



UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN

Conceptualising the Student-University relationship within a UK higher education university: A case study into the involvement of students in assuring and enhancing teaching and learning and the wider student experience.

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the University of Lincoln for the award of Doctor of Philosophy

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June 2019

Abstract

Introduction: Student voice in higher education has the potential to empower students to influence change and improve the collective teaching and learning experience; working to counter the use of student voice as a mechanism to satisfy a marketised sector. To achieve this goal requires a shift in practices, challenging the traditional modes of working that define the student-university relationship and underpin the power dynamics at play within an institution. Conceptualising how student voice is integrated within the student-university relationship and governance models stems from the position that students should be provided with the space and opportunity to be heard and be empowered to influence change and have equal roles as partners with staff in the development and enhancement of the student experience.

Methodology: The research's method of enquiry used a critical, post-structural ethnography with a blended design of critical theory and post-structuralism within an ethnographic case study of a UK higher education institute. Qualitative data was generated from interactions across the institution obtained through semi-structured individual / group interviews, non-participant unstructured observations, texts and policy documentation and an informal participant journal.

The researcher worked with participants to construct the discursive reality of how the historical, political, economic and institutional influences have affected the way that students, staff and senior management are involved within the student-university relationship and how this proliferates through to working with students.

A Foucauldian critical discourse analysis was used to analyse the multiple forms of data, exploring the concepts of discipline, surveillance and governmentality to help expose the problematic practices and the external power in operation. In addition, the work of Habermas' materialist theory of knowing and communicative action helped conceptualise how students and staff work together to create knowledge, make decisions and how this is inextricably linked to power.

Findings: The study highlighted how the amplification and importance of student voice through the metrics used by the regulatory bodies in higher education in the UK has become a key driver for many of the internal quality assurance procedures. The neoliberal discourses and principles of marketisation, performativity and consumerism have led to the use of

bureaucratic systems that limit the possibilities of what staff and students can perform and achieve. The continual requirement to develop practice and benchmark performance across institutions and the sector are illustrative of pastoral power that creates self-regulation of the behaviour and actions of institutions, staff and students. There was evidence of the use and development of partnership models at the institution, however, these were not applied across the university as a whole and were only adopted by a core group of staff and students and could be at the risk of reproducing neoliberal operations of power.

Summary: The findings expose the tensions between a marketised higher education sector and approaches that attempt to amplify the student voice and work in partnership with students. The possibilities of partnership are therefore severely limited under the modern-day construction of a higher education institute and its role in society and require consideration to enable further development.

Acknowledgements

The development of this thesis would not have been possible without the help and support of a few key individuals who I am immensely grateful.

I would like to thank Dr. Karin Crawford for starting me down my journey and helping me develop my curiosity in student voice and the positionality of students in higher education.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the School of Education and my supervisory team, Dr. Sarah Amsler and Dr. Joss Winn who have opened my eyes to a way of thinking that I was blind to before and for helping me develop my knowledge and understanding in the related research and writing of my thesis. Your patience, motivation, enthusiasm and immense knowledge have been pivotal in helping me reach this point.

I would like to thank my colleagues for their patience and support and their looks of interest in my ramblings throughout the process. A big thank you to all the participants who gave up their valuable time to provide their insights, thoughts and perspectives, with whom this research would not have been possible without.

I owe a huge thanks to my mum and dad who provided me with the foundations, support and confidence to achieve in higher education, without their love and support I would have not achieved the many things in life I have.

Lastly, thank you to my family, my wife, Tracey who is a source of eternal strength and support and has provided endless encouragement, motivation and love to help me achieve my goals and ambitions and to my children, Amelie and Orla, who keep me grounded in life, with love, cheekiness, laughter and beaming smiles.

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Chapter 1. Introduction - Conceptualising the Student-University Relationship

Shared authority and independent responsibility are important in institutional governance and the development of learning and teaching and whilst, historically, administrators primarily undertook the traditional roles and responsibilities for decision-making, students have been provided with representation at various levels of governance structures since the 1960s (Bergan, 2003). However, the extent to which students are given decision-making powers in teaching and learning is limited, with students often afforded more of a consultative role, lacking agency and voice (Klemenčič, 2014; Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felton, Millard, Moore-Cherry, 2015).

In the last ten years, the notion that students can assist in a role beyond consultation has gained traction, with involvement and projects such as students as partners, change agents, producers and co-creators of their own learning (Bovill et al., 2011). Healey, Flint and Harrington (2014) argue that “engaging students and staff effectively as partners in learning and teaching is arguably one of the most important issues facing higher education in the twenty-first century” (2014, p. 7). With Neary (2016) outlining that there have been numerous attempts to promote the development of student involvement in enhancing the quality of university life in UK higher education. Part of these attempts has been an increasing expectation by external agencies such as the Quality Assurance Agency for students to participate in quality enhancement and assurance mechanisms (QAA¹, 2012). In addition, there has been a much greater emphasis placed on student representation and more cooperative relationships between the students’ union and institutional management teams (Brooks, Byford and Sela, 2015; Neary, 2016), possibly as a result of the increased emphasis being placed on institutions to involve students in their institutional governance.

¹ QAA – Is an independent organisation with a stated mission to “safeguard standards and improve the quality of UK higher education” and was established in 1997 through the transfer of functions from the former Higher Education Quality Council and quality assessment divisions of HEFCE and HEFCW.

This framing and current thinking is suggestive of a democratic relationship between students and the institution which is an intriguing prospect that has captured the interests of academic developers (Curran and Millard, 2016) and educational researchers (Bovill and Felton, 2016) and is the focus of scrutiny and research interest within academic communities (Klemenčič, 2014; Bovill et al., 2015). In particular, it raises debate and dialogue about how students, students' unions, staff and senior managers can work collectively to form the student-university relationship and the impact or effect this can have on learning environments aligning to calls by Watson (2007) and Monbiot (2017) to develop civic and democratic universities.

The historical and political discourses have framed the current relationship between staff and students in the UK and is a direct consequence of neoliberal reforms that have changed the face of higher education (Little and Williams, 2010), shifting to a marketised higher education sector with clear consumerist agendas (Brooks, Byford and Sela, 2016; Holmwood, Hickey, Cohen and Wallis, 2016). Shore (2008) outlines that the changes are a result of an increased reliance on an *audit culture*, where the performance of institutions is now quantified, compared, scrutinised, rendered visible and ranked all in the name of improving quality. The associated effect of the increased accountability within the UK has seen a shift to placing more emphasis on enhancing learning and increasing learner engagement, with students playing an increased participatory role in governance mechanisms, institutional operations and policy development (Little and Williams, 2010). Klemenčič (2014) echoes these comments and believes that the emphasis on quality assurance²/ enhancement³ and student satisfaction has provided new opportunities and structures for students beyond the

² Quality Assurance - mechanisms for the review of courses and, in some instances, for the monitoring of implementation of learning and teaching policy (Gibbs, Habeshaw and Yorke, 2000) or as defined by the QAA (2011) the guaranteeing of standards and quality of educational provision.

³ Quality Enhancement - processes designed to improve quality, for example staff development, funding for teaching improvement projects, the sharing of good practice, action plans and infrastructural changes such as the use of learning space, library provision and staffing (Gibbs et al., 2000).

formal governance mechanism that students were previously privy to.

At a basic level, student participation or involvement can be the listening to and valuing of student views regarding their learning experience (Seale, 2009) and may be enacted through formal mechanisms such as module evaluations, reports, student - staff committee meetings, institutional surveys, the National Student Survey (NSS) and metrics of teaching excellence. However, the term student voice within the literature and research characterises a form of participation or involvement that sees staff working in partnership with students as equals to influence change, empowering them to take an active role in shaping or changing their education (Seale, 2009). Student voice in higher education can therefore be seen as an integral part of how students and staff work collectively within the student-university relationship to develop the teaching and learning experience, countering a marketised sector.

Seale (2009) identifies that most of the student voice literature in higher education in the UK is descriptive and there is a need for more in-depth studies that are evaluative and develop a greater understanding of practice. Furthermore, Freeman (2016) suggests that there is a need to question more closely the relationships and experiences that are produced by the types of student voice that are currently used and valued within higher education. The current research project worked with participants to construct the discursive reality of how the historical, political, economic and institutional influences have affected the way that students, staff and senior management are involved within the student-university relationship and how this proliferates through to working with students and empowering them to have a positive influence on their educational experience.

1.1 Context of the Development of Higher Education

Previously, UK universities were classified as largely autonomous bodies free from state interference concerned with the education of the (male) elite, with a primary interest in the development of knowledge for the privileged few (Brennan, King and Lebeau, 2004; Collini, 2012). Universities were therefore mainly concerned with the development of research often in a *protected space* to provide individuals and groups with freedom to associate and debate (Brennan, King and Lebeau, 2004).

As universities developed into the modern era they were widely based on the German model, the Humboldt institution at the University of Berlin, which adopted a more liberal education that was organised around the principle of developing greater connections between research and teaching (Readings, 1996). Consequently, the value of higher education has been heavily contested and a topic of great discussion and critique especially from the state who have increasingly taken the view that any publically funded activity needs to serve the need of the economy, alongside a constant pursuit of excellence through accountability (Readings, 1996). Institutions have therefore become less autonomous and answerable to the government due to the financial support provided; requiring institutions to be more responsive to the needs of the economy and secondly, to increase the numbers of students attending universities, addressing inclusivity issues and attempting to develop social mobility (Collini, 2012).

In the current era Holmwood et al. (2016) suggests that there are a number of benefits to students and the whole of society, summarising these under three key aspects:

- educating the next generation of the population
- carrying out research to address social and scientific challenges
- maintaining an independent platform for research into society and science to facilitate democratic debate. (Holmwood et al., 2016, p. 3).

The states justification for universities is problematic as it changes depending on whom it is speaking to, with the reasons ranging from the quality of research excellence in British universities, to training for employment or the transfer of technology, or to provide opportunities for individuals and to develop talent (Collini, 2012). The switching and emphasis is challenging both socially and politically and in some instances contradictory to the development of universities. However, the notion of the university education as a public good comes into conflict with consumerist approaches in higher education that utilise student satisfaction surveys to aid choice and enhance system wide-quality (Naidoo, Shanker and Veer, 2011).

In addition, in recent decades there has been a number of threats to higher education: from funding agencies, the state and managerial interference to academic life (Holmwood et al., 2016); increased marketisation, growth and massification not just in student numbers, but in

the diversification of the student body (Troschitz, 2017); and the range of subjects and the types of institutions, with the introduction of teaching-only institutions (Collini, 2012).

The increased state regulation through the accountability of universities and the exposure to market forces has created a shift in the governance of higher education and is seen as an attack on academic freedom of universities and the guarantee of independence on research through to teaching. Such approaches undermine the ability to challenge students who view education through a narrow instrumental gaze with the goal being to pass the test and achieve the qualification (Holmwood, et al., 2016) as opposed to subject curiosity and scholarship. Collini (2012) argues that at the very least institutions need to try and create a set of aspirational ideals that go beyond the form of the transactional nature of economic return that is found in today's marketised and employment orientated universities.

However, without students, lecture halls and seminar rooms there is no university and more than likely, no academics (Troschitz, 2017) which in turn raises some important questions surrounding not only what a university is for but what a student is, and what role they play in higher education. It is widely identified that the large reforms that have been evident in higher education since the 1980s are as a result of the neoliberal movement and have changed the face of higher education in the UK (Lambert, 2009). Shore (2008) states that neoliberalism has provided an increased reliance on an audit culture due to growing concerns about quality assurance afflicting many professions.

Foucault (1977) defines neoliberalism as a competition framework imposed by the state in a regulatory role at every moment and every point in society. The vision of the state is enacted through the production and reproduction of market forces, which create an ethos of competition that permeates culture, education, personal relations and orientation of the self, organised around a certain imagination of *the market* (Ball, 2012; Davies, 2014). Such approaches target institutions such as universities and activities, which lie outside of the market, bringing them inside the market, through privatisation or the reinvention of themselves in a market-like way. Therefore, the state remains a central actor in forcing institutions to reinvent themselves and measure themselves against the imagination of the market (Davies, 2014).

During the 1980s and through the Jarrett report in 1985 universities become formally accountable for the delivery of identifiable outcomes, with the state becoming the driver of

a set of public policies designed to reform and modernise higher education and the public sector (Shattock, 2008). During this period higher education moved from being privately and self-governed (albeit state funded) to being publicly governed through the state; since this point higher education policy has evolved, driven by a series of agendas, financial, social and economic, absorbing higher education “into the public policy making machinery of the state” (Shattock, 2008, p. 182).

