but have had significant impacts. The Bologna process was established to improve transparency and ease of movement in and through higher education in Europe. The rise of managerialism has resulted from increasing concern with accountability in higher education. Learning outcomes, Dobbins *et al* (2016) argue, have been used as a mechanism for achieving the Bologna process and contributed to the rise of managerialism.

Learning outcomes can be traced further back, and can be grounded theoretically, to Biggs' original conception of constructive alignment of teaching and learning. His basic idea of constructive alignment resonates with co-creation of curricula in that it recognises the constructed nature of learning. However, his arguments that learning is a bounded system which can codified and 'aligned' with a known destination become problematic when looking at the actual practice of co-creating curricula.

A small number of staff participants expressed views that UK higher education has become dominated by the focus on learning outcomes and argued this has resulted in on overly-deterministic idea of learning which erodes space to discuss and, importantly, value unintended outcomes of learning. This last point is particularly important in the context of co-creating curricula. The concern here appears to relate to the technical-rational view that learning outcomes and the idea of constructive alignment can be codified and is underpinned by particular notions of causality; learning task X will lead to learning outcome Y. One participant expressed his concern that this deterministic view of learning seemed to be about protecting oneself in a marketised higher education arena which defeated the idea of education as an exploratory process. This resonates with Dobbins *et al's* (2016, p. 1233) study of staff perceptions of learning outcomes. They found some of their participants saw learning outcomes as a legal safety net, noting: 'This sense of safety appears to derive from the

transparency learning outcomes can offer about both teaching to be delivered and the learning to be undertaken, and so protect against student-as customer complaints'. The process, when distilled in these terms, becomes mechanistic in its efforts to be transparent. This mechanistic approach is reinforced by prevailing quality assurance processes. The pre-occupation with accountability and transparency, whilst reasonable in intent, serves to stifle the potential for learning as exploration.

I would suggest that these concerns reflect the colonisation of learning outcomes by quality assurance frameworks and managerialist practices which reinforce consumer-orientated values of higher education. The dominance of learning outcomes is achieved through module approval processes which expect stated learning outcomes prior to validation. They have become the 'go to' source for staff and students to see the aims of any course or programme and to know on what, precisely, students will assessed. Universities have statements of how best write clear and effective learning outcomes.

Biggs did not intend for learning outcomes and his ideas of constructive alignment to be appropriated by managerialist agendas. His original aim in suggesting constructive alignment was to find ways which put the learner at the centre of course design.

However, to know the destination is to assume that it is pre-defined. This becomes problematic when the destination is itself subject to discussion and co-creation between staff and students. The expression of learning outcomes prior to collaboration has the potential to undermine the process before it has started. Or, at least, if not to undermine it, then to possibly limit it.

The reality of practice is perhaps not as constrained as this. Participants talked about their practice of writing learning outcomes in a way that left enough flexibility to enable exploration through collaboration. Dobbins *et al* (2016) also

found elements of this in their own research, noting differences across disciplines in terms of the degree of flexibility with which staff used learning outcomes. It appears participants in my study were employing subtle 'work arounds'. For example, Eurig at Queen Margaret's talked about 'finding spaces within the bureaucracy' to be creative. This means co-creation is not hindered by learning outcomes and notions of constructive alignment. However, neither is it being helped by the often dominant focus on learning outcomes in quality assurance processes.

Huxham *et al* (2015) reflect upon their experiences of co-creating curricula and offer a more direct challenge to ideas of constructive alignment when co-creating curricula. They describe their experience of co-creating curricula as co-navigation of a course and draw upon the metaphor of natural lines from mountaineering as a way to characterise staff and students co-creating curricula. A natural line in mountaineering is characterised as being the most challenging but most rewarding route to climb. It is certainly not the easiest route and is contrasted to 'contrived' routes. Huxham *et al* (2015, p. 533) argue that Biggs's idea of constructive alignment has been used to 'demonstrate the importance of learning outcomes and to stress that it is what students do, rather than what teachers expect them to do, that determines their learning'.

They go on to argue that the principles underpinning constructive alignment are 'less favourable for those interested in power because of the implied focus on the design activities by the tutor and its strong emphasis on predetermined outcome. In addition, a commitment to sharing power within the learning and teaching context involves more than simply moving from a teacher-focus to a student-focus, but instead a full re-examination of the inter-relationships of both roles'. They exemplify these contrasting ideas through the following table (p. 533):

Table 8: Comparison of Natural Lines and Constructive Alignment approaches to curriculum, Huxham *et al* (2015, p. 533)

Natural Lines	Constructive Alignment
Mountaineering metaphor	Surveying/engineering metaphor
Identifying an elegant route	Creating and efficient route
Team effort	Individual effort
Process informed by outcome	Outcomes determine process
Bounded flexibility and spontaneity	Carefully planned and predictable
Requires risky commitment	Risk is minimised

It is perhaps too simplistic to characterise the two approaches as a set of binary opposites; however, there is something powerful in the distinctions drawn here by Huxham *et al* which warrants further exploration. The principles of their Natural Lines approach combined with data from participants which illustrate 'work-arounds', or subversion, of learning outcomes, indicates that co-creating curricula is challenging one of the most established doctrines in UK higher education course design at the moment.

Huxham *et al's* presentation in Table 8 illustrates the features of constructive alignment and we can see why this would be attractive for a higher education context which is risk-averse and subject to a quality control culture. Constructive alignment is intended to be efficient, demonstrate cause and effect, places responsibility on the individual, is planned and predictable and therefore 'less-risky'. This is undoubtedly in line with the technical-rational view of higher education and so we can see how the quality audit culture pervades learning and teaching practices and is mutually reinforced through ongoing course validation processes which require academics to provide learning outcomes and demonstrate alignment.

Contrast this with Huxham *et al's* Natural Lines metaphor. Their list of characteristics includes an emphasis on process, a team effort (therefore shared responsibility), and space for flexibility and spontaneity. A participant in my study described this as 'finding spaces within the bureaucracy'. I would argue, however, that this is more than finding spaces in which to be subversive. Rather, co-creating curricula is about redefining the *nature* of these spaces, shifting away from the technical-rational approach of alignment to one which recognises collective commitment to sharing risks and responsibilities to co-create and co-own the processes and outcomes of co-creating curricula. In this context, learning is relational. The natural lines metaphor, through enactment in practice, would underpin and realise the process of co-creation and collective responsibility. Such an approach to curriculum development would legitimise and prioritise dialogue between staff and students. It would also serve to disrupt the dominant, colonising discourse of constructive alignment and practice of learning outcomes, offering the space for dialogic pedagogies and co-creation of curricula; this is a radical challenge to existing conventions in higher education.

I want to bring in a caveat here and state that whilst participants talked about the creative process of co-creating curricula (and all of the opportunities and challenges this entails within disciplinary conventions), curriculum, whether co-created or not, is always developed and enacted within a given context. These contexts shift and change with time and situation and operate pushes and pulls on curriculum. We must acknowledge that any framework to facilitate co-creation of curricula has to be mediated within given (and varying contexts). Jenkins' (2009) discussion of curriculum as Ouija Board illustrates this reality well. The contextual pushes and pulls, or forces, which influence curricula are constantly at play, and academics are used to exercising judgement to navigate the tensions these create. Staff participants reflected on these tensions when carrying out the diamond ranking exercise that included curriculum descriptors adapted from Fraser and Bosanquet's (2006) research. This methodological approach provided rich data as a result of participants reflecting on their assumptions about curriculum. For example, Peter from Glasgow gave his initial definition of curriculum as being "… *the course content. It means 'what am I going to teach?*" but later discussed his inclusion of pedagogy in his enactment

of curriculum. By asking them to prioritise and rank by importance elements of curriculum, participants appraised their own priorities alongside those of their discipline, their institution and, where relevant, regulatory or professional bodies. This is not, in itself, unique. However, when asking staff to articulate the explicit influences on their curriculum, (and which aspects they therefore prioritise) coupled with Huxham *et al's* (2015) Natural Lines approach to curriculum development, I argue that you can help colleagues better understand the context they operate within, their priorities for curriculum development, and the processes and principles they use to approach collaboration.

This is significant as it moves us beyond an articulation of the principles which should (and do) underpin co-creation of curriculum (as has been evidenced in existing literature and confirmed by my own research) to one which offers tools to discuss context and process. It also offers a more nuanced way of discussing method and principles than that offered by Pauli *et al's* (2016) study which sought only to assume proxies of collaborative teaching and learning practices.

Academics are forever navigating these tensions but what is exciting about co-creating curricula, as indicated through my data analysis, are the opportunities to work through, interpret, and reinterpret this context with the added perspective of students.

5.4 Towards a New Model of Co-creation

I focus in detail on the examples of practice I investigated and explore the logistics of how collaborations worked. In chapter two, I introduced four models from current literature that offered descriptions of staff-student collaborations in learning and teaching. The first two outlined domains of collaborative activity (Dunne and Zandstra, 2011; Healey *et al*, 2014) and the third, roles that students occupy within these domains (Bovill *et al*, 2016). I also introduced another model, Bovill and Bulley's (2011) ladder of student participation in

curriculum design which described the nature and extent of student participation in decision making about curriculum.

I now take the models from Healey *et al* (2014) and Bovill *et al* (2016) and relate them to my data. In doing so, I propose that an amalgamation of them can help describe the various examples of practice from my study.

Before doing so, it is useful to briefly recap these models. Healey *et al* (2014) identify four activity areas, or domains, in which staff and students collaborate (as outlined in Fig 3 on page 36). These include:

- Learning, teaching and assessment
- Subject-based research and inquiry
- Scholarship of teaching and learning
- Curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy

In the centre of their model they highlight partnership learning communities, which they propose 'emphasises the processes by which the four different kinds of partnership operate' (p. 25).

Bovill *et al* (2016) offer a complementary model to Healey *et al's* which highlights four roles that students can occupy when co-creating teaching and learning. These include:

- Representative
- Consultant
- Co-researcher
- Pedagogical co-designer

Bovill *et al* (2016, p. 4) note that these 'overlapping spheres highlight that co-creation frequently entails students adopting multiple roles that can require

crossing different domains of institutional and individual practice'. Bovill and Bulley's (2011) ladder of participation shows the nature and extent of participation of students in decisions about curriculum, ranging from no input to taking full control.

These models are helpful in that they provide a means of describing the types of activities that staff and students can collaborate on as well as the nature of the roles that students can occupy and the extent to which they participate. Importantly, the authors of these models acknowledge the fluid and overlapping nature of the reality of practice and, for that reason, these models are useful heuristics for enabling a way to think about, discuss, and 'place' staff-student collaborations in relation to one another rather than prescriptions of practice. For example, an individual student can occupy several of the roles outlined by Bovill *et al* (i.e. as a student representative, as a summer research intern, as a developer of a new module) throughout their time at university. These students are what Bryson (2014) has defined as the 'super-engaged'.

This was certainly the case for the majority of student participants in my study. They had participated in various roles during their time at university and had frequently occupied roles as student representatives at class or programme level whilst at the same time separately being engaged as co-designers of courses. In a small number of instances, students talked about how the learning from these different roles were mutually reinforcing; in one instance, a student noted (Linford, at Lincoln) that working as a pedagogical co-designer gave new insights and sensitivities to his role as a College Representative. Students also talked about other students perceiving them as being 'the super-engaged', the ones who 'were involved in everything' and how this was off-putting for others who wanted to get involved but felt they could not give as much time. These students had applied and had been selected to work in small teams to review and/or redesign curricula.

In contrast, some of the examples of practice in my study involved working with whole cohorts of students on a single module. Niamh at UCD, Eurig at QMU, and Susan at Glasgow worked in this way. There were fewer examples of staff and students co-creating curricula in this way. Staff participants wanted to work in this way to ensure inclusivity of all students but also to highlight the challenges of working in this way, mainly in terms of dealing with students who were resistant to co-creating curricula.

Additionally, by working with the whole cohort in a module or class, there are fewer opportunities to opt out. This is inherently more inclusive (and democratic) but, as noted by Niamh at UCD, a staff member has to invest time to engage and discuss resistance if the collaboration is to be meaningful and successful. This is perhaps a much riskier scenario. Niamh shared how she had been approached by students who did not want to participate when working to co-create curricula with an entire class. Eurig at Queen Margaret's also shared experiences of students rejecting and resisting proposed curricula which was considered compulsory (and therefore not for negotiation) by staff. In both cases, Niamh and Eurig talked about the need to step back and revisit the rationale and intentions behind co-creating curricula. This included open discussions about power and the final verdict resting with staff. Whilst not necessarily comfortable or easy conversations to have, Niamh and Eurig reported that the collaborations continued and felt that the fact they held these conversations with their students was, in fact, a testament to the openness and trust established in the group.

Bryson *et al* (2015) discuss approaches to working in collaboration to co-create curricula, proposing pros and cons of each selective and whole cohort models. They differentiate between the selective mode of working in collaboration (and describe this as Model A) and working with whole cohorts (described as Model B). Other authors (Bovill *et al,* 2016a), Moore-Cherry *et al,* 2015) are also urging staff interested in co-creating curricula to seriously engage with issues of inclusivity and working with whole cohorts or large classes. Bryson *et al's* (2015, p. 8) discussion begins to tease out some of the challenges that need addressing

to do so. These include the growing workload of staff and students, difficulties to scale-up activities, training or support for working in collaboration, and university quality assurance processes getting in the way. The tensions highlighted by Bryson *et al* were reflected by participants in my study. Whilst Niamh at UCD argued strongly a rationale for working with whole classes of students (to ensure inclusivity and parity), Sue at Lincoln and Susan at Glasgow reflected they could only co-create curricula in a meaningful way if working with a small group of students.

5.4.1 A Hybrid Approach to Co-creating Curricula

It is interesting to see a number of examples in my study that were hybrids of the Model A and B proposed by Bryson *et al* (2015). These involved a selected group of students and staff collaborating in a Model A fashion, but, at intervals, students involved the wider cohort/class via focus groups, questionnaires, and presentations in lectures in order to discuss, receive feedback, and gain consensus on the proposed co-created curricula. Put simply, this meant that the majority of the co-creation took place in Model A mode but consultation and engagement of the wider cohort (Model B) was also possible. Examples of this type of practice can be found in dentistry at Glasgow, drama at Lincoln, environmental science at Napier, and law at Winchester.

This hybrid model adds another dimension to the work of Bryson *et al*, which I describe below as a Model C, of practice in staff and student co-creating curricula (shown in Figure 8 below).
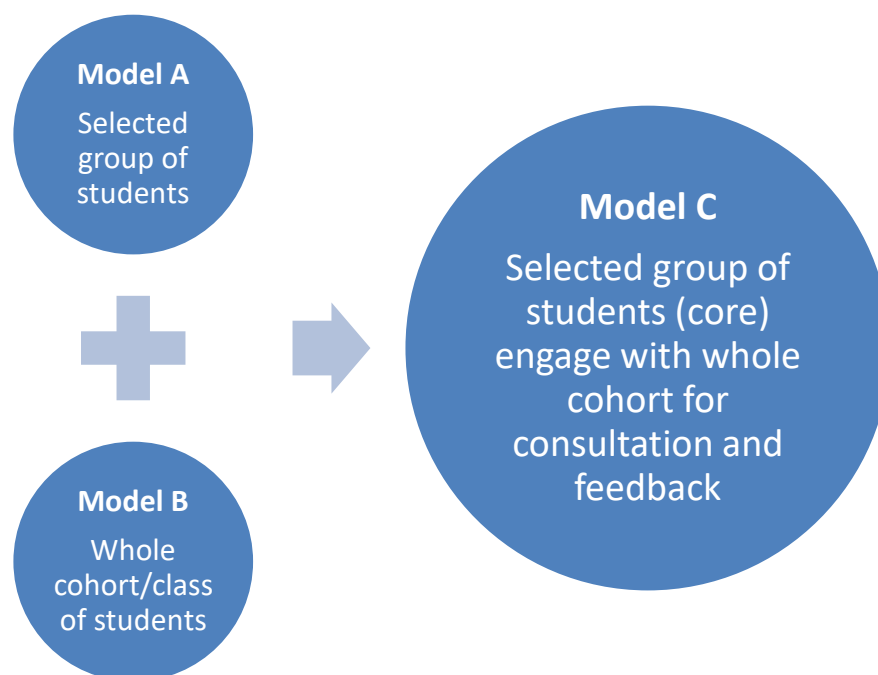
Fig 8: Models of student participation in co-creating curricula

Importantly, Model C involves students occupying roles and domains of activity *at the same time* throughout the life of the project, demonstrating quite clearly just how fluid the roles (Bovill *et al*, 2016) and domains of activity (Healey *et al*, 2014) operate in practice. Students are involved as pedagogic co-designers and consultants but also as SoTL scholars and co-researchers. The involvement of the wider cohort in Model C, albeit partially in some examples of practice, also affords opportunities for a larger, more representative group of students to participate and inform the co-development of curricula. The wider cohort are perhaps acting as respondents rather than collaborators, but if consultation is underpinned by the principles of participatory action research, then the sense of ownership and influence over the outcome may be magnified for a whole cohort and, indeed, may be more inclusive and representative. Werder *et al* (2010, p. 26) remind us of their belief that 'faculty, staff and administrators *need* [original emphasis] to hear from students, keeners and non-keeners as well as inbetweeners, because they have the expertise to share and they need a place to voice it'.

Model C offers the potential to bridge the individual gains of a small, selected group of students with the collective in terms of greater participation as well as

in terms of impact and value. Model C could help address the inclusion dimension too. It brings together the models of Bovill *et al* (2016a) and Healey *et al* (2014) and enables us to discuss a continuum of engagement for different groups of students at different stages of the co-creation activity/project. Arguably, Model C could also provide for greater opportunities for student participation in curriculum design, (drawing on Bovill and Bulley's (2011) Ladder of Participation) whilst ameliorating some of the challenges, i.e. time and capacity, of a solely Model B approach.

5.4.2 Do Conceptions of Curriculum Influence Co-creation?

I explored how participants understood and defined curriculum as I was interested to see if and how this related to their understanding and practice of co-creating curricula; my premise was that an academic's definition of curriculum is likely to influence what they invite students to co-create with them.

Barnett and Coate (2005) argue there is a silence in higher education about curriculum, noting that our lack of debate in the sector leads to a worrisome situation of assumptions influencing policy, resource, and practice. This lack of debate in the UK has also resulted in there being a lack of clarity, in conceptual terms, regarding curriculum in higher education. This dilemma strongly influenced my rationale for exploring conceptualisations of curricula with participants and including this in my research questions.

Staff participants confirmed numerous times within interviews that they had rarely given thought to their conceptualisation of curriculum and what parameters they might use in such a definition. In addition, it was clear that there was little time and space prioritised in their work to explore the issue, even in institutional or departmental forums such as Learning and Teaching committees. It became apparent quite quickly that students were even less involved in discussing definitions of curriculum and found it difficult to articulate

even tentative ideas. I had been naive in my assumptions about this in my pilot study and soon realised that if staff struggle to define curriculum, then certainly students will too.

Staff participants reflected that the few opportunities they might have to encounter such debates would be degree programme planning committees but that these would usually focus on issues of syllabus content, quality assurance, and programme administration issues rather than more fundamental issues of curriculum conceptualisation. To illustrate, this was reflected strongly in Judy's interview where she described teaching as "*the most private public act we do*". Her reflections, and those of other participants, highlight the importance of the individual in determining and exercising their own understandings of curriculum. Even with the caveat of disciplinary conventions, particularly in those teaching within sciences where content is given greater prominence, it would appear from the data that these multiple perspectives on curriculum co-exist and function even in the absence of explicit discussions on the issue.

The majority of examples of practice included in my study looked at curriculum shape and process. Examples in Queen Margaret's, UCD, and Glasgow showed students co-creating content. Mark at Napier talked about students rejecting the opportunity to co-create content, expressing their views that they felt this was the academic's area of expertise and that they wanted to look at curriculum processes. Susan at Glasgow and Mark and Napier were the only examples which demonstrated co-creation of assessment.

Sue from Lincoln talked about the importance of knowledge production and the processes involved but went on to express this in terms of students constructing facts, which seems to reject the idea of knowledge being socially constructed.

The lack of debate about curriculum, and teaching practice more generally, resonates strongly with Shulman's (1993, 2004) discussion about the solitary

nature of teaching and the need for teaching to be reconsidered as community property – to be visible and given status amongst staff across disciplines. His discussion has particular merit in light of this study as it highlights the need for the academic community to explore their implicit assumptions about curriculum and that this is, arguably, a pre-cursor to any further discussion of co-creating curricula with students. If we accept that our own definitions of curriculum influence what we invite students to co-create, then we should not only be concerned with how we understand definitions of co-creation but also, more fundamentally, how we view curriculum (and the relationship with co-creation/collaboration). I argue that this requires use of participatory methods, such as the diamond ranking exercise used in my study, to explore this.

Interestingly, it is worth noting that whilst all of the staff participants in my study reflected that they had little opportunity to discuss definitions of curriculum, it was evident that this did not appear to disrupt or hinder the progress of staff-student collaborations.

5.5 Evidencing Value

In addition to my research questions relating to definitions of co-creating curricula, I wanted to explore how staff, and students defined the impact and value of co-creating curricula together. I wanted to explore what mattered to them in terms of the value of the activity as well as understanding what worked. In addition, I wanted to investigate how practitioners' definitions of impact and value at the micro-level of institutions reflected (or not) measures of impact in institutional strategies. My first step to addressing this dimension of my study was to explore debates within the literature. In chapter two, I outlined arguments which suggested approaches to measuring impact are not politically neutral and that notions of causality are often linked to technicist ideas of measurement. Whilst highlighting the cautionary stance towards conceptualisations of impact, I introduced Bamber's (2013) desideratum of evidence, which argues the need to reframe discussions about impact to discussions about value.

Bamber *et al* (2009, p. 14) argue that 'much professional knowledge is tacit, which means that it is not codified and then shared'. This signals clearly that appropriate evaluation tools need to be used to 'work with' this complexity. If we can find ways to articulate the tacit knowledge of those involved in collaborative activities, then we face the next challenge of how to make this knowledge available to influence practice in other settings. Bamber *et al* (2009, p. 14) also talk about the need for bridging and boundary-crossing to support any kind of translation and reconstruction of practice from one social context to another. This is a key concern for my study in terms of highlighting lessons for the sector.

5.5.1 What Constitutes Value?

I return here to my critique of the neoliberal ideas of impact and evidence in relation to learning and teaching in higher education and discuss them in the context of my data. Bamber (2013) presents practical suggestions for colleagues who are evaluating learning and teaching initiatives, suggesting they draw upon a range of indicators to demonstrate value, including professional judgement. She urges caution over what she describes as the 'impact chimera' but acknowledges that we have to take cognisance of the accountability/impact agenda. Similarly, Shulman (2013) urges higher education researchers and teachers to consider a range of evidence 'types', suggesting that both a randomised control trial and a rich case study analysis are equal, with one being no less valid than the other. Importantly, both Bamber's and Shulman's approaches advocate the importance of opinion and judgement in informing our views about what is valuable in the learning experience. Shulman has been an ardent supporter of scholarly enquiry into one's teaching.

He has not only made powerful arguments about the need for different types of evidence (a combination of randomised control trials, detailed case studies and the judgement from professional wisdom), but he has also called on colleagues to make this data public. This is the premise of his idea of Teaching as

Community Property (1993, 2004). This principle, along with the methodological diversity he advocates, enables debate about the value of learning interactions. Demonstrations of how academics and students apply practice wisdom can help build a (critical) discourse about value and reclaim the territory of impact and causality. He argues that the application of wisdom and professional judgement is important, and he stresses the importance of contextual/environmental factors in understanding teaching practices. This principle shifts our gaze from wanting to know 'what works', underpinned by an ideology of transferability of practice, to *understanding how it is working here and at this time*.

5.5.2 Perceptions of Value

When discussing the value of being involved in these roles, the students were keen to express how they had gained a new appreciation of the difficulties of course design (and teaching in general) as well as developing their confidence and honing their ability to negotiate. This is discussed in more detail later at section 5.5.4 but I raise it here to note that these gains were all expressed in individualistic terms, i.e. the benefits were seen to be to the individual students and that these were gained from being selected to work as a student pedagogic consultant. As others have expressed (Bovill *et al,* 2016; Moore Cherry *et al* 2015; Bryson *et al,* 2015), this raises ethical considerations for how we involve students in teaching and learning, as we must pay attention to the demographics and learning profiles of the students who come forward and participate in these collaborative activities. This has been discussed by, for example, Cook Sather (2015).