The Dearing report in 1997 highlighted that there were four main purposes of universities and these were:

1. Inspiring and enabling individuals to develop their capabilities to the highest levels
 2. Increasing knowledge and understanding
 3. Serving the needs of the economy
 4. Shaping a democratic and civilized society
- (NICHE, 1997)

Beyond the key traditional purpose of development and dissemination of knowledge, the focus was to widen participation and increase the link between the subjects taught to the workforce required, helping meet the economic needs of the state and reducing institutional autonomy (Laurillard, 2002). Additionally, universities serve to help develop the democratic values of a civilised society working with its members and engaging with its community (Watson, 2008). Universities therefore have a role to play in developing inclusive and democratic values with its members.

Since the introduction of the aforementioned neoliberal principles there is evidence to suggest that the performance of institutions has been quantified, compared, scrutinised, rendered visible, and ranked, all in the name of improving quality (Shore, 2008). The ‘*Future of Higher Education*’ white paper in 2003; the formation of the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) in 2007, which has now been merged into the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) in 2009; the Browne report into higher education in 2010; and more recently the higher education green paper released in November 2015 titled, ‘*Fulfilling our potential: teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice*’; the white paper in 2016 ‘*Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility & Student Choice*’ the Consumer Rights Act in 2015; the Higher Education Research Act in 2017; and the formation of the new regulatory body, the Office for Students in 2018, have

driven key changes in the UK higher education landscape. Little and Williams (2010) state specifically that government policies and practices have created an increased accountability of universities to the public and the government and is reflected through such changes as: the expansion of higher education; a more diverse student body; university accountability of the use of public funds; transparency about the education, institutions provide and its output; and student contribution to the costs of tuition, altering the purpose, organisation and culture within universities (Little and Williams, 2010).

Strathern (2000) illustrates how the visibility of data is utilised to facilitate the development of knowledge as an instrument of control or surveillance. The era of an audit culture has enabled the performance of institutions to be quantified, compared, scrutinised, rendered visible and ranked in an attempt to improve quality (Shore, 2008). The resulting affect and proliferation of data in the higher education sector in the UK has provided an increased use of metrics to monitor and assess the performance of institutions and academic staff (Strathern, 2000). Such information is rendered visible to the public through benchmarks and league tables, the resulting effect is an increased marketisation of universities that has seen virtually every aspect of student life and the performance of institutions and its staff subject to measurement, with a compulsion to reduce complex social activities to simple numerical scores or ratings (Brenneis, Shore and Wright, 2005). Selwyn (2014) suggests that for many years there has been an increased use of data in higher education around the globe, which is part of an ever-increasing digital university that uses data to monitor performance and plan for the future and conforms to the neoliberal logics of competition and performance management.

Ball (2012) suggests that performativity of teaching staff is normalised in the university and wider education sector with effort, values, purposes and self-understanding linked to narrow measures of comparison and output, with staff spending increased amounts of time reporting on what they do. In the UK performance-driven measures or perceived measures of *quality* have been further promoted by the introduction of the National Student Survey, Research Exercise Framework, Key Information Set (which includes measures such as the number of good honours degrees and graduate employment statistics) and the Teaching Excellence Framework announced in July 2015. Williamson (2018) describes this as “a *metric tide of performance measurement*” that is designed to create a marketised system within a mass higher education sector. The development of a marketised higher education sector in

the UK combined with the increasing demands from students has created an ideology of the student as a paying *customer* or *consumer* and forces institutions into direct competition with each other (Naidoo and Jamieson 2005).

Klemenčič (2014) believes that the emphasis on quality assurance and student satisfaction influenced by the market-orientated competitive agenda has opened up new opportunities and structures for engagement of students and student governments that could counter consumerism. In addition there have been calls by Watson (2007) and Monbiot (2017) to develop civic universities that share democratic principles, countering neoliberal approaches reclaiming ownership and building a sense of belonging. However, Fielding (2004a), Rudduck and Fielding (2006) and Bragg (2007) express their concerns regarding the present climate, where learners are consulted about their experience in order to raise standards and increase attainment, as opposed to reasons of personal and social development or active membership of their learning community.

1.2 Student Involvement in Institutional practices and processes

It is proposed that one of the key purposes of a university is to serve as a participative space where students learn through example and practice, including democratic principles and how these can be applied to real life (Bergan, 2003 and Plannas, Soler, Fullana, Pallisera and Vila, 2013). Therefore, universities have not only a part to play in helping students understand the role that participation in a democratic system has on society (Lizzo and Wilson, 2009) but to provide institutions that are interlinked with its community (Monbiot, 2017). Zuo and Ratsoy (1999) suggest that the concepts of shared authority and independent responsibility are important in the development of effective university governance. Traditionally it has been mainly administrators who have assumed responsibility for decision-making (Bergan, 2003). However, the variety and complexity of tasks performed by universities require interdependence among administrators, faculty members, students, and members of the support staff and are of direct concern to all (Sabri, 2011; Plannas et al., 2013).

At the time of writing, the neoliberal reforms have seen the introduction of organisations

and bodies such as the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to regulate the sector and distribute government funding to institutions in England. HEFCE was replaced in April 2018 by a new regulatory body the Office for Students. HEFCE and now the Office for Students contracts the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) to devise and apply quality assurance methods in cooperation with the sector and is therefore responsible for reviewing the quality of all publicly funded higher education teaching provision in England on behalf of HEFCE. A key role of the QAA is to safeguard standards and improve quality in higher education and could be viewed as a regulatory body that requires higher education providers to evidence a paper trail indicating how and where learner voice has been captured and importantly, acted upon (Walker and Logan, 2008) and made public (Williams and Cappuccini-Ansfield, 2007). Walker and Logan (2008) suggest that a key reason institutions are fostering learner voice initiatives in higher education is a result of the regulation and audits carried out by the QAA. Institutions must therefore have clear mechanisms in place for gathering and acting upon student feedback, satisfying and reproducing the requirements of the regulatory body.

As a result of the changes and increased expectation and reliance on student voice, higher education institutions have placed more emphasis on student engagement and representation as a means of improving quality of the learning experience (Brooks et al., 2015). The organisation and role student representatives perform is diverse, with the responsibility to organise and train representatives falling under the remit of the students' unions, which are often autonomous and independent organisations (Rogers, Freeman, Williams and Kane, 2011; Brooks et al., 2016; Neary, 2016).

The formal rights to student participation are therefore now standard practice within UK universities. However, models of partnership working between students and staff would suggest that alternative frameworks and modes of working could incorporate students to play a key role beyond evidencing paper trails to assure quality, even within a marketised higher education environment, with the potential to promote democratic modes of working. Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felton (2014) describe the partnership approach between students and academic staff in learning and teaching as "a collaborative, reciprocal process through which all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally, although not necessarily in the same ways, to curricular or pedagogical conceptualisation, decision-making, implementation or analysis" (2014, p. 6-7).

To date there have been a limited number of studies that have examined how students are incorporated within institutional governance processes (Klemenčič, 2014) and how this is influenced by the historical, economic and political factors and discourses that shape student involvement. However, researchers and academic developers have looked at exploring and developing student-staff partnership in a number of ways: student engagement (Mathews, 2016); students as co-creators of curricula (Carey, 2013a; Brooman, Darwent and Pimor, 2015), student as producer (Neary and Winn, 2009), students as co-producers (McCulloch, 2009), students as change agents (Dunne and Zanstra, 2011) and development of an institutional culture (Curran and Millard, 2016). However, Naidoo, Shankar and Veer (2011) identify that whilst there is evidence to suggest the development of co-creation in the sector, there is a need to shift the political and governmental discourse to enable such approaches to be developed in governmental and institutional policies to become more instrumental in higher education at a bigger scale.

1.3 Student Involvement to Student Voice

The term student voice is a very broad term and, at a basic level, encompasses everything from student feedback in both formal and informal structures to staff-student partnership, through to campaigning and protests. However, within the literature in the field of student interactions and involvement in helping shape teaching and learning, the terminology can often be confusing with *student voice* (Fielding, 2004a; Bragg, 2007, Seale, 2009), *student involvement* (Zuo and Ratsoy, 1999; Gvaramadze, 2011; Elassy, 2013), *student participation* (Bergan, 2003) and *student engagement* (Little and Williams, 2010, Carey 2013b) being used interchangeably and it is useful to distinguish between the different terms.

Participation or involvement is suggestive of a certain type of relationship where students are included but not necessarily classified as equals or full partners. Student voice initiatives and research attempts to go further by looking at mechanisms of participation and how students can be empowered through opportunities to actively shape their own and others teaching and learning.

Seale, (2009) defines student voice as

listening to and valuing the views that students express regarding their learning experiences; communicating student views to people who are in a position to influence change; and treating students as equal partners in the evaluation of teaching and learning, thus empowering them to take a more active role in shaping or changing their education (Seale, 2009, p. 995).

This definition by Seale shares a lot of similarities with the definition of a partnership approach by Cook-Sather et al. (2014) cited in the previous section. The research conceptualising student-staff partnership may therefore share a number of similarities and goals; however, it provides a different lens through which to view a partnership approach.

Student voice initiatives are prominent within the education setting in compulsory education; the post-16 sector and higher education settings (Little and Williams, 2010). However, the related literature on student voice is more developed within the compulsory education sector and is dominated by discourses of governance, representation and rights (Fielding, 2001, 2004). In higher education the literature is varied and centres on the main areas of quality assurance and quality enhancement (Shah and Nair, 2006; Williams and Cappuccino-Ansfield, 2007; Lizzo and Wilson, 2009; Elassy, 2013; Planas et al., 2013; Freeman, 2014 and Canning, 2016) and staff or professional development (Dinsdale, 2002; Campbell, Beasley, Eland and Rumpus, 2007). Canning (2016) suggests that student voice encompasses everything from the formal and informal feedback provided by students to their institution to staff-student partnerships, through to campaigning and protests. A more detailed discussion of the empirical studies into student voice will be provided in the literature Chapter 2.5.

In addition, it is important to draw distinctions between student engagement specific to teaching and learning activities and student engagement within institutional practices, processes and initiatives such as feedback, student representation and co-production through research and collaboration (Little, Locke, Scesa and Williams, 2009 and Elassy, 2013). The former is aimed at enhancing the individual student's engagement within his or her own learning and the latter seeks to enhance the collective learner experience, which is inherently different but is often difficult to tease apart in institutional approaches.

Student voice work within higher education in the UK and internationally is currently underdeveloped and lacks clear definitions and conceptualisations, particularly in relation to

the commitments to participation, transformation and empowerment of student voice work and how this is understood and enacted within higher education (Seale, 2009). Elassy (2013), identifies that there are a limited number of studies that have focused on student involvement in either institutional or national quality assurance procedures. Furthermore, Seale (2009) and Klemenčič (2014) suggest that across the variations in student voice work, there is an emphasis on taking on board and valuing student views as consultants. However, there is no articulation of whether or not student voice work in higher education can or does involve transformation or empowerment for students.

Robinson and Taylor (2007) identify four core values that should be central to successful learner voice practice in compulsory education and could be adapted to offer empowerment and engagement opportunities within higher education:

- Clear communication and guidance as to the remit of the work and what this will involve for the student;
- Inclusive participation, ensuring that there is space and thought as to how to hear all voices, including those that are harder to reach.
- Reconceiving the formal power relations, working to involve students-as-partners from the outset, proving ownership and a sense of shared responsibility.
- Space for change and transformation, listening to learner voice alone is not sufficient, therefore it is important to include students in shaping the outcomes.

Currently, the higher education sector within the UK and Europe is incorporating student involvement within quality assurance mechanisms at institutional and national levels, with the Bologna process⁴ supporting student involvement (Elassy, 2013). Student governments have consolidated a strong place within higher education institutions and provide important representation and consultation functions in the quality process system (Klemenčič, 2014) and are therefore of a direct concern to educational leaders (Elassy, 2013; Plannas et al., 2013). Freeman (2016) confirms that student voice has become part of the day to day

⁵ The Bologna Process - a series of ministerial meetings and agreements between European countries designed to ensure comparability in the standards and quality of higher education qualifications.

running of higher education and shapes the concerns of management and academics; changes the organisational content of degree courses and, at times, challenges authority. Whilst there are many recommendations about the desirability of student involvement in quality processes, very few existing studies have focused on the particular issue of how students' views are incorporated into institutional practices and procedures (Elassy, 2013 and Seale, 2009) and how this affects the power relations between staff and students and is enacted through the student-university relationship. Freeman (2016) suggests that whilst student voice activities are often regarded positively there is a lack of clarity surrounding the purpose of student voice, with a lack of acknowledgement to the complex imperatives and ideologies that have informed its development. Furthermore, given the inherent power relation between faculty and students, it is also important to establish clear student rights and structures for ongoing engagement as well as accessible information and appropriate tools for decision-making (Naidoo et al., 2011).

The concepts of shared authority and independent responsibility and how this is shaped and framed in the formal and informal process of an institution is therefore crucial to determining whether students can move beyond a consultative capacity to a position of equal power, where student voice has agency and a transformative effect on the learning environment and governance.

1.4 The Student–University relationship

Constructing the discursive reality of how the historical, political, economic and institutional influences fit together to form the student-university relationship is important in determining how it is possible to work collectively with students in a meaningful way, as characterised in the previous section. To conceptualise the student-university relationship requires both the study of the objects and subjects to be able to construct meaning about how the structures and practices operate. The analysis of discourses enables the examination of the discursive reality and is what Foucault terms *regimes of truth* (Vaughan, 2004). Adopting such approaches seeks to identify legitimate or authorised aspects of the relationship and the tensions / barriers to an effective student–university relationship. Gallant (2008) suggests how the dominant discourses are responsible for the development

of power and are taken for granted and seen as inevitable and natural. Therefore, to alter practice and shape the role and involvement of individuals in the student-university relationship requires changes to the power relations and requires the identification, analysis and redefinition of the discourses.

In the last two decades institutional practices, processes and procedures and how the actors are involved within the student-university relationship has evolved dramatically due to the increased governance of higher education by government departments and regulatory bodies (Williamson, 2018). Internally, higher education institutions have developed a number of practices to assist them in assessing performance, reflecting, comparing and changing themselves based on the representations provided (Bartlett and Tkacz, 2017). Such dynamic changes to the nature of practices and procedures opens an array of questions as to the relationship between staff students and their institutions, the roles they adopt, how power is distributed within the relationship and how this is situated in the overall culture and ethos of an institution (Naidoo et al., 2011; Klemenčič, 2014). At present, it is not clear what type of relationship exists between universities and students to improve the collective teaching and learning experience, or what is driving institutions to increase student involvement in both the formal and informal processes. Furthermore, there is a lack of understanding as to whether the practices and processes work as intended to provide a clear voice for students and ultimately whether students can contribute meaningfully to decision making, altering policy and transforming the learning environment in higher education institutions; or whether the intensification of data driven methods used by the government and increasingly institutions works to regulate and control institutions and limit the scope for working democratically with students and the wider academic community.

To satisfy the QAA UK Quality code for higher education, providers are recommended to create an environment that proactively encourages students to engage fully and foster effective partnership working within representation systems (QAA, 2012). Suggestions as to how this can be achieved are through meaningful professional conversations between students and staff, where higher education providers work with the student body to develop solutions that address issues arising from feedback.

Effective partnership working requires the engagement of the institution as a whole and in particular, an active student body. In 2003, Bergan posed a number of questions that are still

not clear, over a decade on, when evaluating the governance processes in institutions across Europe: Is the general student body sufficiently active and interested to give its representatives legitimacy? Are student representatives effective once elected? Or are they rather helping institutions fulfil the formal requirements without having any real influence on institutional policies?

In addition, Bergan (2003) and Little and Williams (2010) found that the primary focus of many institutions was to work with students in a consultative capacity on what may be seen as immediate concerns, such as social matters, the learning environment and educational content. At the other end of the scale, students have the least influence on hard topics like budgets, recruiting staff and student admissions. The same concern may also be true for academic and administrative staff who have limited opportunity and power to consult on strategic decisions and direction. This form of relationship between the institution and students conflicts with the QAA's quality code which suggests that universities need to use effective student representation at all levels of decision-making by working in partnership with the student body to achieve a faithful and effective representation.

The hierarchical structures of educational institutions can, perhaps inadvertently, privilege staff discourse and marginalise student views (Lizzo and Wilson, 2009). However, this may vary depending on the operational level of governance. At a programme or school level academic staff discourse is likely to be more prominent and at a college / faculty or institutional level academic staff and student discourse is likely to be marginalised in favour of senior management agendas and priorities. In addition, the increased use of data metrics to inform and govern institutions does not necessarily encourage active participation of the user (Selwyn, 2014) and therefore conflicts with the practical implications of a university policy that emphasises student-centredness. The result of current systems therefore often focuses on managing the student body and responding to the data, neglecting the social structures, and cultural values (Strathern, 2000) failing to respond to the experiences of the students and working with them in partnership.

The systems and processes developed in higher education institutions are designed to make individuals more accountable for their actions through a series of managerial and bureaucratic demands from higher levels of management (Selwyn, 2014). As Bergan (2003) identifies there is an emphasis and strong tradition that senior faculty / management

decides everything and therefore whilst part of the process there is little space for the involvement of student representatives. Klemenčič, (2014) argues that there is some anecdotal evidence that students have formal power in decision-making, but still lack effective influence on the development of policies. In addition, student participation in decision-making in governance is still limited by the types of issues that are considered legitimate territory for student consultation (Zuo and Ratsoy, 1999; Bergan, 2003; Lizzo and Wilson, 2009; Carey, 2013b). Furthermore, student representatives also report that when they are listened to, the process of change in higher education institutions is often very slow or even non-existent (Carey, 2013b). The emphasis and imposition that has been created as a result of the integration of technological systems to provide data both to and within institutions reinforces the hierarchical order of power and control within the university setting (Selwyn, 2014), limiting the involvement of staff and student and subsequent partnership.

A compounding factor, as highlighted by Little and Williams (2010), is that whilst institutions view student engagement as central to enhancing the student experience, the underlying rationale of the *student as consumer* is prevalent in many institutions' quality processes. Bergan (2003) had previously suggested that the student as a customer or client was becoming increasingly prevalent, altering the reality and practices and is at odds with the formal and statutory provisions for shared governance and transparency of decision-making.

The suggestion that a marketised higher education sector is more prevalent and powerful lends itself to a certain configuration of the relationship between academics, students and university administration aligned to consumerist models (Bergan, 2003; McCulloch, 2009; Molesworth, Nixon, and Scullion, 2009; Little and Williams, 2010; Carey, 2013b; Brooks et al., 2015; Canning, 2016; Neary, 2016). The positioning of students as *consumers* therefore dangerously defines the value of their role in governance, primarily to maximise satisfaction, ensuring accountability and providing a return on tuition fees (Lizzo and Wilson, 2009; Brooks et al., 2016). Neary (2016) argues that the recent changes to government legislation in higher education: (The Consumer Act 2015 and the White Paper '*Higher Education and Research Bill 2016: Success as a Knowledge Economy*') have exacerbated the position of students as consumer, as the terms of the new consumer act legally positions the student as a consumer of educational services within an individual contractual relationship.

It is apparent that the formulation of the student-university relationship is a confused picture with conflicting ideologies of accountability to the state and the increase of market forces. It is also not clear that students themselves wish or are able to effectively participate in the governance of educational institutions in meaningful ways (Seale, 2009). Therefore, in practice how democratic models of student voice work discursively within these contexts are not clear.

Little and Williams (2010) believe there is cause for optimism and suggest that there is evidence that some institutions are actively seeking to move beyond a student as (only) a customer. They suggest that these institutions are developing a greater sense of partnership between students and staff by encouraging methods of discussion on broader / strategic issues and less on immediate problems affecting the learning and teaching. The work of Little and Williams (2010) falls short in suggesting or evaluating what this looks like and whether such a model can provide a transformative and empowering impact for the student.

It remains evident that whilst work and research into student voice in higher education has increased there is still a need to develop clear definitions and conceptualisations, particularly of the commitments to partnership and democratic inclusivity; and how this is understood and enacted within the sector requiring further in-depth research that evaluates the discursive practice in reality.

1.5 Research Aims and Questions

The ethos of student voice work is based on the assumption that actively engaging students will lead to enhanced learning and better teaching. Therefore, student voice work has a large role to play in empowering learners, listening to their concerns, interests and needs through appropriate means, to develop educational experiences better suited to those individuals. It is proposed that this can be achieved by democratic decision-making that is shared between students and staff, with the learning community informed as to how decisions are taken and the processes and people involved (Walker and Logan, 2008). This form of student voice offers greater opportunities for students to have their voices heard, to affect outcomes and bring about change and should represent the core values of successful

student voice highlighted by Robinson and Taylor (2007).

However, in practice it is evident that how student voice fits within the governance of higher education institutions to form the student-university relationship is a confused picture. Freeman (2014) identifies that student voice is used in different ways as a result of the underpinning and competing imperatives that shape the manner in which managers, academics and students come to regard themselves, each other and the purpose of higher education. It is therefore not clear what role or level of involvement students are required or afforded to play within governance and whether transformative opportunities that empower students to co-create exist within the current climate. Whilst Klemenčič (2014) and Bovill et al. (2011) report how students are frequently playing more than a consultative role with involvement in projects re-positioning students as partners, change agents, producers and co-creators of their learning. However, it is not apparent how prevalent such student voice initiatives are and to what level these operate at with students in UK institutions. And whether it is possible to challenge the current consumerist contexts that have arisen due to the introduction of tuition fees and the political agendas that have created an audit culture, forcing institutions into competition with each other.

1.5.1 Research Case

The aim of the current research project is to conceptualise the discursive reality of the student-university relationship within a UK-based institute. The University of Lincoln has a tradition of promoting the involvement of students in the institution's governance models and policies and therefore serves as a unique case in which to study such interactions.

Foster (1997) describes how the university, now classified as a post 1992 institution can trace its origins back over 130 years from a vocational art college established in 1861. The development of the university stemmed from a number of training institutes and colleges, established in the regions of Hull and Grimsby, which were combined in 1976 to form a College of Higher Education, then a Polytechnic in 1990 and subsequently into a University in 1992 as a result of the Education Act. Throughout its various incarnations it is evident that there was a civic commitment between the university and the local community, people, economy and region (Foster, 1997). In 1995 the opportunity to help establish a University of Lincoln gained momentum, with a project company founded who developed a business plan

to rally the call for the concept of a university and to raise the required capital. The business plan produced in 1995 established a need for Lincolnshire to have a dedicated higher education institution, to prevent the majority of students who wanted to access higher education leaving the region to pursue their goal. The business case developed states that companies in the area identified there was a demand for training support and identified a number of key areas that would support sectors in the Lincolnshire area. In addition, the university wanted to establish themselves as an institution that had a close relationship with HE-industry / commerce and wanted to produce its own University, rather than a University looking to find its community. (University College for Lincolnshire, 1995).

Of particular relevance to this research project is how even in its earliest forms the university could be viewed as student centred in its approach. Central to the universities vision was to create a learning environment where students would be required to take responsibility for their own learning and progress through flexible academic structures (Foster, 1997). In addition, there would be a focus on the vocational nature of programmes and the learning curriculum, underpinned by applied research built on the concept of a 'teaching first' as opposed to a teaching only' university (Foster, 1997, p. 173).

Since the University of Lincoln was established in 1995 it has continued to develop its roots with the community as established by Whyte (2015) who outlined how he believed that the university was successful in rediscovering and reviving the civic university through the aforementioned initial strategic aims and partners. A recent publication by the University 'The New Civic University' demonstrates the emerging partnerships and developments that the University have had in areas such as food manufacturing and Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) provision, aligning to the Government's strategy to address regional disparities, developing growth and improving living standards in the area.

Furthermore, the University has continued to develop its approach and association with its students and the connection between research and teaching. A key developmental in the universities history could be cited as the appointment of Professor Mike Neary a National Teaching Fellow appointed in 2007 as the Dean of Teaching and Learning for the University and subsequently implemented a university wide initiative and research project titled the 'Student as Producer' funded by the Higher Education Academy. The aim of the project was to bring together teaching and research, described by Neary and Winn (2009) as a

dysfunctional relationship in higher education. The premise and development of the Student as Producer model was built upon liberal humanist principles alluded to earlier in Chapter one by Readings (1999). Neary and Winn (2009) identify how the approach inspired by Wilhelm Humboldt from the eighteenth century used a central organising principle of establishing a close relationship between research and teaching. The model sought to develop independent and autonomous citizens by abandoning the transmission of knowledge through lectures and instead moving to the creation of research and communities built on scholarship not guided by regimented curriculum and guidelines.