Transparent selection processes are key to ensure diversity and inclusion in collaborations. Staff participants offered their reflections on selection processes, all of which involved application and interview. However, they also reflected that the students were already known to them as interested and engaged students who had shown enthusiasm in their learning. We need to address issues of diversity and difference of perspective not just in simple dichotomous terms of staff and student but also in recognising the plurality and

heterogeneity of the student population. This includes working with students from a range of backgrounds and perhaps not necessarily with students who are the highest achievers in terms of grades (Felten *et al,* 2013). This ensures the value given to different perspectives can be retained.

Access to influential figures, or gatekeepers, seemed to be valued by a number of student participants. They cited this as one of the things they valued in the process; it gave access to those who could influence action. It also gave them an identity beyond their immediate course, which in turn seemed to add to their feeling of agency and belonging within the institution. This was strongly apparent at Lincoln and Winchester.

5.5.3 Cognitive Dissonance with Measurement

Healey *et al* (2014, p. 10) discuss the cognitive dissonance of using tools such as NSS and KIS to measure the success of staff and student collaborations. Participants themselves recognised the nuanced relationship between needing to evidence product and outputs and the personal development which comes from the process of collaboration. I share Healey *et al's* (2014) concerns regarding cognitive dissonance with measurement tools such as the NSS (and the possible introduction of TEF) but recognise that these measures are here to stay and they are powerful. Staff participants voiced how quality assurance and evaluation tools were necessary for transparency but saw working with students as an opportunity to gain much richer insights and, importantly, to enter into a discussion of ideas to co-create curricula. I was also interested to see that student participants expressed frustration at existing evaluation mechanisms (such as end of module evaluations) and the limitations of feedback (which Trowler and Trowler (2010) noted was the predominant way that students could traditionally influence curriculum and learning). Abi at Lincoln expressed the benefits of being involved including being able to *"create the course we want rather than the course the academics think we want"*.

Cook-Sather and Felten (forthcoming) recognise that universities are made up of individuals whose values align with neoliberal managerialist ideologies and those who reject such values. They draw upon Hansen's (2014) idea of the 'embodied cosmopolitan' to propose that 'the fundamental work of academic leadership is not to aim for universally shared values but rather to cultivate practices that can be widely embraced by a diversity of people and that recognize the contributions of differently positioned people' (p. 2). They go on to describe the need for academic leadership that is underpinned by the ethic of reciprocity and the practice of partnership. Whilst Cook-Sather and Felten are discussing the need for this new model of leadership in a wider sense, I apply their idea directly to the business of evidencing value, as it is the principle of plurality (of positions, ideologies and values) that underpin the arguments presented by Bamber (2013) and Shulman (2013).

The principles of ethical leadership advocated by Cook-Sather and Felten might help facilitate the hopeful spaces that McLean (2008) advocates for and provide the very forum for development of communicative reason, a space to challenge and debate for the better good and to debate the various types of evidence that, when taken together, indicate the value of these collaborations.

5.5.4 Identifying What Matters as well as What Works

My study provides rich and contextualised accounts of staff and students co-creating curricula. A key finding from my study has been that participants described their experiences as positive, both in terms of the outputs from collaborations as well as the process of working together.

In chapter two, I noted Bamber's (2013) argument for reframing discussions about impact to discussions about value and I shared Cousin's (2013) caution about focussing on accounts of 'what works'. These authors suggest it is possible to ameliorate neoliberal and managerialist ideologies and practices to focus on gathering various types of evidence to judge success. I wish to build on their

arguments here as I believe identifying the value of staff and student co-creating curricula has further nuances. It is important to ask practitioners, at the micro-level of an organisation, how the practice of co-creating curricular works in their context, and to identify the key success factors that have enabled all involved to judge whether or not it was a success. Understanding ways in which these practices can be offered to others (more frequently) is crucial if the sector is to see student involvement to co-create curricula grow.

Bamber's (2013) triangle of evidence, outlined in chapter two, provides a useful framework to identify a range of evidence that helps construct a case for judging the success of an educational initiative. Reflecting on the outcomes of my study, I suggest that it is essential to ask participants what *matters* to them in terms of the collaboration being a success rather than asking them simply 'what works'. This is best exemplified in the interview with Laura, a student at Winchester. She expressed her awareness of the need to have an output at the end of their project – a set of learning resources – as this is what the university had funded and expected to be delivered. However, in terms of what she perceived to be of greatest value from the collaboration, she talked at length about being seen with respect by staff, about developing her confidence to negotiate, and about drawing upon her experiences of learning with dyslexia to improve, as she saw it, resources for other students.

I do not wish to suggest there are not quantitative evaluative tools to capture the measures of success expressed by Laura. However, it is rare that an institution will prioritise capturing this type of evidence. Rather, all institutional strategies analysed for each case in my study included an improvement of NSS scores and/or employability/graduate destination statistics as the main indicators of success (or Key Performance Indicator) for teaching and learning. At the time of writing, it is not clear what proxies will be used to measure teaching excellence with the proposed Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) but there is every potential for a greater concentration on satisfaction measures rather than including measures such as those identified by Laura. This highlights the need for educational researchers to continue gathering rich accounts of

practice through case studies such as those gathered in my study and to continue making the case for these to be considered alongside other proxies of success. By asking what matters at the micro level of an institution, the researcher (or evaluator) can adopt principles of participatory research and work with participants to identify the criteria by which they believe an activity should be judged. The aim then is not to collect generalisable data of 'what works' but rather rich, contextualised pictures. In this way, the culmination of different types of data (Shulman, 2013) helps us to develop our understanding of the value and impact of co-creating curricula.

The argument for this can be advanced by educational researchers. However, it is essential that leaders and managers in higher education facilitate and enable this to happen too. I want to illustrate this by returning to Cook-Sather and Felten's (forthcoming) argument that neoliberal and critical theory ideologies can (and do) co-exist within higher education institutions. They suggest that a way to reconcile these ideologies is through a leadership and management approach which is driven by principles of academic leadership where 'partnership is the practice through which people engage in reciprocal processes of teaching and learning that embrace a spirit of cosmopolitanism' (p. 11). They define cosmopolitan in this context, as being open and reflective of new ideas, people, values and practices. Their argument is specifically useful to my study because the ethical leadership style they advocate can create the types of spaces for dialogue with staff and students about what matters as well as what works. Advocating such an approach takes into account responsibility for transparency and creating fair access to positive learning for students across an institution as well as also appreciating that perspectives of what matters will differ from context to context and between individuals. Taken together, these evidence types demonstrate the complexity of co-creating curricula rather than simplifying it.

Werder *et al* (2010, p.26) reflect on the importance of leadership to create an environment in which students want to participate, and, importantly, return to. This is of particular relevance when considering sustainability of initiatives. They

state: 'Leaders' personal characteristics, the values they hold, and the extent of their commitment contribute to how others perceive the organisation. …. In this case it was her facilitative ability- her ability to model facilitated dialogue- that proved to be perhaps the most positive influence on these students'. Asghar (2016) also provides an example of how this type of space can be created in his example of Dialogue Days within an institution.

5.6 The Role of Institutional Support

A key relationship I addressed in my research questions related to the interface between the practices of co-creating curricula (at the micro level of institutions) with the institutional strategy statements (at the macro level of institutions).

Part A of chapter four presented my analysis of strategy statements for each institution (case). Where available, I also analysed related statements regarding initiatives addressing student engagement.

Analysis of strategy statements showed minimal references to student engagement in learning and teaching and, with the exception of the University of Glasgow and University of Edinburgh, no reference to Students as Partners or co-creation of the curriculum. I acknowledge there are limitations to how much can be inferred through such documentation, but it is striking that there is minimal mention of student engagement in learning and teaching and that all institutional measures of success relate to NSS scores. Whilst institutions such as Edinburgh and Lincoln have separate Student Engagement strategies they are weighted towards student engagement through governance and representation.

Despite the lack of visibility of co-creating curricula (or student engagement in learning and teaching more broadly) in strategy statements, it is striking to note the breadth of practice that occurs across all cases. Through interviews with participants at the micro level, I gained a different perspective on institutional

structures and mechanisms that were enabling staff and students to co-create curricula.

In nearly all instances of practice, staff had received some form of development funding to support collaborations with students. In the main, this was used to pay students to participate. Mark at Edinburgh Napier was the only participant to talk about their intention to not pay for student involvement as they felt payment entrenched student-as-consumer relationships. In UCD, Niamh was provided funding for a teaching fellowship.

Of greater significance across cases were the instances, at Lincoln and Winchester, of central teams (based within educational development units) which were created specifically to support staff-student collaborations in learning and teaching. These schemes effectively operate across the institution at the meso-level (the middle level) of management. The two teams were configured differently and the respective schemes in each institution operated in different ways. Both Lincoln and Winchester have received external recognition for the work they have done. Lincoln has reflected their commitment to staff-student collaborations more explicitly in their strategy, whereas Winchester is now a key partner in the HEFCE REACT project which aims to identify best practice and support institutions across the UK specifically to engage with hard to reach students.

The institutional programmes had different models of working. Lincoln's team works primarily via a staff network of Student Engagement champions. The manager of the team looks to work with and through this network to identify projects, build capacity, administer funds, and support review and progress of work. They rarely interact directly with student participants. Conversely, the Student Fellows Scheme (SFS) at Winchester is a partnership between the university and students' union. Their primary focus is to work with students to identify projects and then 'match them' with staff partners. Staff can also approach the scheme with an idea, but this had occurred less frequently. The

majority of the projects operated by the SFS did not address curricula specifically. However, the ones that were included in my study had all been initiated by students. This is notable, as it is staff who usually act as gatekeepers to issues related to curriculum (Bourner 2004; Bovill and Woolmer, 2014).

The teams at both institutions operated a facilitating role as well as an administrative one. They were a conduit between senior management and 'on the ground' project teams. They were also facilitators of discussion between staff and students. This was particularly evident at Winchester where student participants talked frequently about their contact with central staff involved with SFS. This was in relation to additional training and support offered centrally but also on a one to one basis where students wanted to discuss ideas of how to approach their staff partner. This model of working is not unique and shares many similarities with other cross institutional staff-student collaborations, for example, the SaLT programme at Bryn Mawr where students work with staff to observe and offer feedback on teaching, discussed extensively by Cook-Sather (2014b).

It was interesting to note that student participants at Winchester talked about how the Student Fellows scheme there had enabled them to become engaged; other, more standard forms of engaging with student life were not possible for them or they had not found channels in existing structures to address their learning in the way they wanted. For example, Holly, a mature student and parent, found the Student Fellows scheme a means to influence her learning experience directly.

The schemes at Winchester and Lincoln sit in contrast with other cases in my study where examples of practice were identified and initiated by staff. Apart from interacting with macro-levels in respective universities to access institutional development funds, the focus of activity in these other examples was very much at the micro level. In these instances, staff worked either alone

or in small staff teams to collaborate with students. However, not all examples were small scale. Niamh at UCD provides one example of working across a whole year group, for example.

5.6.2 Scalability and Sustainability

Scalability and sustainability of practice was not included as a topic in the interview schedule, as the examples of practice included in my study were at various stages of completion. Some participants were clearly focussing on next steps after just starting rather than focussing on sustainability. However, a number of participants offered a small but interesting range of examples and issues for addressing sustainability and gave critical reflection on how practices could be scaled-up to involve more students. These examples and ideas are useful to consider as such discussion is missing from current literature.

Before expanding on this aspect of discussion, I wish to share a cautionary note. I would like to argue that rather than position my discussion antagonistically to the technical-rational approach to achieving sustainability and scalability, we should acknowledge the cognitive dissonance between this and critical pedagogy ideology and find ways to work with these co-existing ideas.

As I critiqued earlier, the related topics of sustainability and scalability are often dominated by the technical-rational paradigm of strategy implementation when discussed by senior managers and strategy teams within institutions. The view that 'best practice' can be identified, critical success factors distilled and then replicated in other contexts (either across disciplines or institutions) is most commonly seen in technical-rational structures.

This underlying belief is central to managerial practices which advocate notions of 'rolling out', 'embedding' and targeting 'cold spots' within institutions. This approach also informs a 'what works' discourse between managers, academics,

and students which can negate the importance of context and motivations to engage in collaborative activity (or any other innovation in learning and teaching for that matter) and are closely linked with a particular paradigm of evaluating impact and success. Equally, the language of 'roll out' and 'embedding' represent what McLean (2008) describes as the colonisation of teaching and learning in higher education.

When discussing issues of sustainability and scalability, I am keenly aware of wanting to avoid presenting participant suggestions in a way that perpetuates such managerial assumptions. This builds upon my argument above regarding identifying what matters and retaining a sensitivity to context.

The idea of sustaining co-creation of the curricula is problematic for a number of reasons. The first is that students are transient; it is a key success factor that they graduate and move on. For this reason, sustainability of co-creating curricula at the micro level (within small groups) has to account for the turnover of students involved. Ideas of sustainability are further complicated by the fact that models of co-creating curricula vary. Where staff are working with a whole class of students to co-create curricula for immediate use in the class, this approach could be replicated year on year with each new cohort (as was the case for Niamh at UCD and Susan at Glasgow). Contrast this with a model where staff and students are revising or creating a module. The activity is time limited (such as Sue at Lincoln) unless the member of staff wishes to work with a new cohort of students to review the module on a cyclical basis (as was the case for Mark at Napier).

Laura, Dominic, and Chloe at Winchester all expressed their wishes for their model of staff and students co-creating curricula to continue after they had graduated. To achieve this, the students were in the process of establishing a Student Consultancy Board. This Board would be made up of a small group of students who staff from within Law could approach to initiate and work together on future projects to co-create curricula. This model is interesting as it tries to

address the issue of student transiency by providing a means, or 'go to' place where staff can work with a small group of students on future curriculum projects. What was particularly striking to me, however, was that the students felt strongly that this consultancy board should be separate from and be perceived as different to discussions that take place in the Staff Student Liaison Committee (SSLC). This indicates that discussions which take place in staff-student collaborations are different to those that take place in traditional committees where students are representatives inputting into university governance and quality assurance processes.

Dan at Lincoln worked with staff who were designated Student Engagement Champions within the university. The champion role was assigned to academics and professional service staff by Heads of Department. Dan noted that some staff were more actively involved in establishing projects with students than others. As such, his priority was to facilitate discussions between active and less-active staff to try and generate new ideas for activities with students.

In terms of scalability of activity, Mark at Napier discussed how he was working with colleagues to discuss the possibility of mapping across a programme where students can participate in co-creating curricula. He argued it was crucial for institutions not to view co-creation of curriculum as something that should be universally offered or aspired to. His rationale for this was based on his experience with certain modules that lacked the time and resources to invest in such collaborative activity and that some individual staff would not wish to work in this way (and should not be forced to). Mark voiced concern at the potential for this dynamic to show negatively in exercises such as NSS scores, whereby a student who compares their experience with co-creating curricula in one module against another judges one negatively against the other. This is further exasperated by the fact that the NSS focus on measuring satisfaction rather than engagement. Mark suggested that programme level mapping of where co-creating curricula occurs (as well as other forms of active student participation) and discussing this with student cohorts could help address his concern about skewing NSS scores. Mark's reflections and suggestions for practice emulate

exactly the kind of collegial and ethical leadership advocated by Cook-Sather and Felten (forthcoming).

Acknowledging that practice is highly contingent to context (and people), it may help with thinking creatively to address the longevity of collaborative activity. Ensuring continued ownership and buy-in from students may be difficult, especially in collaborations involving selected groups of students who will move on. Importantly, ongoing flexibility, reinvention, and reinterpretation of co-creation of curricula should be encouraged. This means encouraging a cycle of co-creating curricula as well as 'one off' collaborations, especially when review teams are made up of selected groups of students.

5.6.3 Encouraging Risk-Taking

There are multiple dimensions of risk to consider in the context of co-creating curricula. The activity is an inherently creative process and to be prescriptive about how a staff-student collaboration should progress could undermine the dialogic and relational aspects of the process – the very aspects of collaboration that make the experience powerful for participants and that results in a richer 'product' at the end. Yet working creatively comes with inherent risks: risks associated with the unknown, risks with not producing a viable curriculum (or learning experience), risks of resistance or lack of readiness of staff and students to engage, and risks of not being able to demonstrate the complexity of impact and value from working in this way to convince funders of continued support. There is a balance to be struck between advocating risk-taking in teaching and learning in the context of (increasingly) risk averse quality assurance mechanisms, and it is clear to me that institutional processes and external agencies are key to addressing this.

Staff and students included in my study, on the whole, self-selected to co-create curricula because they were motivated and embraced the risks that came with the creativity of co-creating curricula. I recognise, however, that others in

academia may feel a lack of preparedness, or even resistance, to participate in co-creating curricula. Part of this may relate to a lack of desire to work in this way or a sense that students do not have the required knowledge or skills to design learning and teaching, and there is a need to discuss the potential benefits and explore issues of resistance. Where staff do 'opt-in' to working in collaboration with students, quality assurance systems should enable participation (and support considered risk-taking) rather than present a barrier.

There is a body of literature which critiques quality regimes in UK higher education (McLean (2008), Sabri (2011) Murphy (2009). It is essential that students also retain a criticality about the function of quality regimes or else we risk them too becoming socialised into the existing practices and assumptions, or 'colonised' in a Habermasian sense, of quality mechanisms. One of the key benefits from staff and students collaborating is the perspective students bring, which is unburdened with quality regulations. Whilst arguing for an environment which supports considered risk-taking, I am mindful that the level of risk has to be appropriate for the given context and that opportunities to co-create curricula have to take account of the local environment.

As outlined in section 2.5.2, the curriculum is influenced by a range of conventions and requirements that, in turn, influence the potential for co-creation. These conventions can include requirements to comply with standards (such as 'fitness to practice') in professionally regulated courses. There are also examples of canonical curricula in particular disciplines which are seen as foundational (and fundamental), such as the natural sciences. In these instances, opportunities to co-create curricula, particularly opportunities to co-create curricular content, are likely to be limited. To change content may be seen as risky. However, even within these constraints, there may be opportunities to collaborate with students, as there is usually flexibility about how students achieve the required outcomes and competencies.

One approach to create an environment in which risk-taking is encouraged and managed is through ethical leadership at macro and meso-levels of an institution (Cook-Sather and Felten, forthcoming).This can be facilitated through discussions with university managers at the commencement of collaborations. Academic developers also have a role to play in facilitating discussion which

explores resistance and/or apprehension to participate in collaborations. Bovill (2013b, p. 103) explores this issue by noting:

> '..it is important for us to realise that not all academic staff and students will want to be involved. Similarly there may be contexts where co-creation can be difficult and it is important to recognise that differing levels of participation and collaboration are possible and appropriate. It is essential that academic staff can access advice and support to pursue co-created curricula approaches'.

Another way to manage risk is to start small, test the water and develop an understanding of how co-creation works in a given context. Starting small is advocated by Cook-Sather *et al* (2014).

5.7 Revisiting my Research Questions

It is important to revisit the original research questions that I set out to address for this study and to assess if my approach to data collection and analysis has answered them. This is particularly important given the structure of my discussion chapter which cuts across numerous research questions when addressing issues of process, models of working, critique of curriculum, and evidencing of value.

The approach taken in my study was strongly rooted in the desire to explore areas of practice which were under-defined in existing literature. This included examining at the micro level (of institutions) perceptions of curricula, the meaning-making processes of co-creating curricula, and participant perceptions of the value of this by participants. In parallel, I wanted to understand the interaction, if any, with the wider institutional environment at each case study site. For this reason, my unit of analysis has been institutions with individual examples of practice forming sub-cases for each case.

My exploration of these various dimensions has required a multifaceted conceptual framing, drawn from different bodies of literature. This has included aspects of critical social theory, existing heuristic models of student-staff partnerships in learning and teaching, conceptual models of curriculum and, finally, organisational development literature relating to policy implementation and evidencing of value.

I believe my conceptual framing and data collection along with my analysis have enabled me to address all elements of my original research questions.

To ensure clarity regarding the answering of my research questions I have provided responses below which pull together the discussion themes presented above and relate them specifically to each question.

RQ1: *In what ways do staff and students understand and define curriculum?*

Staff participants described curriculum in a variety of ways. All described curriculum as a product of some kind, in terms of the content and structure of a module or programme, when asked to give their initial definition of curriculum. Only a small number of staff described curriculum as a wider learning process in their initial definitions. The introduction of the diamond ranking exercise which used curriculum descriptors from Fraser and Bosanquet's (2006) study prompted staff participants to discuss and reflect upon their responses. Upon doing so, participants revisited their original definitions. This methodological approach appears to have value in encouraging participants to explore their tacit assumptions about curriculum.

Student participants from the pilot study found it very difficult to respond with a definition of curriculum and I found it hindered rather than helped the flow of interviews.

Examining participants' perceptions of curriculum provided a rich source of data, with many participants reflecting in interviews that they had never been asked or had given much thought to articulating their definitions of curriculum. This resonates with Barnett and Coate's view that there is a 'silence' about curriculum in UK higher education. I argue that the findings to this research question are of value to further research on co-creating curricula but also have merit for further research as a stand-alone issue in teaching and learning in higher education.

RQ2: *How is co-creation of curricula defined by staff and student practitioners?*

I demonstrated through my review of existing literature that co-creation of curricula in higher education is a nascent area of practice and as such is not clearly defined. Because of this, I chose to include cases which were described by participants themselves as co-creating curricula rather than me pre-defining criteria to select cases.

I demonstrated in Figure 2 on page 33 how the practice of co-creating curricula is nested within the wider field of research which looks at student engagement in learning and teaching.

The analysis of my data shows that there was no consensus on terminology used to describe or name the practice of co-creating curricula. It was most striking that no participants referred to the current policy discourse of Students as Partners in their work. Participants did, however, focus on the importance of the ways in which the collaborations worked and each articulated the principles which informed their work. This emerged as being of more importance to both staff and students than what label to call or name the practice. I have drawn upon arguments from critical social theory and particularly McLean's (2008) discussion of critical university pedagogy to argue that this lack of consensus of

terminology shows a lack of colonisation of policy discourse. Rather than see this as problematic, I have argued that this lack of colonisation enables ownership by participants at the micro-level of practice. This is confirmed in the analysis of my data which shows participants operating creatively and not requiring to work within prescribed frameworks.

This data set has been collected at particular point in the development of Students as Partners policy and it may be that adoption of terminology changes over time as more research is published on co-creating curricula and the policy agenda progresses. I have argued, however, that it is essential that the principles underpinning this work (as expressed by participants) are not lost – or colonised - in the policy discourse, as it is these principles which underpin the radical and transformatory potential of staff and students collaborating in learning and teaching. To lose focus on such principles of collaboration could give way to a misappropriation of the Students as Partners agenda by neoliberalism and for it to be used as a tool to further rather than combat the consumerisation of higher education. As Buckley (2014) cautions, this agenda cannot challenge and uphold the idea of a quasi-marketised higher education at the same time.

RQ3: *What current examples of practice illustrate co-creation of curricula in UK HE?*

Following on from my second research question, I have also collected examples of how the practice is occurring in different institutional and disciplinary contexts.

Examples included in my study differ in type. Some examples have focussed on developing content and resources for modules and programmes. Some have focussed on the structure of modules. Existing literature (Dunne and Zandstra, 2011; Bryson, 2015; Healey *et al*, 2014; Bovill *et al*, 2016) identifies domains of

collaborative activity and roles that students fulfil. Bryson *et al* (2015) have described models which work with selected groups of students and models that work with whole cohorts, noting benefits and limitations of each approach. As a result of my data, I present a hybrid model of co-creating curricula (described above as Model C) where staff work with a select group of students but then the group consult the wider student cohort on proposed changes.

The inductive approach used in this study provided space for participants to explore issues and give emphasis to topics they felt were important. For this reason, the choice of semi structured interviews was a particularly useful approach for data collection. It is noteworthy that many participants (staff and students) talked about the usefulness of the research interview as a 'space' for reflection on practice. It was evident the interviews also gave an opportunity for participants to think through practice, explore tacit assumptions, and even ponder future actions as a result.

RQ4: *In what ways do practitioners define the impact and value of this work?*

It was clear from analysis of institutional strategies that NSS scores are taken as a key performance indicator of success for teaching and learning.

Keen to explore what mattered as well as what worked for staff and students, I asked participants what they valued about co-creating curricula. Participants explored this issue widely, identifying personal and institutional benefits from collaborations.

Staff talked about how the collaboration had re-energised teaching. They gained new insights into familiar issues and they learned what students viewed as a priority and why. For some staff, co-creating curricula influenced their orientation to teaching and for others it was an opportunity to enact their commitment to critical pedagogy.

For students, they overwhelmingly valued the process of co-creating curricula, particularly in terms of the opportunities it created to discuss and negotiate with staff outside of the usual parameters of the classroom. This highlights the need to develop indicators of success that can capture the processes of co-creating curricula as well as the products of the curricula itself.