The connection between teaching and research identified by Neary and Winn (2009) promotes a number of benefits that align with the development of student voice and partnership and are the: development of critical and inquiry based evaluative skills; construction of knowledge through participation in communities of practice; counteraction of consumption models of education and the transmission of knowledge through the encouragement of student participation in their studies.

The notion of student voice as outlined earlier by Seale (2009) moves beyond listening to the student body and responding to their concerns to trying to encourage, engender and empower active citizenship and participation in their learning and the development of practice. The University of Lincoln has demonstrated such approaches through initiatives such as the Student as Producer, its approach to assessment, its relationship with the wider community and its approach to student engagement which has received attention across the sector and showcased, for example in the JISC Change Agents project in 2015.

Furthermore, the University was one of the first in the UK to setup a Student Engagement unit within the University's infrastructure and in the words of the University *placing students at the heart* of the institution's governance processes. Cited on the University of Lincoln's Student Engagement page were the following claims

We have developed what we believe to be the most comprehensive strategy for developing and embedding partnership working in the UK. Our strategy, which is a sub-plan of our University Strategic Plan and Teaching & Learning Plan, sets the context for re-engineering our relationship with students so that we see and work with them as active partners & producers rather than passive consumers of education

<http://edeu.lincoln.ac.uk/student-engagement/our-work-and-strategy/>

(Accessed: 11 May 2015, this page is no longer accessible and has been replaced by the following page / statement)

Student Engagement – The University of Lincoln is a sector leader for student engagement. It is at the heart of everything we do. Staff and Students work together as partners on a number of innovative projects, which mutually support the academic community (<https://lalt.lincoln.ac.uk/lalt-engagement-team/> Accessed: 14th February 2018)

At the time of writing the Universities Student Engagement Manager along with the Vice-Chancellor of the University were regularly invited as keynote speakers at national conferences in the UK, highlighting the interest from within the higher education sector in the approach that the University is taking. In addition, the university describes the University's student engagement work is to "facilitate partnership working between University of Lincoln staff and students in order to enhance the quality of the education we deliver and help create a personal student experience" (<http://edeu.lincoln.ac.uk/student-engagement/our-work-and-strategy/> Accessed: 11 May 2015)

Students can therefore be seen as partners in the University structure and are said to be involved formally across the University as student representatives in decision-making at school through to college and university level and can apply to work on validation and interview panels and contribute to pedagogical and curriculum development. Therefore, the setting of the University of Lincoln its history and innovative approaches provides a unique case and opportunity to examine and investigate how the historical, political, economic and institutional discourses have affected the concepts of shared authority and independent responsibility in the development of teaching and learning.

Specifically, the research seeks to identify how the ethos and practice of the institution proliferates down to practice, examining the: nature and extent of student voice; impact of student voice on the decision-making across multiple levels of institutional governance; and the power relations between the institution, staff and students. The research will provide a

rich and detailed assessment of how students are positioned within the student-university relationship and the reasons for such positioning. The research will develop the primarily descriptive research that exists, not only providing a greater understanding of the complexities in practice but also understanding how student voice is imagined and enacted in an institution that seeks to counter consumerist models of education through its innovative approaches.

To address the aims of the research a number of key research questions have been formulated:

- What are the drivers behind how and where student voice fits within the hierarchy of a university?
- Who wants to be involved in improving the collective teaching and learning experience and why?
- Who ultimately makes the decisions and alters policy?
- What are the challenges, barriers and tensions to a more democratic student-university relationship?

1.6 Thesis Overview

The research thesis is presented in nine chapters, including this introduction

Positionality As an academic in higher education and as a researcher, I am inextricably bound up with this project, however, care was taken to minimise the risk of imposing my views through the research. Inevitably, I was positioned inside and outside of this research project (see Chapter four) and therefore although valid there is a need to accept that my own experiences may not be representative for others. Insider status provided an understanding of the current context of higher education and student voice and the institutional structures and processes.

Chapter 2 The *Literature Review* outlines the contextual and background research relevant to the current study and is split into a number of key areas:

neoliberalism and higher education; student involvement in institutional governance; mechanisms of quality assurance to enhance learning and teaching; institutional partnership approaches; and issues of structure and power in the student-university relationship

- Chapter 3** The *Theoretical Framework* details the philosophical approach adopted based on the workings of Michael Foucault and Jürgen Habermas which were used to structure and analyse the data exposing the historical, political and economic influences and how this affects the democratic processes and relations of power in a UK higher education institute.
- Chapter 4** The *Methodology* outlines the methodological, ontological, epistemological and theoretical considerations before detailing the methodological issues. Details of researcher positionality, the case sample and ethics are included in this chapter. An ethnographic case study approach was adopted which included semi-structured individual and group interviews, observations of meetings and events, review of policy documentation, a survey to students and an informal journal. A Foucauldian critical discourse analysis was utilised to analyse the multiple forms of data.
- Chapter 5-8** Chapters five through to eight presents the analysis and discussion of the current study within the context of the theoretical framework and existing literature. The chapters examine the data in relation to the stages of the Foucauldian critical discourse analysis adopted, conceptualising the findings of the how the wider influences affect the student-university relationship and the inclusion of student voice in the development of learning and teaching and institutional governance.
- Chapter 9** The *Conclusion* draws contributions to knowledge in relation to the individual research questions being explored. The implications, limitations and recommendations for future research are then explored. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the overarching findings of the research study.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Neoliberalism and Higher Education

To understand the drivers behind where student voice fits within the hierarchy of a university it is important to understand the current context within which higher education sits and the influence and power government policy has had on the way institutions operate. Lambert (2009) identifies how higher education has undergone large reforms in recent times, with neoliberalism cited as the main mechanism that has changed the face of higher education. As established in chapter one, neoliberalism can be identified as the development of a competitive framework imposed by the state to develop a regulatory role at every moment and every point in society (Foucault, 1977). Olssen (2015) cites neoliberalism as, a positive representation of the state's role in creating appropriate market conditions, laws and institutions, necessary for the state's operation and creation of the enterprising and competitive entrepreneur.

The point at which the effects of neoliberalism started within the higher education sector has been cited by many as the Jarrett report (1985) into efficiency of universities (Shore, 2008). The findings of the report, commissioned by the committee of vice-chancellors and principals outlined that universities needed to become corporate enterprises, where value for money is an integral function and that universities were failing the economy and were therefore targets for reform and increased external control. The neoliberal reforms provided a pathway through which the government brought about new norms of conduct and behaviour. Shore (2008) believes that neoliberalisation has developed an increasing reliance on an *audit culture*, due to growing concerns about quality assurance afflicting many professions.

Under the arrival of the Thatcher Conservative government the University Grants Committee became a much more purposeful planning body in the 1980's before being replaced firstly by the University Funding Council in 1989 and HEFCE in 1992 (Shattock, 2008). The changes were designed to *empower* the taxpayer to be able to make rational choices into their education, which were then subsequently seen as commodities, thus making members of the public into customers or consumers. The era of an audit culture enabled the performance of institutions to be quantified, compared, scrutinised, rendered visible, and

ranked all in the name of improving quality (Shore, 2008). Furthermore, Selwyn (2014) suggests that the developments in higher education have been underpinned by the neoliberal logics of competition driven by the measurement of performance and quality, which has led to an increasing use of data and metrics to monitor performance and planning. An intended consequence of such approaches, has seen universities in direct competition with each other requiring the implementation of business models of operation to meet the expectations of the increased scrutiny, termed as new public management (Raaper, 2018).

The focus on quality was seen as an influence that was revolutionising the way organisations worked, although quality itself is a somewhat ambiguous term since it has connotations of both standards and excellence (Milliken and Colahan, 2004). Ellis (1993, In Milliken and Colahan, 2004) suggested that a working definition of quality should refer to “the standards that must be met to achieve specified purposes to the satisfaction of customers”. He proposes that “as the purpose of teaching is learning then the quality of teaching is its fitness for the purpose of promoting learning” (2004 p. 385). I will return later to the influence of the effects of quality standards in higher education and its impact upon teaching and learning, but it is useful at this point to try and provide a working definition to help determine quality in this context.

The turn of the millennium saw a number of key changes to policy and legislation by the government that demonstrated a continuation of the development of neoliberal principles and absorption of universities into the machinery of the state (Shattock, 2008). In 2003, *‘The future of higher education’* White Paper was released. It identified a need to increase participation in higher education and described this as an essential mechanism for achieving social justice and economic competitiveness. In 2007, the creation of the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) was set up by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown providing further evidence of the government’s role in the management of higher education, with one of the key aims being to, “raise and widen participation in higher education” (Lambert, 2009, p. 297). In 2009, the White Paper *‘Higher Ambitions: The Future of Universities in a Knowledge Economy’* was produced and proposed that there needed to be clearer links between institutions and the economy, as well as further information for prospective students. This was followed closely by the announcement of raising the tuition fee to £9000 per year to be funded by the individual from 2012 (Brown and Carasso, 2013).

More recently, The Consumer Rights Act in 2015, The White Paper on Higher Education and Research Bill in 2016 (HERB): '*Success as a Knowledge Economy*' and The Higher Education Research Act in 2017 have further exacerbated the management and governance frameworks in existence in the UK, which has also seen the introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework and the creation of a new regulatory body – the Office for Students. Both the Teaching Excellence Framework and the new regulator are designed to operate on behalf of students and taxpayers to support a competitive environment and promote choice, quality and value for money.

The combination of the continuous development of government policy transferring decision-making upwards into government (Shattock, 2008), the creation of a competitive market and cost cutting fiscal measures and regimes of economic rationalism, eroded funding streams and reduced the overall direct funding for universities per student (Shore, 2008). Over the course of the last two decades students' contribution to tuition fees has continually increased, and currently Home European Union students pay or finance their entire tuition, at a cost of £9,250 per year, the most expensive in the world (Myers, 2017). The language used to defend the changes is one of empowering the student as a customer, to make informed decisions that will drive up standards within the sector (Morrison, 2017).

The introduction of tuition fees have helped create a more liberal market for higher education (Morrison, 2017), which has long been characterised by government control on the number of undergraduate students that an institution could enrol. Gradually, since the Browne report in 2011, government control on the numbers of students institutions were allowed to enrol have gradually altered, with a more liberal market created by the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, in 2013 announced that the cap on student numbers would be opened up in 2014-15 and scrapped altogether in 2015-16 (Browne, 2010). Removal of the cap on student numbers places institutions in direct competition with each other in what resembles a free market and is an example of what Foucault (1979, p. 121) describes as *active governmentality* in the service of a regulatory principle of competition. Nixon, Scullion and Hearn (2016) identify that this application of capitalist economic principles by the British government to higher education has not only promoted competition amongst higher education providers but has been used as an attempt to increase student numbers, reduce cost and improve offerings as a result of consumer demand.

The approach adopted by the government to increase competition, the introduction of tuition fees, relaxation in controls on student numbers and opening the market to new providers (Morrison, 2017) has influenced the terrain of higher education, resulting in the re-structuring of managerial practices and processes and affecting the role and functions of the university and the beliefs about who can participate (Lambert, 2009). Therefore, the involvement and the role of students and their thoughts regarding the quality of their provision through the National Student Survey has a direct relationship with rankings and league tables, prompting institutions to develop practices to assist in scoring well in the metrics (Gibbs, 2012). As a result, the notion of the student as a consumer is promoted and encouraged and has been highlighted in the student participation and voice literature. It could therefore be seen as a product of the current climate and contexts of competition and consumer choice that the neoliberal agenda has created.

The increased accountability of universities to the public and the government is therefore visible through: the expansion of higher education; a more diverse student body; university accountability for use of public funds; transparency about the education institutions provide and its output; and student contribution to the costs of tuition (Little and Williams, 2010). The consequence of the increased competition and marketisation of universities to the public has seen virtually every aspect of student life subject to measurement, with a compulsion to reduce complex social activities to simple numerical scores or ratings (Brenneis et al., 2005). For example, the National Student Survey, the number of good honours degrees and graduate employability statistics (Naidoo and Jamieson 2005; Neary, 2016).

It is envisaged that quality assurance is provided by market competition, which is seen as the key to safeguard quality and is shared between institutions, individually and collectively, the state and the market (Brown and Carasso, 2013). Organisations such as the QAA advocate student involvement in the mechanisms of quality assurance and enhancement that inform governance mechanisms. Universities, which are not able to attract students, are therefore under severe financial pressures and at worst may be forced to close. Institutions have therefore responded to the call by increasing student engagement and participation within institutional governance in an attempt to improve the wider teaching and learning experience and to enhance measures of accountability (Gibbs, 2010). Freeman's (2014) findings support Gibbs, suggesting that there is a need for senior management in universities

to develop meaningful engagement with students that does not impose measurements directly linked to national level strategies to drive quality assurance.