RQ5: *How do practice and institutional strategies inter-relate?*

Commitments to co-create curricula were not visible in institutional strategies. At the macro-level, there was a focus on student engagement with assurance and enhancement of teaching and learning. This very much reflects the trajectory of student engagement in the UK and so it is perhaps not surprising to find this focus in strategies.

What is interesting to note is that the practice of co-creating curricula, whilst not very visible at the macro level of institutions in my study, it is taking place and achieving positive outcomes and outputs. I believe this shows an emergent, bottom-up development of this practice.

Where links exist between macro and micro levels, this usually manifests through access to development funding. In a small number of cases, small teams of staff were available to facilitate the collaborative process.

5.8 Summary

This chapter presents my interpretation and prioritisation of my results. I have outlined the over-arching themes arising from my study, relating my data analysis with the relevant synthesis of literature presented in chapter two. The themes I focus upon include: exploring the processes and discourse of practice;

providing an alternative approach to outcomes-based curricula; presenting a novel hybrid model of co-creating curricula; focussing on evidencing value rather impact; and, finally, the role of institutional support. In addition, I have also explored how my analysis has addressed the original research questions for my study.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Implications

6.1 Introduction

Having discussed my findings in the previous chapter, I now present my concluding thoughts from my study. I discuss my contribution of new knowledge to this field of research, the implications this has for practice, and make suggestions for further research in light of my findings.

I also provide a critique of my thesis. It is here that I offer post-hoc reflections on what I would have done differently with the benefit of hindsight.

6.2 Contribution to the Field

I believe this study offers four key contributions that will be of value to scholars and practitioners focused on co-creating curricula in higher education: a new model of co-creation, curriculum conceptualisation and the parameters to co-create curricula, the lens of critical social theory, and the use of participatory research methods to research definitions of practice and evaluate success.

6.2.1. Towards a New Model of Practice

The examples of practice included in my study demonstrated a range of models of working. The use of Healey *et al's* (2014) domains of activity model and Bovill *et al* (2016) student roles model provide useful ways for placing the examples I investigated. Equally, Bryson *et al's* (2015) tentative models of working with selected groups of students (described as model A) or whole cohorts (described as Model B) helped explain a number of examples of practice within my study.

However, in addition to these models from the literature, I have identified a hybrid model from my data which shows selected groups of students working

periodically with the wider cohort in their efforts to co-create curricula. I have described this as a Model C (building on Bryson *et al's* 2015 typology) of co-creating curricula and have argued that this model could perhaps ameliorate the tensions identified by Bryson *et al* (2015) for working with large cohorts (such as time and resistance) whilst also addressing issues of inclusivity of the wider student cohort (as called for by Moore-Cherry *et al* (2015), Healey *et al* (2016), Bovill *et al* (2016). It would be beneficial to investigate these examples of practice in greater detail to see if they do, indeed, achieve the aims I have suggested here. If they did, it could offer an additional recommendation for practice in co-creating curricula which is currently not evidenced in the literature.

6.2.2 Curriculum Conceptualisation and the Parameters to Co-create Curricula

This study has provided insight into the lack of clarity about individual and disciplinary conceptualisations of curriculum in higher education. I believe my methodological approach of using Fraser and Bosanquet's (2006) curriculum descriptors could be used as a useful heuristic to explore academics' perceptions of curriculum. Exploring individual's understanding of curriculum has benefits for staff-student collaborations as it enables students to gain insight and awareness of the values and conventions at play and which set the scene for which collaborative activity take place. The relationship between curriculum conceptualisation and co-creation of curricula has only been tentatively explored in the literature (Bovill and Woolmer, 2014; Bovill, Baumfield and Woolmer, forthcoming; Ashwin and McVitty, 2015) and, as far as is known, there is no empirical evidence available beyond this study which has attempted to explore this relationship in detail.

Linked to this issue, I believe the analysis which builds upon Huxham *et al's* (2015) metaphor of 'natural lines' as a guiding principle for co-creating curricula offers a compelling alternative to the dominant discourse of Biggs' constructive

alignment and associated learning outcomes. The insights gained from participant experiences of working to co-create curricula adds evidence to the arguments made by Healey *et al* (2014) and others who highlight the inherently creative process involved in this activity.

As practice in this area develops, researchers and practitioners need to be conscious of the opportunities for ensuring the inclusiveness of co-created curricular approaches.

This study has highlighted examples which illustrate a variety of approaches to co-creating curricula. However, I do not intend to suggest that co-creating curricula is universally appropriate. There may be very good reasons for not collaborating. These could include lack of resource, lack of institutional support, or the need to meet regulatory requirements (Bovill and Bulley, 2011). Even where staff and students have committed to co-create curricula, it may be necessary to move between co-creation and transactional modes. This was illustrated by Eurig's account of working with a whole cohort of students at Edinburgh Napier where he described having to return to delivering content through a lecture when he felt students needed that input to support further co-creation activity. Rather than suggest a prescription for practice, this study aims to encourage staff and students to consider opportunities to co-create curricula that are appropriate for their context.

Related to this is the need to reflect on who is involved in this type of activity and who is not. I have highlighted in section 4.3.4.2 the processes for selecting and recruiting students to participate in co-creating curricula, and I have demonstrated in my findings that many of the selected students are identified as being 'super-engaged'(Bryson, 2014), for example, by being actively involved in clubs and societies or being class representatives.

This raises important questions about the inclusivity of co-creation practices and the need to pay attention to the potential for opportunities being offered predominantly to students who are most familiar and, arguably, most

advantaged. Moore Cherry *et al* (2015) and Cook Sather and Agu (2013) argue for the need for staff-student partnerships to critically reflect on the voices that are *not* heard and those that are implicitly or explicitly privileged through institutional processes. In addition, there is a need to reflect upon the extent to which the assumptions and practices of co-creating curricula are culturally bound and culturally specific for both staff and students. These issues have been addressed extensively through research into internationalising the curriculum (and internationalisation in UK higher education). However, this body of literature is only just beginning to connect with debates on co-creation of learning and teaching. I suggest in section 6.4 that this is a rich area for future enquiry.

6.2.3 The Lens of Critical Social Theory

Authors such as Bovill (2013b), Buckley (2014), Cook-Sather *et al* (2104), Fielding (2004), and Bragg (2007) draw upon aspects of critical pedagogy to underpin their argument for involving students more coherently in co-creating curricula (and learning and teaching more widely). These sit in opposition to neoliberalism in higher education. They have made powerful arguments to researchers and practitioners about the necessity to democratise learning (in higher education and schools). The arguments grounded in critical pedagogy call for student participation in learning not only for benefits to the individuals involved but to also address wider issues of social injustice and inequality. In this sense there is a collective value in this type of collaborative activity. These arguments offer countenance to the prevailing culture of neoliberalism in higher education, which continues to permeate the academy and positions learning as individualistic and to exist to serve the economic need of society.

The intentions behind critical pedagogy resonate very much with my own position as a higher education practitioner and influenced my approach as a researcher. My application of McLean's (2008) work to this study, which draws heavily on Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action and challenges the colonisation of the higher education 'lifeworld', offers a new and

complementary narrative to the field. I believe the particular strength this aspect of social theory offers is the ability to link the macro and micro 'lifeworlds' within universities, showing the interplay between policy and institutional discourses (which are often neoliberal in intent and action) and the actions of teachers and students 'on the ground'. McLean's interpretation of Habermas's theory has not been applied to staff-student collaborations before and my use of it here is novel. Her theoretical application of Habermas's ideas add a breadth to the research in this field in the sense that it acknowledges the relationships between the organisation and individuals whilst at the same time arguing for the enactment of critical pedagogy.

I came to McLean's work (and that of Habermas) after my data collection and part way through my data analysis as a result of discussions with other scholars' who responded to my interim findings. As such, there has been an element of retrospective application of her work and it is with some frustration that I came to her thoughts at the time I did within the research cycle. I believe the inclusion of critical theory, and specifically McLean's application of Habermas's work relating to his Theory of Communicating Action, has enriched my study and provided an explicit lens through which to critique policy and practice. Most importantly, I believe the use of critical theory in my research helps to demonstrate the political nature of staff and students co-creating curricula, thus raising awareness of the need to understand the values that drive this type of practice.

6.2.4 Participatory Methods and Researching Co-creation of Curricula

My motivation for using semi-structured interviews and the diamond ranking exercise was to provide opportunities for participants to explore and direct discussions. My review of literature relating to curriculum conceptualisations highlighted that beliefs and assumptions regarding curriculum are often tacit and undebated (Barnett and Coate, 2005; Blackmore and Kandiko, 2014; Toohey,

1999). Equally, when discussing the value and impact of co-creating curricula, I wanted to ensure that participants could direct conversation to discuss what mattered to them, giving them space to define success within the collaborations.

Reflections from participants showed that the research interview itself provided space for them to explore and reflect on their practice in a way not previously available to them. This is perhaps not unsurprising given their comments on lack of opportunities in existing committees to discuss such things. However, the use of a visual task, the diamond ranking exercise, indicates great potential for exploring espoused beliefs and enacted practices. I suggest that the adaption of Fraser and Bosanquet's (2006) work on curriculum combined with the diamond sorting task worked as a heuristic in my study. It served to generate discussion, introduce possibilities, and, by allowing participants to contribute their own descriptors if they wished, enabled ideas to remain fluid and permeable. I therefore argue that research on co-creating curricula would benefit from greater use of visual participatory methods. My study offers one model of how this could be done and the value of doing so. However, there is opportunity to consider many other visual methods including, for example, auto-elicitation through photographs (Cousin, 2009) or concept mapping.

6.3 Critique of the Research

It is necessary at this juncture to explore the limitations of my study. As well as arguing the extent to which my study contributes to the field, it is of equal importance to reflect on, with the benefit of hindsight, how the study could have been improved. As discussed in chapter three, my inductive approach to this study has been explicitly informed by my previous professional background. Rather than eliminate my experience and insight from the study in an attempt for objectivity, I have deliberately incorporated my own positionality, arguing

throughout my study how and where I make assumptions and, most importantly, my rationale for studying how others make sense of co-creating curricula. I believe this adds to the trustworthiness of my study.

However, there are aspects of my study that could have been improved and deserve critique. These include timeframe of analysis, understanding the role of meso-level of each case site, and gaining personal perspectives of senior managers at each case site.

6.3.1 Time Frame of Analysis

The aim of this study has been to provide a rich picture of practice in relation to institutional contexts. Due to time constraints, I was only able to interview participants once in short time frame. In doing so, I have gained perspectives from individuals who are at different points in their collaborative journey; some were able to offer reflections on a completed process and some were at varying stages of progress. The study could have been strengthened by adding a longitudinal dimension to data collection. This would have involved interviewing participants at the start of a project and then interviewing those same participants again at the end. I have argued that analysis of my data shows the importance of the collaborative process for individuals and for this process being of high value. A longitudinal study would provide even richer data through which to explore this further.

6.3.2 Understanding the Role of the Meso-level of each Case Study

The aim of case study research is to provide rich and comprehensive accounts of a setting or site which is under examination. This is tempered with the reality of working with multiple constraints including timing, resources, and access to both artefacts and people.

I am conscious that my study has gathered detailed accounts at the micro level and has provided analysis of institutional strategy statements from the macro-level of each case. I believe the study could have been strengthened with additional data which could have provided an account of priorities and context at the meso-level, such as departmental level. I presented Trowler *et al's* (2009) discussion of the policy implementation staircase, noting how policy is reframed and re-contextualised in different ways 'up and down' the staircase. In hindsight, each case study would have been strengthened by including accounts from either Heads of School and/or Directors of Learning and Teaching (or their equivalent). The perspective of these individuals could illustrate in more detail how macro-level strategy is prioritised and reframed within disciplines. It could also have gauged the level of knowledge and institutional commitment to collaborating with students.

6.3.3 Perspectives of Senior Managers at each Case Site

Linked with the above comment regarding viewpoints at the meso-level, I believe the study could have been improved by inclusion of interviews with senior managers at each case site. Interviews with, for example, Pro Vice Chancellors could provide additional perspective on policy priorities and the extent to which there is awareness and commitment to Student as Partners and student engagement in learning and teaching. I believe it was appropriate to focus my resources on gathering micro-level accounts, as there are few published examples of how staff and students are co-creating curricula. As the policy environment develops in this area, the perspectives of senior management on issues such as the proposed Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) could provide insights into the extent to which consumerist ideologies of higher education are perpetuated or negated and the perceptions of Students as Partners.