Engaging students in developing the quality of teaching and learning could, therefore, be considered to be in direct conflict with the ideologies of performativity, marketisation and the student as a consumer and risks developing an entitlement culture (Naidoo and Jamieson 2005). Furthermore, Brooks et al., (2016) identify that consumerism and marketisation are not only evident in the institution but has been extended to students' unions who have found it hard to resist the dominant policy discourse. Raaper (2018) suggests that students' unions occupy a liminal space between the traditional left-wing political discourses that often clash with consumer practice mechanisms, making collective protest action very difficult.

As identified, the combined effect of these measures with the resulting model of mass higher education and increasing demands of students creates an ideology of the student as a paying *customer or consumer*. The success of higher education is now measured by: the numbers of students it attracts; the number of graduates securing well-paid jobs, research and consultancy revenue, prominently displayed in league tables used to assist consumer choice (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005). The notion is that graded quality judgements facilitate students in choosing which institution to study at, in the notion of their *best buy* (Brown and Carasso, 2013).

The focus or shift of degrees to a product for which undergraduates survey the marketplace has undoubtedly fuelled the marketisation of academia and brought with it the culture of comparison, benchmarking and league tables and the accompanying notion of quality. Filippakou suggests that quality in higher education can be split into two dominant discourses, the discourse of quality assurance and the discourse of quality enhancement. The two discourses influence the manner in which the idea of quality in higher education is interpreted in society and suggests what it may mean to be a *good academic* or *good student*. In addition, there are a number of other discourses, which are associated with either one or both of the two main discourses, providing interrelationships, tensions, contradictions and fragmentations between them as figure 2.1 represents.

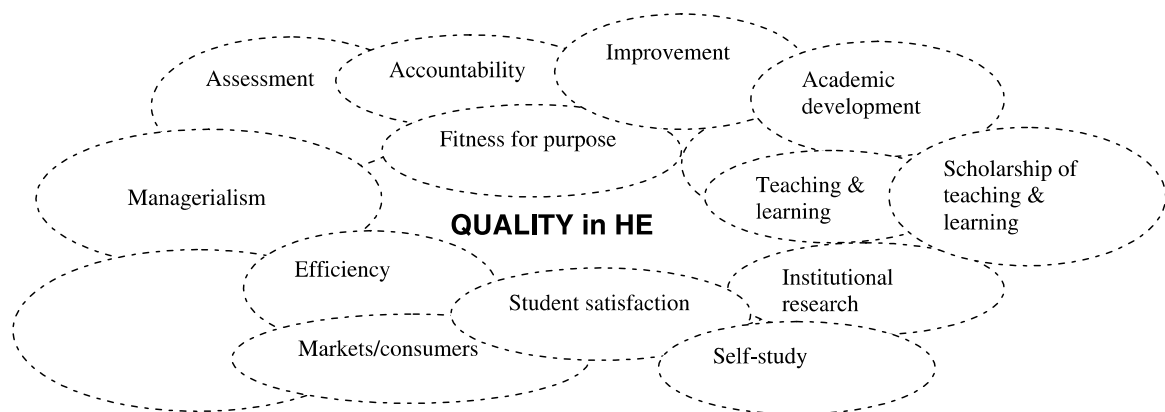


Figure 2.1 Quality as a network of discourses: a representation (Filippakou, 2011)

The effect of an emphasis on audit and quality has had significant implications for learning and teaching, impacting on pedagogic practices, principles and relations between staff and students (Lambert, 2009). The need to meet quality assurance measures within institutions has changed the relationship between staff and students, with a focus on the measure of learning and teaching and how to increase student engagement now of primary importance in the literature and to institutions themselves.

Gibbs (2010) in the '*dimensions of quality*' outlined that the most significant indicators to quality are: class size, cohort size, extent of close contact with teachers, quality of teachers, the extent and timing of feedback on assignments and the extent of collaborative learning. Gibbs (2012) argues that the current indicators utilised in the former Key Information Sets (KIS) and the National Student Survey questions, are invalid indicators that do not provide an assessment of the indicators outlined. A sentiment that was proposed by Strathern (2000) who suggests that what is less visible in the assessment of teaching and learning is the actual practice itself and the workings of the institution and that such use of data as knowledge amounts to a surveillance instrument to help control institutions through regulation.

The net effect within the UK is a shift towards placing more emphasis on enhancing learning and increasing learner engagement, with students playing a more central role in university governance mechanisms and national policy development (Little and Williams 2010). According to Trowler (2010), the work on student engagement now goes beyond individual student learning to involvement in structures and processes at a subject, faculty and

institutional level and forms a large part of the quality processes that inform institutional governance derived from the audit culture. Reference to quality processes at these levels are module evaluations / reports, student / staff committee meetings, programme annual monitoring reports, programme validations / modifications, Periodic Academic Reviews (PAR), National Student Survey and institutional surveys at all levels of study.

In addition to the use of students to support quality processes in higher education institutions, is the increasing use of digital technology and data. Williamson (2018) identifies how as the marketisation of higher education institutions has developed so has the use of data and metrics used to monitor and assess performance and planning. Williamson (2018) suggests that we have now reached a point where we have moved beyond the use of people to the use of people, technology and programmes, creating a reliance on software, algorithms and computers. The growth, production and use of data in the UK have been outlined by Ozga (2009) as the most advanced in Europe. It would also appear that the use of data is only intensifying with Williamson describing how the Higher Education Research Act has developed “a metric tide of performance measurement across the sector” (Williamson, 2018). Furthermore, the new regulator the Office for Students is designed to continue the agenda of developing competition and student choice by acting as a consumer focussed market regulator through implementation of the Teaching Excellence Framework, underpinned by data and metrics from institutions and their programmes.

The overall affects and changes to higher education as a result of neoliberalism is articulately framed by Selwyn (2014) who suggests that:

We can clearly identify the rise of discernible new managerial practices that are now prevalent throughout all aspects of the university – from marketing activities, league tables, devolved budgets and targets, systems of self-evaluation, intensified managerial control of curricula, standardised labour processes rigorous imposition of overarching accountability mechanisms, development planning and performance management, quality assurance and accountability (Selwyn, 2014, p50).

Such changes within higher education demonstrates the closer alignment of governance processes to the logics of capitalist markets (Williamson, 2018). The use of digital relationships also dangerously defines the relationship between students and their institution and staff and might intensify the inequalities of power and control that appear to

be associated with such systems and approaches (Selwyn, 2014). A danger highlighted by Williamson (2018) is that the use of data driven systems produces connections between people that is likely to increase authoritative power or power that is influential, further promoting managerial mechanisms that fit to the ideals of market competition.

The current market regulation in higher education provides a very complex arrangement of systems, processes and involvement of individuals. The development of an audit culture ultimately determines the performance and productivity of academic staff and as such there is a level of cynicism among higher education staff, as they believe the measures used to assess actual teaching or the student experience are highly constructed and artificial mechanisms (Strathern, 2000; Selwyn, 2014). The evidence provided demonstrates how neoliberalism has had a profound effect on institutions since the 1980's and has fundamentally changed how institutions both operate to meet the accountability demands created by the government and its relationship with its students. As a consequence of the current historical, political and economic context and tensions it is not clear if it is possible to effectively involve students as partners in institutional governance mechanisms. The rise and development of accountability, market competition, consumerist perspectives and the use of data driven processes has cemented and reinforced the neoliberal principles in universities who are now very much beholden to them.

The next section explores and develops how, why and where students are involved within the governance processes in an institution, considering the reasoning and mechanisms behind the current positioning of students in further detail and depth.

2.2 Student Involvement in Institutional Governance

2.2.1 Regulatory Drivers of Student Voice

Part of the neoliberal reforms in the previous section highlighted how there has been an establishment of regulatory organisations and bodies such as the Office for Students, which replaced HEFCE and government quangos such as the QAA. The Office for Students came into operation in April 2018 and is part of the on-going reforms put in place under The Higher Education Research Act of 2017. The QAA currently remain the main body to regulate

the higher education sector, with the current documentation higher education institutes work to being the UK Quality Code for Higher Education written by the QAA in 2012 and redrafted in 2015. In the 2012 quality code, there is a specific section on the involvement of students in quality; Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality, Chapter B5: Student Engagement (http://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/chapter-b5_-student-engagement.pdf?sfvrsn=cd01f781_8). The documentation provides an overview and examples of sound practice for student engagement and involvement in quality. Within this chapter it outlines that all students should have the opportunity to be involved in quality enhancement and assurance processes in a manner and at a level appropriate to them and encourages that providers create a culture and environment where students are encouraged to take up the opportunities on offer. The chapter also refers to partnership working between students and staff as a mutual relationship based on respect for each other and identifies that the context of partnership working is based on

the values of: openness; trust and honesty; agreed shared goals and values; and regular communication between the partners. It is not based on the legal conception of equal responsibility and liability; rather partnership working recognises that all members in the partnership have legitimate, but different perceptions and experiences. (http://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/chapter-b5_-student-engagement.pdf?sfvrsn=cd01f781_8 p. 5).

In addition, the chapter goes as far as suggesting that student involvement in quality processes should not be passive and that higher education providers should promote active involvement by students in all aspects of their learning. Such approaches should provide transformational opportunities for students to influence their individual and collective higher education experience. However, the chapter does not outline how the involvement of students can provide transformative or empowerment opportunities within collective governance models (e.g. of resources and policies) or what this might look like in practice. Furthermore, the 2015 quality code identifies how institutions should engage students in assessing their whole educational journey in higher education. It is outlined that institutions should deliberately include students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their university experience.

The policy guidance by the QAA highlights a number of areas for consideration. Firstly, if

students are entering into higher education with a consumerist position, will they wish to be involved in the development of learning and teaching and if so at what level do they wish to partake. Secondly, what is the function or driver behind why the QAA wish to increase student involvement in the assessment of quality, is it to promote competition and consumer choice or as a result of a genuine desire to develop the individual through transformative experiences.

Generally, the mechanisms for assuring the quality of the student experience and contributing to institutional governance and accountability mechanisms is through questionnaires and surveys and via representation of staff and students on committees at course, faculty and institutional level (Bergan, 2003; Little and Williams, 2010). The inconsistency of approach to student feedback and the intense debate on the issue of how to publicise feedback in an effective way, led HEFCE to introduce an annual National Student Survey of final year students, carried out by Ipsos Mori in 2005 (Williams and Cappuccini-Ansfield, 2007). This survey, based closely upon the Australian Course Experience Questionnaire, was designed as an attempt to provide feedback from students at the national level that could be published quickly and effectively on six main areas: teaching; assessment and feedback; academic support; organisation and management; learning resources, personal development and overall satisfaction.

Williams and Cappuccini-Ansfield (2007) believe that the results from the National Student Survey are an essential element of the revised quality assurance framework for higher education, which forms part of a package of new public information on teaching quality, and helps inform prospective students by enabling current students to express their views in a public forum (Little and Williams, 2010). However, the implementation of methods of this nature promotes consultative and consumerist models of working with students not modes of working and engaging in partnership with students as suggested by Freeman (2014).

Furthermore, the Higher Education and Research Act in 2017 introduced a new quality assurance exercise, branded as the Teaching Excellence Framework which offers Gold, Silver and Bronze ratings of teaching performance which has the potential to link performance and ratings to increases in tuition fees (Morris, 2017). The Teaching Excellence Framework utilises a number of metrics around the National Student Survey and employment data / statistics to categorise the quality of teaching, assessing and framing teaching in this way

effects and reshapes the academic and student relationship (Saunders and Blanco Ramirez, 2017).

2.2.2 Framing of Student Involvement and Participation

As a result of the changes in government policy, the framing of how students are involved in governance in UK-based higher education institutions and the relationships they hold with academics and universities is messy (Carey, 2013b) with large variations and mechanistic procedures in place both intra and inter-institution (Little et al., 2009). Freeman (2014) identifies how student voice means different things to different people and is underpinned by competing imperatives shaping the different ways in which management, academics and students come to regard themselves and the purpose higher education serves. What role or level of involvement students are required to play within an institution's practices and procedures has therefore become unclear and it is difficult to determine whether transformative opportunities exist that enable students to work democratically and inclusively with staff.

Relatively early in the partnership movement, Little and Williams (2010) surveyed all higher education institutions in England and investigated student feedback and representation systems seeking to inform and enhance the collective student learning experience. Sixty-two percent of institutions responded and the study concluded that whilst institutions view student voice as central to enhancing the student experience, more emphasis seems to be placed on viewing students as consumers and less on viewing students as members of a learning community.