6.4 Areas for Further Research

Focussing on principles and the relational aspects of this work seems to be where it is most important to direct further research at this point in time. Further small scale studies which glean rich pictures of practice could help elucidate this further; these are the 'actualities of encounter' which Fielding (2015) argues are essential to demonstrate and retain the values of critical pedagogy.

It is exciting to reach the end of a PhD study and be left with ideas of how to continue and refine the conversation I have started with my doctoral research. I have argued in my conclusion the ways in which I believe I offer a contribution to the wider scholarly debate on co-creation of curriculum in higher education. I also believe that elements of my study are of interest to the wider debate on teaching and learning in higher education, particularly my findings relating to curriculum conceptualisations.

I suggest the following four areas which would warrant further research in light of my findings:

- examination of the practice of co-creating curricula as a new type of micro-culture;
- curriculum conceptualisations in UK higher education;
- the process of co-creating curricula in an online environment; and
- experiences of international staff and students involved in co-creating curricula in UK higher education.

Roxå and Mårtensson (2009), Renc-Roe and Roxå (2014) and Mårtensson *et al* (2014) have researched the extent to which academics in universities enter in to meaningful conversations with colleagues about teaching. In their original research, Roxå and Mårtensson (2009) surveyed 109 staff from across a range of disciplines and found that the average number of colleagues with whom an individual would have significant discussions about teaching ranged from 6-10.

(Mårtensson *et al,* 2014) have argued that these networks are significant and describe them as micro-cultures. Their research focusses solely on interactions between academics. My study has shown that the collaborative discussions that take place when staff and students co-create curricula offer opportunities for different kinds of dialogue and curriculum and learning. It would be of interest to look at the extent to which staff-student collaborations share the same features of micro-cultures as described by Roxå and Mårtensson. My interest in this relates to the synergies between their research and my interests with how micro-level collaborations interact with wider organisational structures and practices. This is an area of further research I am currently planning to pursue after my PhD through my postdoc position.

I have highlighted in section 6.2 that my study has contributed new knowledge by gathering empirical data on the ways in which participants conceptualise curriculum. This has been collected in the context of a study which has focussed on co-creating curriculum. However, I argue that conceptualisations of curriculum by academics warrants separate attention. Research which explored this in more detail, building on Fraser and Bosanquet's (2006) research, could help address the silence about curriculum that Barnett and Coate (2005) describe.

My final recommendations for further research relates issues of co-creating curricula to issues of online provision of courses and the experiences of international students in co-creating curricula.

There is significant investment in universities to develop online courses to aid delivery at a distance. I have argued that one of the most powerful aspects to arise from staff and students co-creating curricula is the potential to create new opportunities for dialogue and conversational scholarship (Werder *et al,* 2010). My study raises questions about how principles of co-creation could be replicated through online, often asynchronous, provision. JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee UK) is working with a selection of universities to examine how

technology can assist learning and increase collaborations between staff and students. Of the ten case studies reported in the publication, only one institution is looking at technology and staff and students co-creating curricula.

None of the student participants I interviewed in my study held international or EU student status. One staff participant was from a non-UK background. As I did not have access to all participants involved in the examples included in my study, I am unable to speak to the extent of non-UK participation. However, associated with issues of inclusivity discussed in chapter five, further research on co-creating curricula may wish to explicitly address the extent to which the voices of non-UK staff and students feature in this kind of activity. Further research should also look to gain a greater understanding and sensitivity of how the ideals and principles of staff and students co-creating curricula translate across different cultures and educational systems. This is of particular importance if this practice is to grow.

6.5 Implications for Practice

I complete this chapter with final reflections on what my study means for practice. Where necessary, I include here practices at the macro as well as micro level of institutions which bear influence on staff and students co-creating curricula.

The implications outlined below include:

- Involvement of educational development colleagues in the initiation, progress and evaluation of activity.
- Evaluate activity using participatory methodologies.
- Allow for flexibility in quality assurance mechanisms and use of learning outcomes in curriculum design.
- Create time and space for dialogue outside of classroom and committee environments

- Indicators of value in local contexts

6.5.1 Involvement of Educational Development Colleagues in the initiation, progress and evaluation of activity.

Colleagues working in academic development departments can bring skilled facilitation to staff-student collaborations and bring the 'outsider' perspective to discussions and debate. These same individuals are also likely to be familiar with relevant research in higher education, encouraging critical debate, and reflection on the purpose and function of staff and students co-creating curricula. Equally, they are well positioned to undertake evaluation of collaborations, thus adding to the research literature in this area.

6.5.2 Evaluate Activity using Participatory Methodologies.

Individuals evaluating the practice of co-creating curricula should consider opportunities to use participatory methods for data collection. Doing so would enable participants and researchers to explore the often tacit aspects of collaboration and ensure that new spaces are created to facilitate dialogue outside of 'usual' classroom and committee settings.

6.5.3 Allow for Flexibility in Quality Assurance Mechanisms and use of learning outcomes in curriculum design.

Quality assurance processes are necessary for transparency and accountability in higher education. However, course approval and monitoring processes should be designed to allow flexibility, thus enabling staff and students to co-create curricula. This could include shortening the lead-in time and documentation required for new course development as well as making it easier to amend learning outcomes in response to the outcomes of co-creation.

6.5.4 Create Time and Space for Dialogue outside of classroom and committee environments

Opportunities to discuss issues of learning and curriculum development should be offered to students (and advertised more widely than to elected Student Representatives), specifically outside of classroom and committee environments. These could be advertised as Dialogue Days (Asghar, 2016) or, where staff and students are working in teams to co-create curricula, adopt an approach which meets in informal settings and away from classroom and office spaces.

6.5.5 Indicators of Value in Local Contexts

Researchers and evaluators of co-created curricula should seek to evidence the value of the process as well as the product of the collaboration. Such evidence should reflect what participants determine matters within their local context.

6.6 Summary

Staff and students co-creating curricula has radical potential to reclaim and reframe discourses about who, what, why, and how learning takes place in higher education. This practice offers a potential countenance to the pervasive discourses of neoliberalism and consumerism in and about universities. To achieve this though, staff and students need to remain mindful of the values underpinning co-creation of curricula. This is a journey; one that is evolutionary yet with revolutionary potential. This study places itself within this emerging field of research, contributing theoretical and empirical insights to the ongoing scholarly debate. It has shown that collaborations take time and an acceptance of risk, and that what we call it matters less than the principles that support it.

> 'Empowering education is thus a road from where we are to where we need to be. It crosses terrains of doubt and time. One end of the road leads away from inequality and miseducation while the other lands us in a frontier of critical learning and democratic discourse. This is no easy road to travel. Any place truly different from the status quo is not close by or down a simple trail. But the need to go there is evident, given what we

know about unequal conditions and the decay in social life, given the need to replace teacher-talk and student alienation with dialogue and critical inquiry…..That transformation is a journey of hope, humour, setbacks, breakthroughs, and creative life, on a long and winding road paved with dreams whose time is overdue.' (Shor, 1992, p. 263)

Appendices

1 Extract from HEA PhD proposal

HEA Doctoral Programme proposal

HEA defined thematic area - 'Students as partners'

<u>Title</u>

Evaluating the impact of student-staff co-created curricula in higher education

<u>Please provide details of the proposed research and how the proposal has clear benefit to practice or policy (1500 wds max)</u>

This research project aims to:

1) enhance understanding of the impact of student-staff co-created curricula in higher education, in terms of a) student outcomes, b) staff outcomes, c) departmental and institutional outcomes;

2) investigate a range of facilitating factors and barriers to co-creation, informative to the HE sector in supporting sustainable models of co-created curricula in the future;

3) disseminate a range of examples of co-created curricular approaches and lessons learned as well as identify elements of good practice that will be of benefit to the international higher education sector.

Increasingly, academic staff and higher education institutions are realizing the benefits of engaging students more meaningfully in decisions about their learning experiences. Despite many calls for students and staff to co-create curriculum (often from schools' 'student voice' discourses, popular education, and critical pedagogy literature), we have not engaged meaningfully in enacting co-created curriculum in higher education institutions until relatively recently (Little *et al*, 2011; Bovill, 2012). This lack of implementation may be related to a range of factors, such as: concerns for quality assurance, the use of outcomes-focused curricula, professional body requirements, and most fundamentally, a nervousness to move away from well known (what might be viewed as 'safe') pedagogical approaches. However, good practice in co-creation of curricula should not disregard these concerns. Instead, practitioners are finding ways to respond to these issues whilst still working in partnership with students to design curricula.

Compelling beneficial outcomes are emerging where students have been co-creating curricula, including: increased motivation for study, academic staff and students relating differently with enhanced dialogue, academic staff and students gaining a greater meta-cognitive awareness of the learning process (Bovill *et al*, 2011), and some reports of enhanced student performance in assessments as a result of students' deeper understanding of, greater engagement in, and enhanced responsibility for, learning (Bovill, forthcoming). Interest in co-creation approaches has grown substantially in the last few years, with increasing numbers of conferences and events dedicated to this area of practice and research.

Approaches to co-creating curricula are founded on principles of inclusivity and emphasise the importance of hearing student voices that are often under-represented in more traditional learning environments (Fielding, 2004). Thus, enhancement through co-created learning offers a particularly valuable opportunity for improving the experience of our diverse range of university students. However, at present the use of co-creative approaches to curriculum tends to be confined to small scale practices supported by individual academic staff. There are relatively few larger scale programmes of co-creation of curricula, although there are emerging quite a number of larger scale programmes focused on students as consultants or co-researchers into learning and teaching (Dunne & Zandstra, 2011; Cook-Sather, 2010; Neary, 2011). The co-created curricular initiatives that exist in higher education have often not been evaluated or the outcomes disseminated widely. Therefore, this project aims to investigate the processes and outcomes of co-created curricula in a range of different UK higher education institutions.

This project would proceed over five main phases, spread across three years:

Year 1: Sept 2013-Aug2014

Phase i   Planning and research design, ethical approval (Sept 2013-February 2014)

Phase ii   Piloting data collection methods (March 2014-August 2014)

Student will submit a 1500 word annual progress report to the HEA

Year 2: Sept 2014-Aug 2015

Phase iii   Data collection and ongoing analysis (September 2014 – April 2015)

Phase iv   Data analysis, writing up and dissemination of early findings (May 2015 – Aug 2015)

Student will submit a 1500 word annual progress report to the HEA

Year 3: Sept 2015-Aug 2016

Phase iv cont. Data analysis, writing up and dissemination of early findings (Sept 2015 – Dec 2015)

Phase v   Writing up and dissemination (Jan 2016-Aug 2016)

Student will submit a 5000 word report to the HEA.

Phase i   Planning and research design, ethical approval (Sept 2013-February 2014)

In this stage, we would recruit a suitably qualified PhD student to the University of Glasgow, College of Social Sciences (CoSS) . The student would undertake the Research training provided by CoSS/and attend an induction process arranged jointly between the HEA and the University. The student would refine the research project proposal over the first six months, informed by the literature, discussion with staff and students involved in co-creating curricula with the supervisors, and also some knowledgeable expert advisors.

It is envisaged at this stage that the student would adopt elements of evaluation research methodology and case study methodology as appropriate paradigms within which to evaluate the processes, outcomes and impact of co-created curricular approaches. Both of these paradigms are broad qualitative and flexible approaches, whilst simultaneously being well structured frameworks that are particularly suited to gathering bounded, in-depth examples of practice in a range of different settings (Cousin, 2009). Whilst we envisage that the research project would involve collecting data at a range of different types of institutions in the UK, at this stage the location and number of examples is not pre-defined (estimated 10-20 settings/examples investigated initially and approximately 4 to 8 settings/examples investigated in depth). This project will focus on investigating co-created curricula in UK higher education settings, but we would not rule out investigation of a limited number of international examples where these offer valuable extension to understanding in the field.

The student will spend some time in the first six months identifying different co-creation approaches and from these examples, find ways of sampling that will demonstrate a range of processes and outcomes that are possible in a range of different disciplines across different institutional settings. The examples should provide information and outcomes useful to many different individuals and institutions. The student will spend time refining the methodology and research plan and will complete an application for ethical approval from the University of Glasgow.

Phase ii   Piloting data collection methods (March 2014-August 2014)

The student will conduct a pilot study between March 2014 and June 2014, where they gather data using the planned approach and will test whether the data collection methods are gathering the quality of data intended. Changes and adaptations to the data collection methods and research plan will be made at this stage. Between June 2014 and August 2014, the PhD student will write up the methodological approach and some of the background literature review, as well as setting up a range of meetings and data collection arrangements for starting the main data collection phase in September 2014. Some early dissemination of findings - see the dissemination section.

Phase iii   Data collection, writing up and ongoing analysis (September 2014 – April 2015)

This stage will involve collecting data from all of the settings identified. The PhD student will undertake data analysis as the research process proceed, so informing any continuing adaptations to the research process.

Phase iv   Data analysis, writing up and dissemination of early findings (May 2015 – Dec 2015)

The student will undertake more in-depth data analysis, including comparison of different examples to find in-case themes as well as cross-case themes consistent with case study methodology. The PhD student will also present some early findings at appropriate local and national events.

Phase v   Writing up and dissemination (Jan 2016-Aug 2016)

While the PhD student will undertake writing throughout the duration of the research project, the final phase of the project will involve them writing up their thesis. It will also include maximising a range of dissemination strategies – see dissemination section.

<u>Project Benefits</u>

Overall, the project benefits focus on providing evidence of the impacts of staff-student co-created curricula as well as providing guidance to staff and students about how to implement co-created curricula design approaches. This is particularly important in the current context of a very high level of interest in 'students as partners' but currently the evidence to support co-created curricula work is piecemeal. Specifically, project benefits will include:

 - a literature review of the current evidence and guidance on staff-student partnerships in curricular design in higher education;

 - a collection of a range of examples, covering different settings, disciplines and types of staff-student partnerships in curricular design, followed by synthesis of lessons learned and elements of good practice from these examples and from the literature;

 - an enhanced understanding and evidence of the impact of staff-student partnership approaches to curricular design;

 - an enhanced understanding and evidence of the key factors that can sustain, as well as act as barriers to, staff-student partnerships in curricular design useful for influencing future policy and practice;

 - project findings would be disseminated in a wide range of local, national and international arenas as outlined in the dissemination section below;

 - the PhD student would have undertaken a rigorous higher educational research training, which would prepare them as a skilled researcher focused on higher education topics and specifically focused on curriculum design and 'students as partners';

- this project clearly focuses on the HEA theme of students as partners, but also connects meaningfully to other HEA key themes of assessment and feedback, specifically 'students reshaping assessment and feedback', as well as online learning where examples of co-created curricula will include face-to-face as well as online learning environments.

References available on request
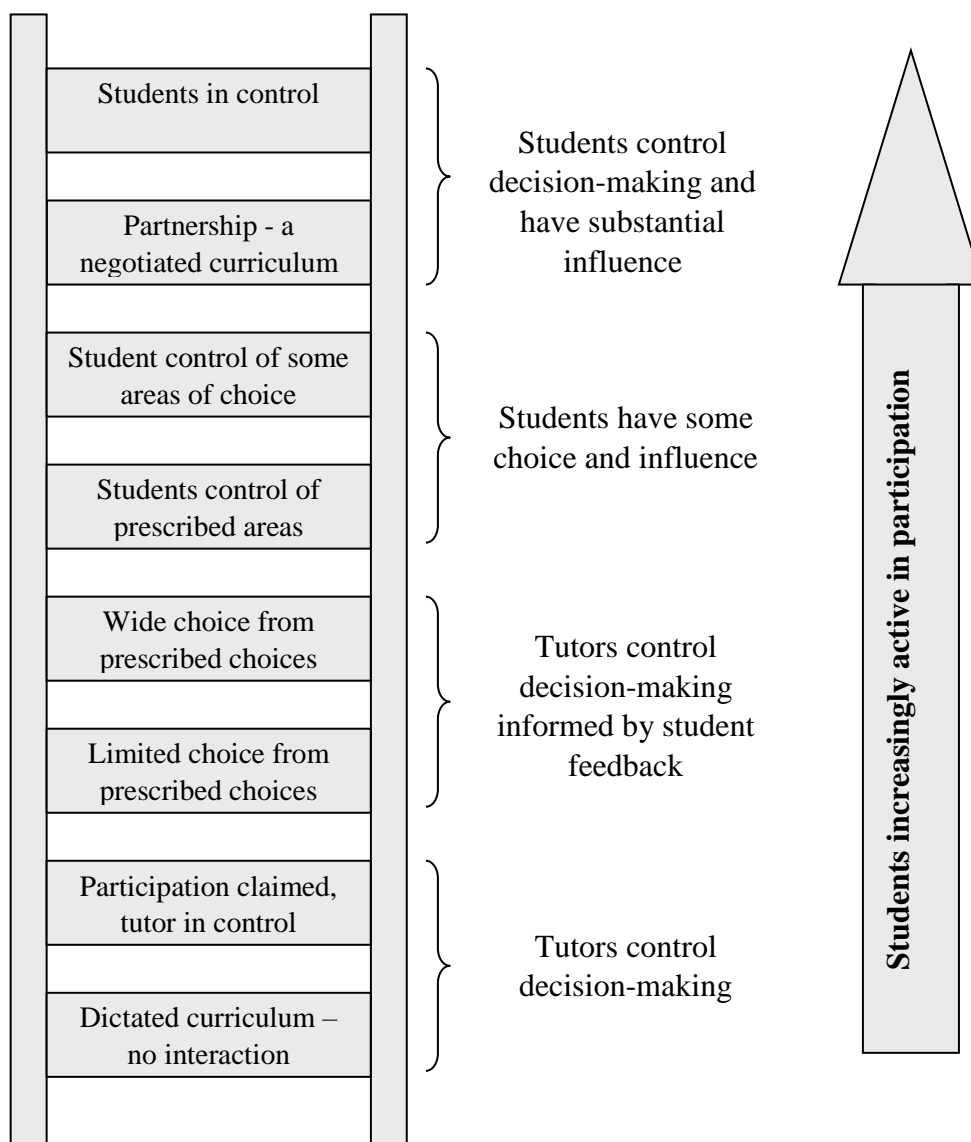
2. Continuum of Student Engagement in Schools

'Student involvement can mean and is often intended to mean very different things. It can range from one end of a continuum in which student voice is in largely passive mode and only audible through the products of past performance to the other end of the continuum where student voice is the initiating force in an enquiry process which invites teachers' involvement as facilitating and enabling learning. At one end of the continuum we have 'students as data source', then 'students as active respondents', the students as co-researchers' and, finally, at the other end, 'students as researchers'. (Fielding, 2004:201)

Students as data source	Students as active respondents	Students as co-researchers	Students as researchers
Teacher commitment to acknowledge and use information about student performance. Students are recipients of better informed pedagogy. Teachers understand more about students through effective dissemination of information about their performance and attitude.	Teacher willingness to move beyond passive data collection and has desire to hear students' experiences of lessons in school. Students are discussants rather than recipients of current teaching and learning. Teachers seeks to make meaning out of active discussion with students	This mode is more partnership than previous modes. Student and teacher roles are not equal but joint agreement on what is of importance to research. Commitment and agreement of students is essential. Shift from discussion to teacher-led dialogue and teacher and students are in exploratory mode.	Partnership remains dominant but the voice of students is at the fore; leading or initiating not just responding. Student identify issues for research. Teachers are listening in order to learn but to also contribute to and support student-led research.

Adapted from Fielding (2004:201-202)

3. Ladder of Student Participation in Curriculum Design

Students in control

Partnership - a
negotiated curriculum

Student control of some
areas of choice

Students control of
prescribed areas

Wide choice from
prescribed choices

Limited choice from
prescribed choices

Participation claimed,
tutor in control

Dictated curriculum –
no interaction

Students control
decision-making and
have substantial
influence

Students have some
choice and influence

Tutors control
decision-making
informed by student
feedback

Tutors control
decision-making

Students increasingly active in participation

Bovill and Bulley (2011)

4. Summary of Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Curriculum in the Disciplines

	Hard pure disciplines	Hard applied disciplines	Soft pure disciplines	Soft applied disciplines
Curricular structure	Cumulative, atomistic curriculum. Linear programme design.		Reiterative, holistic curriculum Spiral curriculum	Emphasis on vocationally related skills, but broadly defined, with intellectual breadth and personal growth
Purpose of higher education	Purpose to acquire subject knowledge and reasoning powers	Emphasis on acquisition of problem-solving and practical skills	Purpose to acquire a broad command of intellectual ideas, fluency of expression.	Emphasis on vocationally related skills, but broadly defined, with intellectual breadth and personal growth.
Teaching methods	Instructive (didactic) methods to 'deliver' fixed content. Small groups work on predetermined problems. Teaching preparation is relatively quick. Large lectures with class labs. ICT used extensively	Practical experience provided.	Constructive (student-centred) methods to explore ideas. Small groups work discursively. Teaching preparation is time consuming. Face to Face teaching predominates, smaller class sizes. More limited use of ICT	Practical experience provided but knowledge base acquired first.
Learning	Students need to memorise facts and apply problem-solving skills. Logical reasoning.	Practical competencies are needed in addition.	Students need to think laterally, read copiously and have good powers of expression, critical thinking,	The ability to solve open ended problems is required in addition.

			fluency, creativity.	
Assessment	Outcomes of assessment objectively assessable. Objective tests and examinations often used. Assessment by teacher using model answers and guides.		Outcomes of assessment require judgement. Essays, short answers, continuous assessment often used. Assessment by peers and self sometimes used. Assessment intuitive.	

Trowler, (2014:20, adapting Neumann *et al*, 2002)

5. Interview Topic Guide

University | College of
of Glasgow | Social Sciences

Interview Topic Guide:

Project Title: Co-creating curricula in higher education: exploring perceptions of staff and students

Researcher: Cherie Woolmer, c.woolmer.1@research.gla.ac.uk

1. What is your understanding of curriculum?

1a) Diamond ranking exercise: What are your key considerations when thinking about curriculum? Can you prioritise these words/phrases in order of most and least importance? Discuss why you have chosen the order you have.

Interviewee is invited to prioritise the words/phrases (listed below) and place them on top of the diamond grid. The words/phrases at the top of the diamond are considered "most important" and the words/phrases at the bottom are considered least important. The phrases and words have been derived from the four conceptual categories of curriculum identified by Fraser and Bosanquet (2006).

2. What is your understanding of co-creating curricula (with staff/with students[5])?

    What would it look like when it is taking place? How do you know it is working? Who is doing and saying what?

3. What value do you see in creating opportunities for co-creating curricula? For staff, students, the institution?

    What kind of impact do you think it has had on yourself/others involved in the collaboration/discipline/institution?

4. How would you sum up the principles of working in this way and your rationale for co-creating curricula?

---

[5] Dependent on respondent being interviewed.

Diamond ranking exercise - key considerations in curriculum design

Words and phrases to be prioritised (taken from Fraser and Bosanquet, 2006)

Goals	Content
Process	External requirements, such as professional bodies
Institutional strategic requirements	Student motivation
Opportunities to innovate with teaching and learning	Learning outcomes
Fit with wider programme of study	Student involvement/input
Latest research and knowledge within the discipline	Unit outline
Prior knowledge/skills of students	University quality assurance regulations

Note: blanks cards will also be provided to enable participants to include other phrases/words.
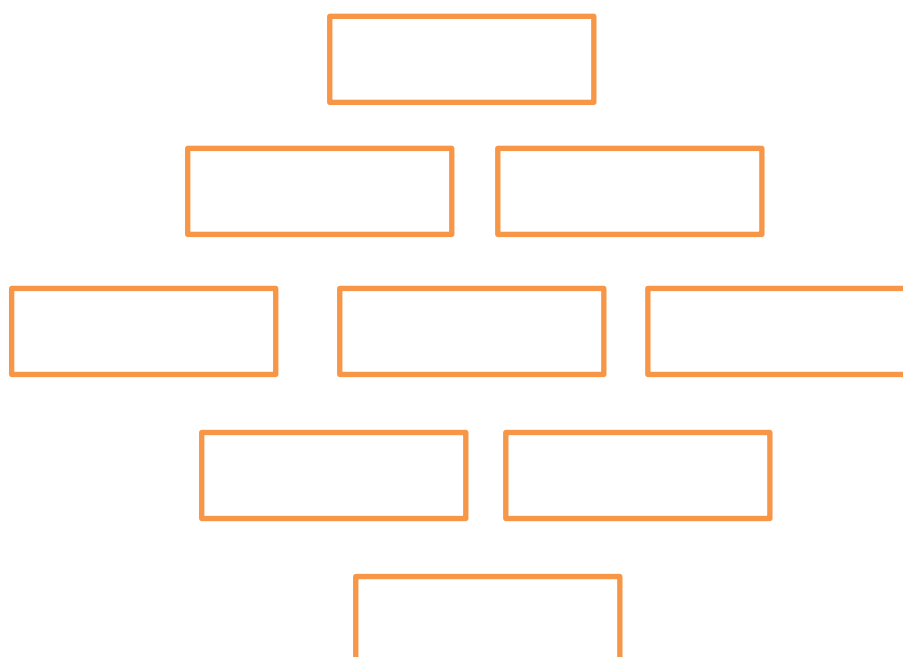
6. Interim Results