However, Raaper (2018) suggests that students do not necessarily act as consumers but recognises that the consumer identity has been increasingly imposed on students by the various aforementioned legal and policy frameworks that contradict the proposed intentions of QAA recommendations. The concern is therefore that students may start to behave as passive recipients in higher education models of the student-university relationship, restricting their full involvement in a learning community that would inform and enhance the collective student experience (Little and Williams, 2010). However, it would be naive to suggest that there is no political activism among contemporary students and their unions in England (Raaper, 2018). As Brooks (2017) and Neary and Saunders (2016) highlight, some of

the most recent student protests have been particularly targeted against market forces in higher education.

Little and Williams (2010) suggest that the increased prominence of the notion of student as consumer alongside a more expanded and differentiated higher education system has meant that quality assurance processes have become a means of engaging students. The following quotes taken from Little and Williams (2010) provide an example of how selected senior institutional staff see student engagement and the perception of how this is central to enhancing the student experience:

students are now consumers and they can choose accordingly...they want the best for their time [at university]... all the opportunities we give them should make students feel they have a voice (Senior Admin p. 121).

Our institutional set of values includes a customer focus...so we are taking seriously what the students have to say...students and their extended families are becoming more discerning customers (Senior Academic staff member, p. 121).

Such quotations conflict with the notions of partnerships in learning endeavours and provide a clear indication of the dichotomy between the formal requirements of student involvement to meet the requirements of QAA and providing students with the opportunity to be involved in quality assurance and enhancement processes. For institutions the pressure in ensuring that they meet the increasing demands of a competitive market, scoring well on measures that are reported publicly, such as the National Student Survey, number of good honours degrees and employability figures / salaries is ever increasing (Gibbs, 2010), especially in how these metrics are now been used to form ratings of institutions and their subject areas under the umbrella of the Office for Students and the Teaching Excellence Framework. Plannas et al. (2013) however, argues that this is a great time and opportunity to consider the role we wish students to have within the university, and which spaces, processes and means of education we are going to place within their reach.

In 2008, the FutureLab⁵ published a review of learner voice initiatives across the UK's education sectors authored by Walker and Logan. The review was commissioned by a government quango (British Educational Communication and Technology Agency) and aimed to summarise the evidence from research, policy and practice for the promotion of learner voice engagement across the primary, secondary, further (FE) and higher (HE) sectors of education. The key message and critique within this review was that student voice is about empowering learners by listening to their concerns, interests and needs through appropriate means, in order to develop educational experiences better suited to those individuals. The review does not articulate that students should be treated as consumers or that student voice is about students shouting to be heard, nor is it about educators giving away all their powers to learners. It is clear that the ethos of student voice is about keeping learners informed as to how decisions are taken and the processes and people involved and, at the opposite end of the spectrum, that decision making is negotiated and shared between students and staff; concerned with the form, style, content and purpose of education (Walker and Logan, 2008). This form of student voice offers greater opportunities for students to have their voices heard, to affect outcomes and bring about change and outlines the core values of successful learner voice by Robinson and Taylor (2007) highlighted previously.

2.2.3 What it means to be a Student: Consumerism vs Partnership

The position and role that is afforded to students poses an important question of what it means to be a student. As previously established, the notion of the student as consumer has been established by the invitation to students to navigate higher education as a market, making informed decisions and judgments about the value for money of knowledge, learning, teaching and space. It emphasises student satisfaction and calls for institutions to respond to both students' demands as individual learners and indeed student demand on aggregate (Streetling and Wise, 2009; Morrison, 2017).

⁵ FutureLab - Futurelab was set-up in 2001 with start-up funding from the Department for Education. The remit of the organisation has evolved over time to focus on learning and teaching innovation, maintaining its specialist knowledge in digital technologies.

With consumerism has come an entitlement culture, *where what should I do* has turned into *what can I get* on the part of the students (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005). This cultural shift has placed an increased emphasis on core areas such as contact hours and student support, areas that are particularly prone to unrealistic expectations on the part of students (Murphy, 2011). Tomlinson (2017) suggests that the consumerist perspective is a reactive position of professional accountability to external stakeholders (e.g. students) who pay for their education and are entitled to instant gratification.

Furthermore, Naidoo and Jamieson (2005) propose that there is an emergence from students that suggests getting a *good degree* is an entitlement paid for by their fees. The desire for a good honours degree (upper second class) is framed primarily by its subsequent bargaining power in the job market. This change seems to be justified and supported by an increasing acceptance that this is the purpose of higher education, a provision that appears to eliminate transformational opportunities and development of scholars (Molesworth et al., 2009).

An entitlement perspective creates a different model of student voice, one which is different to both audit-focused or emancipatory models of student voice and affects the dynamic between staff and students making it difficult for them to work together easily. Troschitz (2017) identifies that if an entitlement perspective is assumed, then it is possible to suggest that the neoliberal approaches and strategies have succeeded and students have internalised the neoliberal view of higher education. A notion supported by Little and Williams (2010) who identify that when students have a problem they are forthcoming, but when they are asked to help improve learning and teaching further there is a reticence to assist.

Molesworth et al. (2009) argue that a marketised higher education environment prevents those who have the capacity to co-create a pedagogically sound experience from doing so. Many principles of best practice outlined in educational literature fail to take account of the broader political context, currently dominated by neoliberalism. Furthermore, Molesworth et al. (2009) believe that, at present, a *good* education might be based on economic growth, *profitable* higher education institutions and satisfied student-consumers rather than, and regardless of, ideas of sound pedagogy. Hence a good education may even be in critical opposition with both the pedagogic literature that privileges deep learning and development

of scholars, which echoes the caution, provided by Gibbs (2012) that institutions are likely to change their behaviour to improve invalid indicators, which could be at the expense of educational effectiveness.

In order to consider alternative perspectives to the notion of the student as a consumer in higher education, this needs to be performed outside of a discourse that conceives the role of higher education in purely instrumental terms as an investment in human capital (Barnett, 2010). In addition, Carey (2013a) asserts that there is a need to shift the positioning of a student from a complaints culture with its associated assumption that students are driven by consumer expectations, to a position that encourages students to offer solutions, providing feedback-on-feedback to signal that the student voice is heard. Underpinning all of these aspects is how power is conceived between the state, institutions, management, staff and students and how this shapes practice. Freeman (2014) proposes that power needs to be acknowledged to help understand the complex identities that student voice shapes, to enable the examination of how activities can be both productive and empowering, countering alternative and competing discourses.

Consumerism has been cited as a key driver behind the changes in quality assurance and enhancement in universities (McCulloch, 2009), with the role of the student and positioning as a consumer coming under increased scrutiny from a pedagogical perspective. As a result, a number of other models or metaphors have been suggested to help define the student–university relationship such as students as co-producers (McCulloch, 2009), the concept of communities of practice in learning (Streetling and Wise, 2009), students-as-partners (Healey, et al., 2014; Felton, Bovill and Cook-Sather, 2014; Matthews, 2017) and students as producers (Neary and Winn, 2009).

For McCulloch (2009), a co-production metaphor is one where students, lecturers and others who support learning are engaged in a cooperative enterprise, which promotes active participation with others to enhance learning. McCulloch (2009), argues that co-production would: engage the students, reducing the distance between student and education; help to contribute towards deep learning and reinforce the community and create a collegial approach to learning.

An alternative model proposed by Streetling and Wise (2009) is the concept of a community of practice in learning: such a model rejects consumerism and co-production models. Within

a community of practice the emphasis is on building relationships - not only between teachers and students, but also between students and other students. They believe that power is key and outline that, in consumerism, power is *cleaved*; in co-production, power is shared; and in communities of practice, power is seen as relational, dynamic and ever shifting. Streetling and Wise (2009) believe that students should be able to challenge the quality of the learning environment and the support they are getting and that power is exercised through their commitment and contribution to their community of practice.

In addition, proponents of partnership suggest that if a partnership lens is adopted to institutional approaches to interactions with students it is possible to envisage highly flexible and rich partnerships with students that extend to a series of activities (Felton, Bovill and Cook-Sather, 2014). For example, mentoring undergraduate research, facilitating service learning, designing and leading study modes and advising on learning communities.

Lastly, the notion of the student as producer, which aimed to develop collaborative relations between students and academics for the production and development of knowledge was proposed by Neary and Winn (2009). An underpinning principle of student as producer was to promote the freedom of knowledge whereby students collaborate with staff producing a teaching, learning and research environment that includes the values of openness and creativity. Such an approach attempts to create equality, reconstructing the relationship of a student as producer and academic as collaborator.

Troschitz (2017) suggests that the student as producer moves beyond concepts such as co-producer or partner as it considers not only the pedagogical relationship of the student in higher education but also the transformation of society. However, it could be argued that these approaches have a large area of common ground and work to counter consumerist models by defining the relationship with students in a radically different way to a consumerist perspective, as asserted by Dunne and Zandstra (2011)

There is a subtle, but extremely important, difference between an institution that 'listens' to students and responds accordingly, and an institution that gives students the opportunity to explore areas that they believe to be significant, to recommend solutions and to bring about the required changes (2011, p. 4).

Dunne's vision is set within the context or belief that listening to the student voice implicitly

supports the perspective of student as consumer, as opposed to engaging students as researchers or change agents which positions the student as an active collaborator and co-producer promoting potential transformation opportunities (Dunne and Zandstra, 2011).

The form that partnership approaches take is very dependent upon how the institution and staff seek to embed them in practice and therefore represents a variety of practice (Matthews, 2017). Carey (2013a) identifies that there are significant opportunities for students to participate in the design of their learning and it may be possible to make such opportunities both accessible and attractive to students, promoting student involvement in curriculum development. Examples in practice of students working in partnership with staff can be found in the development of co-curricular and course design (Bovill et al., 2011; Carey, 2013a; Brooman et al., 2015); as researchers or co-producers (Neary and Winn, 2009; Peseta et al., 2016); as partners (Curran and Millard, 2016); as change agents (Dunne and Zandstra, 2011); student-as-partners (Seale, 2009); to promote student voice (Seale, Gibson, Haynes and Potter, 2015); student involvement in governance processes (Bishop, Crawford, Jenner, Liddle, Russell and Woolard, 2012; Bishop, Miller, Keeley-Smith and Muzangaza, 2016); and students as consultants on teaching (Crawford, 2012).

The literature and research in this field suggests that if students and staff work collectively together then it is possible to utilise student voice as more than just a way to benchmark and keep the student body satisfied. The literature would propose a student-university relationship that is characterised more by models of co-production, communities of learning or student-as-partners and which meets the current requirements of the regulatory agencies, such as QAA, who prescribe the practice guidelines on quality assurance and enhancement.

However, whilst a number of metaphors and models have been devised to help us conceptualise how students can be involved in improving learning and teaching, few studies have sought to examine if it is possible to build and develop a culture of partnership and transformation with students that resists the marketised and consumerist approaches of neoliberalism. Matthews (2016) suggests that there needs to be an emphasis on not just engaging students but a mind-set of partnership which provides opportunities for students to co-create their learning and be provided with a place at the metaphoric table where decisions about learning and teaching are made.

As Little and Williams (2010) concluded, there is a great deal of work required to progress its development within the higher education community and a need for wider discussions across the higher education sector, which include a more specific focus on concepts of partnership and perceived barriers to effective practice. Furthermore, whilst co-production and communities of learning models encourage reflection and cultural change to approaches in learning and teaching and quality enhancement processes, the extent to which students buy-in to work as partners with staff in enquiry and the willingness of staff to engage in power sharing are key determinants in redefining the student–lecturer relationship (Bishop et al, 2012; Matthews, 2017).

There is also some concern that students-as-partners initiatives are seen as an elite scheme (Healey et al., 2014) that has limited scope in terms of the number of opportunities and the extent to which it reaches the wider student bodies. Therefore, to develop into mainstream opportunities, institutions must identify whether they wish to grow and expand the schemes (Peseta et al., 2016). Carey (2013a) suggests that partnership needs to become a living feature of the learning assessment strategy, which is an on-going process throughout the whole learning experience, not just a one-off exchange or involvement.