Feedback on interim findings

The following list of items from this early stage of analysis has been adapted from a conference presentation given at the Improving University Teaching Conference, July 2015, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia.

a) Definitions of curriculum appear to be multifaceted (and sometimes contradictory). Some participants argued definitions are unimportant but others valued exploring their tacit assumptions in the context of co-creating curricula.

b) Discussions focused on content and process but not on knowledge (creation or ownership).

c) Issues of time and temporality of collaboration occur frequently in terms affordances and constraints. Collaborations were generally perceived as time consuming but that staff and students reap rewards. Some students voiced frustrations at limited scope for input due to time constraints.

d) There was little/no explicit discussion amongst participants on values or principles underpinning the relationships during the collaborative activities.

e) Roles and identities (especially for students) appeared to be fluid and were negotiated through the collaborative process.

f) Staff discussed paternalistic/maternalistic gatekeeping during collaborative activity and expressed a variety of reason for doing so.

g) Institutional structures and staff in mediating roles are important in sustaining momentum.

h) Staff and students appear to develop greater awareness (and empathy) for the level of effort required to develop and revise courses.

i) Those students involved in collaborative activities seem to be the "super-engaged" (Bryson, 2014). This raises issues of access and inclusivity.

j) Motivations for students to be involved with collaborative work include developing skills, seeing it as a route to further study, wanting to make a difference, and understand their learning better. Staff were predominantly driven by values and their teaching philosophies.

k) Staff and student discussed the value and impact of working in this way in a variety of ways, including enhanced awareness of the curriculum development process, being able to 'try out' new identities, energising, and putting values into practice.

7a. Coding from Data Analysis

7. Code number	Code descriptor	Code relationships
1	Motivation	
2	Time	
3	Funding	
4	Support of others/Like minded	16, 5
5	Position of power/influence	31, 26
6	Definition of partnership	
7	Process	
8	Product/actual activity	
9	Expectations	
10	Impact	
11	Curriculum definition	
12	Gatekeeping	
13	Visual task	
14	Discipline	16
15	Stage of student	
16	Academic identity/teaching philosophy	
17	Change	
18	Student resistance	
19	Risk	
20	Principles	6
21	Scalability	
22	Expertise	
23	Aspirations (personal)	26,9
24	Challenge (personal)	26,9
25	Conceptualisation/theory	
26	Description of relationship	
27	Uncertainty	26
28	Prior Experiences	
29	Institutional enablers	

30	Super Engaged	
31	Authority	26
32	Applied Learning	
33	Barriers	2
34	Assessment	8
35	Broader Reach/involvement	10
36	Confidence	10
37	Legacy	10,48
38	Impact on others	10
39	High Standards	
40	Awards and nominations	16
41	Student as consumer	50
42	Technology and social media	8,26
43	Employability	10, 1
44	Success measure	10, 46
45	Partnership process not discussed	6
46	Evaluation	
47	Recognition and reward for staff	16
48	Sustainability	21
49	Awareness of curriculum devpt processes	10
50	Political context	41
51	Students adopting our discourse	10
52	Enthusiasm/Excitement	10
53	Impact on wider learning	10
54	Ownership	26, 10
55	Inclusivity and diversity	

7b. Coding from Data Analysis: Nvivo Coding Hierarchy

Curriculum Definitions
Conceptualisation
Visual task

Establishing partnership
Barriers
evaluation
Expectations
Process
Process not discussed
Recruitment
Resistance
Risk
Technology and social media
Time

Impact and Value
Awards and nominations
Awareness of curriculum develpt process
Confidence
Employability
Enthusiasm
Impact on others
Impact on wider learning
Legacy
Outputs
Ownership
Recognition and reward
Success measures
Wider involvement in university

Institutional Context
Barriers
Change
Funding
Gatekeeping
Institutional prog
Political environment
Position of influence
Scalability
Support of others_like minded
Sustainability

Motivation
Applied learning
Aspirations
Challenge
Employability
Increase engagement
Make a difference
Perspective

Principles of partnership
Accountability
Dealing with uncertainty
Definitions
Discussion

| High standards |
| Inclusivity |
| Relationships in partnership |

8. Plain Language Statement and Consent Forms

University of Glasgow | College of Social Sciences

Plain Language Statement

Project Title: Co-creating curricula in higher education: exploring perceptions of staff and students

Researcher: Cherie Woolmer, c.woolmer.1@research.gla.ac.uk

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether to participate.it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. After reading the information please show your consent to taking part by signing and dating the consent form.

The purpose of the study is to explore how staff and students who are actively engaged with co-creation of curriculum talk about and understand issues related to the topic. In particular, it aims to identify terminology that people use, and perceptions about practice from staff and students and to compare this with some of the complexity and contradictions found in current literature.

This is a qualitative study and uses a mixture of interviews and visual tasks with staff and students who are involved with co-creation of curricula activities. You will be asked a series of questions about how you define curriculum and about your experiences of opportunities for co-creation and the value of this kind of activity. You will also be asked to carry out a prioritisation exercise by ranking statements about co-creation activity. This will last up to 40 minutes. Your answers will be recorded using an audio recording device and will be transcribed at a later date.

Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any point and for any reason, without having to explain your decision to the researcher. Participation or non-participation in the research will have no effect on student assessments or grades of academic work.

You have been invited to take part because you are either a staff member or student involved with co-creation of curriculum activity in higher education and are considered to have valuable experiences to share on this topic.

There are a number of possible benefits from being involved in this research. These include: exploring your experiences with a researcher, having an opportunity to discuss relevant literature and examples from the sector that might inform future work, and a chance to raise the profile of your work at a time when there is national and international interest in this topic. You will also have access to any future conference presentations and/or publications related to the research project.

You are invited to give permission for the researcher to use your name and institution in the project outputs and for these to be associated with any direct quotes used. Alternatively, I can represent your contributions through the use of a pseudonym*.

Signed consent forms will be stored separately from the audio recordings and transcriptions. Student and staff data will be paired where they are from the same institution and same programme of study if both students and staff have been interviewed. The only information about you which will be kept is the audio recording and the transcription. These audio recordings will be accessible to only the main researcher but some transcripts will be shared with her supervisors. The digital audio recordings will be stored on a password protected computer. On completion of the project, the audio recordings will be destroyed.

If you are happy to be involved in the project, you will now be asked to sign a consent form to confirm this.

This study has been reviewed by the College of Social Sciences Ethics committee and is supported and funded through the Higher Education Academy Mike Baker Doctoral Studentship Scheme.

If you would like further information about the study, please feel free to contact me, Cherie Woolmer, (c.woolmer.1@research.gla.ac.uk) or either of my supervisors, Dr. Catherine Bovill (Catherine.bovill@glasgow.ac.uk) or Professor Vivienne Baumfield (Vivienne.baumfield@galsgow.ac.uk). In addition, if you have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research please contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer, Dr Muir Houston muir.houston@glasgow.ac.uk

* Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies.

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Consent for participation in this study: Student form

Title of Project: Co-creating curricula in higher education: exploring perceptions of staff and students

Name of Researcher: Cherie Woolmer, c.woolmer.1@research.ac.uk

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Plain Language Statement for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

3. I consent to interviews being audio taped and for visual data to be recorded and reproduced in print.

4. I understand that transcripts will be returned to participants to check for accuracy

5. I *do/do not (*delete) consent to being identified by name in any publications arising from the research.

6. I understand that participation or non-participation in the research will have no effect on my assessment or grades of my academic work.

7. I understand that I can contact the researcher for this project

I agree / do not agree (delete as applicable) to take part in the above study.

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Date   Signature

University of Glasgow | College of Social Sciences

Consent for participation in this study: Staff form

Title of Project: Co-creating curricula in higher education: exploring perceptions of staff and students

Name of Researcher: Cherie Woolmer, c.woolmer.1@research.gla.ac.uk

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Plain Language Statement for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

3. I consent to interviews being audio taped and for visual data to be recorded and reproduced in print.

4. I understand that transcripts will be returned to participants to check for accuracy

5. I *do/do not* (delete) consent to being identified by name in any publications arising from the research.

6. I understand that I can contact the researcher for this project.

I agree / do not agree (delete as applicable) to take part in the above study.

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Date   Signature

9. Publications and Presentations

I have engaged with dissemination and review of my research throughout my PhD, which has resulted in the publication of a peer-reviewed journal article, conference papers, and keynote presentations. Engagement with researchers in the field has enabled me to present and refine my arguments and has exposed my work to external critique from scholars across the international community. These include:

Publications

Bovill, C., Baumfield, V., and Woolmer, C. (to be submitted) *How curricular conceptualisations in higher education influence student-staff co-creation of the curriculum*

Woolmer, C., Sneddon, P., Curry, G., Hill, B., Fehertavi, S., Longbone, C., and Wallace, K. (2016) Student-staff partnership to create an interdisciplinary science skills course in a research intensive university. *International Journal for Academic Development 21 (1)*.DOI: 10.1080/1360144X.2015.1113969

Conference papers

Bovill, C. and Woolmer C. (forthcoming) *Building an institutional interdisciplinary network focused on active student participation'*. SEEDA annual conference 2016

Woolmer, C. (Forthcoming) *Staff and Students co-creating curricula: narratives of impact*. RAISE conference, University of Loughborough, September 2016.

Woolmer, C. (2016) *Staff-student collaborations in Learning and Teaching: the need for deliberative spaces*. Improving University Teaching annual conference, University of Durham, July 2016

Woolmer, C. (2016) *Student motivations for co-creating curricula*. University of Glasgow Learning and Teaching Conference, April 2016

Woolmer, C. (2015) *Students and staff co-creating curricula in higher education: exploring narratives of impact*. Improving University Teaching Conference, University of Ljubljana. July 2015

Woolmer, C. (2015) *Co-creating curricula in higher education: exploring perceptions of staff and students*. Student Voice conference, University of Cambridge. June 2015

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Keynotes and Presentations by invitation

Woolmer, C. (2016) *Staff and students co-creating curricula: Reflections on research and implications for practice*. Festival of Learning, University of West of Scotland (invited workshop)

Woolmer, C. (2015) *Co-creating the curriculum: revolution or evolution*? Student Fellows Conference, University of Winchester. March 2015 (invited keynote).

Woolmer, C. (2015) *You say it's a revolution? Students as co-creators in higher education.* Active Student Participation Conference. Uppsala Universitet, March 2015 (invited keynote)

Woolmer, C. (2014) *Staff and students co-creating the curriculum: the influence of underpinning motivations.* PG Cert Academic Practice Workshop, University of Strathclyde. October 2014. (invited workshop)

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Available at: http://www.ed.ac.uk/governance-strategic-planning/strategic-planning/strategic-plan-2012-16 accessed January 2016

University of Edinburgh Student Engagement Policy (2015)
Available at:
http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/AcademicServices/Quality/studentengagement/StudentEngagementStatement.pdf accessed January 2016

Edinburgh Napier Academic Strategy 2020
Available at: http://www.napier.ac.uk/about-us/our-values-and-strategy accessed January 2016

University of Glasgow University Strategy 2015-2020
Available at: http://www.gla.ac.uk/about/strategy/ accessed January 2016

University of Lincoln Strategic Plan 2011-2016
Available at
https://www.lincoln.ac.uk/home/abouttheuniversity/governance/strategyandvision/ **NOTE**: This strategy page has been updated to show the University's new 2016-2020 strategy. accessed January 2016

University of Lincoln Teaching and Learning Plan 2011-2016
Available at:
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University of Lincoln Student Engagement Strategy 2012-2016
Available at:
https://www.lincoln.ac.uk/home/media/universityoflincoln/globalmedia/documents/SES.pdf accessed January 2016

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Queen Margaret University Strategic Plan 2012-2015
Available at: http://www.qmu.ac.uk/the_university/docs/Strategic-Plan.pdf
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University College Dublin University Strategy 2015-2020
Available at: http://www.ucd.ie/strategy2015-2020/ourvisionfor2020/index.html accessed January 2016

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