Peseta et al. (2016) suggest that whilst the diverse political positions can give an appearance of non-consensus regarding the student-as-partner movement, helping to understand the basis for its diversity is key to interpreting how it may be possible to reconcile the tensions in the literature. It is evident that over the past decade changes have occurred to the prevalence and diversity of student voice and partnership initiatives both in the UK and internationally as identified, the current contexts and political agendas conflicting the notions and ideals of Walker and Logan (2008) and Robinson and Taylor (2007). Both Fielding (2004a) and Rudduck and Fielding (2006) express their concerns regarding the present climate, where learners are consulted about their learning in order to raise standards and increase attainment, as opposed to reasons of personal and social development or active membership of their learning community. It is good that student voice is at the forefront of current agendas as it provides a forum for debate and dialogue and there is a clear need for further research and initiatives to help develop the area. However, in order to develop this further it is also important that an understanding is sought as to who wants to participate in improving the collective learning and teaching experience, what their motives are and how they can effectively participate.

Thus far the literature review has highlighted how neoliberal practices have developed and changed the way that institutions function and how quality in learning and teaching is determined by the regulatory bodies. In addition, it has identified how the tensions between the neoliberal marketised and consumerist approaches conflict with the role and involvement of the student as a partner in their learning. The call from the literature is to move beyond using student voice to merely evidence a paper trail within a marketised higher education environment. Promoting democratic modes of working has prompted researchers and scholars to suggest that there is a need for institutions to adopt a collective approach. Healey et al. (2014) suggest that a whole-institutional approach to partnership needs to extend beyond learning and teaching, incorporating institutional governance and wider aspects of the student experience. Adopting such an approach should include active collaboration between professional services, educational and learning development, academic departments, and students' unions.

2.2.4 Models of Student Involvement and Partnership

The following section examines the literature to determine how the involvement of students has been incorporated within institutional governance mechanisms and the development of learning and teaching and the wider student experience. It has been proposed that working with students more democratically and inclusively through student voice and partnership with students can assist in problem-solving at a local level and has the potential to help build a sense of community (Luescher-Mamashela, 2013; Healey et al., 2014; Cook-Sather and Felton, 2017) and social capital (Zuo and Ratsoy, 1999; Bergan, 2003). Klemenčič (2014) outlines that there have been a limited number of studies that have examined how students are incorporated within institutional governance processes. However, a number of researchers and organisations have tried to conceptualise how students are or can be involved as partners in governance processes and learning and teaching.

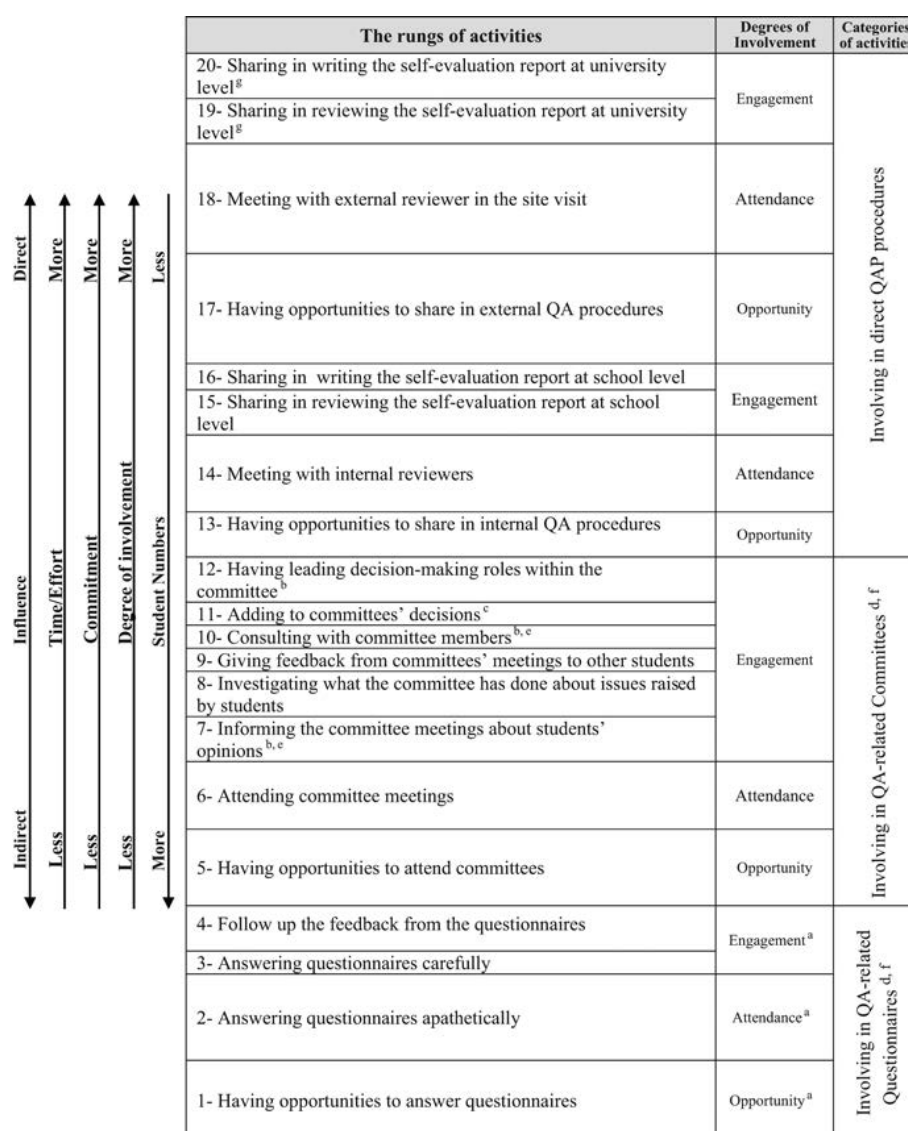
One such model has been produced by Student Participation in Quality Scotland (SPARQS)⁶, who are a unique body within Scotland that have looked to challenge traditional practices and modes of working, seeking alternative ways for students to actively engage in the development of their student experience. SPARQS proposed a three-tiered model of student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement committees, which provides students with different levels of opportunities in meetings and events that range from an opportunity for students to attend, through to actual attendance and being able to make an effective contribution.

SPARQS classify student engagement in quality assurance as a state whereby student representatives are more active than passive, are able to be proactive rather than simply reactive, and can use informal channels effectively. Elassy (2013) builds on the work of the basic model offered by SPARQS and is depicted in Figure 2.2.

Elassy contends that students carry out additional activities when involving themselves in institutional governance that are not accounted for in the SPARQS model, such as responding to assurance questionnaires and involvement in direct internal and external assurance procedures. The model provides a comprehensive representation of the activities that students may be involved in, particularly in a UK-based institution, depicting where students are involved. What is important to consider in Elassy's model is that not all students may wish to be involved at all levels and therefore provides opportunities for which students can input at a level of contribution they are comfortable with. The model provides evidence of communication and dialogue, democratic inclusivity and student involvement in decision-making. However, the processes are still very traditional and sit within a formal hierarchical structure and it is not necessarily clear what the staff contribution is, whether any of the levels require partnership between staff and students and whether there is the possibility to empower students in such practices and procedures and therefore does not

⁶ Student Participation in Quality Scotland (SPARQS), a unique publically funded body that solely looks at developing participation of students in institutional governance and quality with the aim of improving standards and the student experience. Currently no such body exists in England

illustrate student voice mechanisms and processes aligned to the conception of student voice in this study as defined in chapter one.



Sources: ^a SPARQS (2004b); ^b Arnstein (1969); ^c Widemann and Femers (1993); ^d Cumming (2001); ^e Hart (2008); ^f Little *et al.* (2009, p. 15); ^g QAA (2009f, pp. 15, 17)

Figure 2.2 Elassy's (2013) model of student involvement activities in the institutional quality assurance processes.

In addition to the formal structures that have been clearly set out by SPARQS and Elassy, there is a call for universities to seek additional ways in which students can be involved, engaging students in other roles such as consultants, co-designers, co-creators and change

agents (Bovill et al., 2015; JISC, 2015). Robinson and Taylor (2007) advise that there is a need to pay particular attention to how student voice is captured both formally and informally and how students and staff can work more co-operatively, providing the scope for transformation of the student experience. Furthermore, there have been numerous calls to extend student engagement and partnership beyond the engaged or super-engaged student to whole cohorts, creating mainstream opportunities (Flint, 2016; Bovill 2017). Peseta et al. (2016) identify how they sought to develop innovative student-as-partner initiatives that marked a significant departure from the university's tendency to rely on student feedback surveys and committee representation as its main forms of student voice. However, approaches of this nature are not common due to the complexities of including student-as-partners on this scale, the administration and time resources required and the consumerist models that some students conform to which challenges and competes with such approaches.

Bovill (2017) suggests that it is possible to draw on work from the international development field (Department for International Development, 2003) to map the different types of engagement by different actors, identifying how and where students and staff can be partners in the development and evaluation of curriculum design. Table 2.1 depicts the participation levels of students and staff, this example illustrates how students or the teacher may be involved in the different aspects of the partnership work. Bovill describes how such an approach is driven by the fundamental values and beliefs of the teacher and how the participation opportunities are orchestrated.

Bovill (2017) suggests that partnership practice is underpinned by flexibility in the opportunities provided to students (from the premise that not all opportunities may be desirable for everyone), within an environment of mutual respect and development and one, which is open to new directions and suggestions. Similar to Elassy, there is an acknowledgement that not all students may wish to be involved in partnership work; in addition there may be situations where such approaches may not be appropriate from both a staff and student perspective. Applying such approaches and models to the work in student voice there is therefore an acknowledgement that it may not be possible to engage with all students in a meaningful way and that there may be limits to working with students in models of partnership and quality assurance.

Table 2.1 Example participation matrix illustrating the nature of participation by students and staff in a collaborative evaluation project.

Level of involvement	Inform	Consult	Participate	Partnership	Control
Action Research stage					
1. Course design	All students				Teacher
2. Evaluation design		Student group (n=18)		Teacher + Student group (n=2)	
3. Conduct evaluation		Teacher	Student group (n=18)		Students (n=2)
4. Analysis of results	Student group (n=12)			Teacher + Student group (n=8)	
5. Dissemination				Teacher + Student group (n=8)	

(Adapted from Bovill, 2017, p. 3)

Seale (2016) developed an amplitude framework for evaluating student voice work in higher education, which can be found in Table 2.2. The framework is an evaluation tool, not a model for which to develop student voice work. However, it may be suggested that the components in the framework represent the most important aspects that should be considered in effective student voice approaches. Seale (2016) believes that two components are essential when evaluating student voice work in higher education, reach (extent to which students bought into the aims and outcomes of the project) and fitness (extent to which the assumptions on which the student voice work is based are accurate) (p. 219).

The amplitude framework assesses two criteria, reach and fitness of student voice in higher education against three factors: aims and assumptions, process and outcomes. By amplitude, Seale (2016) identified “the extent to which educational relationships and institutions enable student voice to contribute to the acoustics of existing spaces and co-construct new acoustic spaces” (2016, p. 227).

Table 2.2 Seale's amplitude framework for evaluating student voice in higher education.

Factors / Criteria	Reach	Fitness
Aims and Assumptions	Intersubjective validity – The extent to which all participants bought into the aims, identified problems and assumptions of the student voice project	Contextual Validity – The extent to which the student voice project is based are accurate or evidenced based
Process	Participatory Validity – The extent to which all participants in the project had opportunities to influence, make choices and have a voice	Ethical Validity – The extent to which processes are put in place / planned into the student voice project to enable meaningful responses to the student voice. The extent to which university personnel have the power or are willing to act on student voices
Outcomes	Catalytic Validity – Extent to which transformation occurs for both students and tutors	Empathic Validity – The extent to which students and staff understand one another better

(Adapted from Seale, 2016, p. 228)

From the models provided it is not clear how students can be incorporated effectively in formal quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms and in smaller pedagogical development projects or even whether this is possible. Flint (2016) encourages the sector to look to the development of mainstream opportunities for involvement of students. We therefore need to envisage and develop frameworks or modes of delivery between staff and students that somehow link both the formal mechanisms of student voice with the more informal mechanisms. Elassy's more formal model of student voice in institutional governance does not account for partnership working and therefore to develop an institutional approach there is a need to incorporate aspects of Bovill's model which provides examples of spaces in which students can work to develop curriculum solutions with staff beyond the formal mechanisms. Such a model needs to include the spectrums of quality assurance mechanisms from participation in module evaluations and online surveys, to producing school and institutional self-evaluation reports, with the development and evaluation of partnership work to enhance learning and teaching and the curriculum.

Seale's amplitude framework may therefore serve as a means of helping to establish the requirements and evaluate the means of engaging with students across all aspects of formal

and informal practices from module evaluations, to course committees, pedagogical development through to decision making across the institution. There is a lack of research that looks beyond singular projects in student voice and partnership to assess the *reach* and *fitness* of approaches across and institution examining the role students adopt or are afforded within an institutions governance processes and requires further examination.

Healey et al., (2014) produced an over-arching model (Figure 2.3) to outline the opportunities that students can engage in as partners in learning and teaching in higher education and it identifies the different forms student partnership may take. The top of the model illustrates that students can be engaged as partners in learning, teaching and assessment or in curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy; and in the bottom half students are engaged in subject-based research and enquiry and the scholarship of teaching and learning. The outer ring of the model depicts student engagement to emphasise the point that “engagement through partnership is a form of student engagement, but not all forms of student engagement are forms of partnership” (Healey et al., 2014, p. 25).



Figure 2.3 Students-as-partners in learning and teaching in higher education – an overview model (Healey et al., 2014, p. 25).

Healey et al's. (2014) model illustrates the need for an institutional approach and the

development of a culture where staff and students work together as partners in both the formal and informal development of learning and teaching. It is clear that for such approaches to be sustainable there is a need for this to occur across the institution, again questioning the roles, values and involvement of staff and students, and the relationship they hold with each other and the institution.

The models and framing of student voice and partnership provides an argument for why students should be involved in the development of learning and teaching and the quality assurance and governance mechanisms in higher education. Whilst it has become a requirement for institutions to include students in assessing and assuring learning and teaching practices at a level appropriate to the student there is a belief that this could be done in a manner which provides the students with the opportunity to work in partnership with the staff and the institution. However, it has also been identified that this is fundamentally difficult due to the growing concern about the marketised and consumerist landscape and competitive marketplace created by the government. The relationship between students and their university is consumer focused (Neary, 2016), forcing institutions to respond to students in a manner that will increase the metrics used to assess learning and teaching and inform league table positions (Gibbs, 2012).

There is therefore a need to further scrutinise and investigate the motives behind why institutions have become more interested in listening to the student voice; and ask whether it is possible to accommodate students in institutional approaches that can provide transformative and emancipatory opportunities; and how best this can be achieved.

2.3 Mechanisms of Quality Assurance to Enhance Learning and Teaching

The previous sections have outlined some of the more formal requirements for institutions to include students in governance mechanisms, the reasoning for this, the modes of working with students and the models of how students can be involved and the different framing or levels of student involvement that is provided. The following section will provide more specific detail of how the student voice is enacted and configured through the students'

unions and how students and student representatives are organised and included in the formal and informal mechanisms used by institutions to involve students in the assurance and enhancement of learning and teaching.

2.3.1 The role of the Students' Union as an Advocate for the Student

A key body and advocate of student voice within the student-university relationship is the students' union. Students' unions have played an important part in UK higher education and have a long history of their role and function within a university, dating back to 1864 when St Andrew's University in Scotland established the first Students' Union. Typically, all students, both undergraduate and postgraduate, become automatic members of their institutional students' union unless they opt out and if their union is affiliated with the National Union of Students (NUS) they receive automatic membership of this too (Brooks et al., 2015).

Historically, the role of students' unions in the UK has been to carry out a range of functions for their members including: organising social activities; providing support on a range of academic and welfare issues; representing students both individually and collectively; and campaigning on local and national issues (Brooks et al., 2015). However, due to the changes to the higher education sector in the UK in recent years the relationships between institutions and their students' union have changed and there is now a much greater emphasis on the role and function of student representation (Raaper, 2018; Brooks et al., 2015). Furthermore, Raaper (2018) suggests that there has been an increasing shift in the positioning of the unions and senior managements which has seen them working more closely. This shift represents that unions have become important stakeholders within the system where universities need to maintain competitiveness in institutional benchmarking and rankings (Klemenčič, 2014).

It could be argued that unions have become depoliticised, requiring student representatives to act more as advisors and service providers contributing to institutional quality agendas (Klemenčič, 2011). Luescher-Mamashela (2013) suggests that, more recently, the role of student representation has been to safeguard the interests of students within a consumerist perspective however, there is evidence that political activism still exists in modern students' unions (Raaper (2018). The student revolts of 2010 in the UK provide a reminder of the

activist functions that students can possess, which transformed students from passive consumers into more radical proponents, willing to fight government changes affecting students in both further and higher education (Myers, 2017).

2.3.2 Student Representation and its role in Institutional Governance

Guidance by the QAA asserts that institutions should have a clear and robust student / course representation system that facilitates the student voice (QAA, 2011). As a result, Brooks et al. (2015) outlines that students' unions have devoted significant time and energy to ensuring that that students are represented and the student voice is heard on campus effectively by their institution. Student voice in relation to representation can be summarised as "students who speak for their fellow students on educational issues related to a specific programme of study" (Carey, 2013b, p. 1290). One of the key roles of a student representative is to attend key programme-related committees, acting as the student voice, speaking on behalf of their peers in meetings, facilitating a response from staff, with relevant issues escalated to senior management (Carey, 2013b). Staff-student meetings of this nature often focus on problems and issues and do not always report or acknowledge good practice (Carey, 2013b).

Student representation has increased at all levels of institutional governance processes (Bergan, 2003) and can be classified as part of a democratic mode of working, with student representatives elected through their students' union. However, this does not necessarily demonstrate that student representatives and the wider student body feel that they have an effective voice or that they want to engage in enhancing learning and teaching and the student experience.

The common reasons cited internationally for student involvement in institutional governance have been: individual skill development (teamwork and critical thinking); to improve university governance; to gain experience; social reasons; desire to serve other students and influenced by friends or parents (Zuo and Ratsoy, 1999; Lizzo and Wilson, 2009; Carey, 2013b). In addition, Trowler (2010) suggests that there is a substantial, robust body of evidence to support assertions that individual student engagement in educationally purposive activities also leads to positive outcomes of student success and development in

their programmes. Carey (2013b) found that student representatives may also adopt additional roles to peers such as providing advice, guidance or pastoral support with staff also utilising representatives as a point of contact to consult over relevant matters.

Evidence from Scotland would suggest that that the most likely students who wanted to be involved in institutional governance are home-based, male / female, young / mature, honours level students studying full-time undergraduate programmes and are based on campus (SPARQS, 2005). This illustrates that perhaps student representatives fit a particular model and therefore amplifies certain voices, with other groups and voices not heard in the places where decisions are being made (Canning, 2016). It has also been suggested that student representatives are seen as an elite group of individuals who are often favoured by staff (Carey, 2013b), which is also a criticism of partnership work in general (Healey et al., 2014).

Zuo and Ratsoy (1999) identified that the factors affecting student involvement are: personal factors (philosophy, educational level, age, maturity and leadership style); attitudinal factors (attitudes and enthusiasm of staff towards student participation in university governance); environmental factors (political and economic factors in broader community, restructure due to financial constraints) and organisational factors (scheduling of meetings, rules of governing bodies, characteristics of students).

Student representatives surveyed in a study carried out by Lizzo and Wilson (2009) in Australia described challenging attitudes or mind-sets that their fellow students had towards their role, which included a lack of awareness of who their representative was or that student representatives even existed; lack of efficacy in the process and a belief that if issues are raised, these will not be addressed and a lack of respect for the work representatives put in. In addition, Plannas et al. (2013) in a study on Spanish universities, found that students demonstrate scarce knowledge of the spaces and mechanisms for participation. In line with this, most students do not know who their student representatives are on different governing bodies / committees of the university. However, at a subject level the majority of students (60%) are aware of whom their representative is. The main reasons provided for students not participating in institutional governance were cited by Plannas et al. (2013) as ignorance of the spaces and mechanisms for participation (48%) and a lack of time (78%), with 41% of students believing that it is not worth participating, or that the university

climate does not invite participation. This is in agreement with the findings from Zuo and Ratsoy (1999) and Lizzo and Wilson (2009).

Whilst it is not possible to assume that processes and practices are similar to UK-based institutions, it demonstrates that problems may exist in the democratic structures of student voice and representation internationally. In the UK it is evident that the level of engagement and impact of student representatives varies considerably and is a consequence of the highly contextual nature and culture in which it operates (Carey, 2013b). Furthermore, the inactivity of representatives has been reported as a big irritation by staff in the UK who regularly work with student representatives, often linked to the requirement to gain student input in decision-making procedures (Carey, 2013b).

Whilst a lot of attention is drawn to the inclusion of student voice, democracy and empowerment of the student, this cannot be one-way and the participation of academic staff, administrative and service staff is fundamental in ensuring participation of the students themselves within an effective model as outlined earlier (Sabri, 2011; Elassy, 2013; Plannas et al, 2013). Carey (2013b) identified that, whilst there is a clear appetite for partnership working between institutional staff and students, there is still a need to change the culture and systems to support members to achieve this. Furthermore, Carey (2013b) suggests that whilst partnership between staff and students should be achieved, this may require *new rules* of engagement, which builds a dialogue between staff and students, with both sides empowered to debate, question and challenge.

Zuo and Ratsoy (1999) identified that administrators and members of the academic staff are sceptical about the role of student voice and representation, believing a student's primary role is to study, not to be a politician and that they have a voice through surveys. Additionally, they cited that students lack the experience and knowledge and do not have the required maturity to be effective participants in decision-making. Whilst Zuo and Ratsoy were writing at an early point in the student voice literature, a decade on Lizzo and Wilson (2009) identified that despite the increase in positions that students now have access to, there is still tension as to the legitimate positions that students should be ascribed or entitled to claim, having clear implications for the enactment of a representative role. Little et al. (2009) add that there is evidence that student voice could be educationally purposeful; however academics and quality officers would argue there has been no fundamental debate

about why student voice is important, or perhaps how it can be used effectively.

In addition, poststructural feminist critiques express caution that representation systems and student voice initiatives often encourage the more privileged voices and further exclude the margin as highlighted previously (Cook-Sather, 2007). Furthermore, Bragg (2007) adds that student voice should not be viewed as monolithic as there is no such entity as a single student voice. It is, therefore, important to recognise and acknowledge how hard it is to learn from voices we do not want to hear and to learn from voices we do not know how to hear (Fielding, 2004b; Cook-Sather, 2007). The criticism of student voice and partnership approaches is that they are often only accessible to a small number of students and are therefore classified as elitist. It is, therefore, important to find alternative ways of accessing students who are not engaging with their programme and university, not just an amplification of those students who engage in most curricular and extra-curricular activities.

This section highlights the importance that students' unions and their student representation systems have in institutional governance mechanisms, but also how there are many issues with such a system. In addition, it is not clear that staff are willing to move to a point of sharing power to enable joint decision-making with students to develop learning and teaching and the student experience.

2.3.3 Student Involvement in Decision-making

At a school level, staff-student committees focus on local programme-based issues; legitimate issues often centre on secondary areas such as the cafeteria and parking with an apparent prohibition against discussing the performance of teaching and therefore reducing attendance, engagement and the expression of the student experience (Carey, 2013b). In addition, when issues are escalated beyond the limit of the programme, change can often be frustratingly slow (Carey, 2013b).

A number of issues have previously been identified with the involvement of decision-making in institutional governance. Programme-based committees have been identified as not fit for purpose (Carey, 2013b), often viewed as intimidating places to raise concerns due to the power balance in the student / tutor relationship and concerns regarding the tutors who mark their work and write their references (Carey, 2013b; Canning, 2016). Members of a

students' union focus group in a UK higher education institute reported that, whilst they were involved in lots of conversation with staff, they felt that they were not able to contribute to key decisions as they are made outside of the meetings, whether in separate meetings or at times when students' union staff were not available (Brooks et al., 2015). Whilst it is reported that the values between union officers and senior managers were becoming more aligned, it is noted that this is still an unequal relationship controlled by senior managers who may be providing students with a stronger voice in institutional governance structures but also limit more critical questioning and activist positions due to the wider pressures of external metrics (Brooks et al., 2015; Raaper, 2018). In some instances, where senior managers and students' unions had relatively equal relationships, participants outlined that individual schools within the university sometimes acted to block decisions that had previously been agreed at an institutional level between students' unions and senior management (Brooks et al., 2015).

The fear or danger of student voice and representation is that students are consulted on decisions that have already been made, as opposed to being involved in making those decisions (Carey, 2013b) or answering the questions that the university wanted answering, rather the questions students wanted to pose. In addition, one of the perennial problems highlighted in the student voice and representation literature is the feedback loop (Little and Williams, 2010; Rogers et al., 2011; Carey, 2013b), outlining what actions and changes have occurred as a result of student feedback. In order to build confidence and trust with students and engage them in governance systems it is essential that information is fed back (Rogers et al., 2011).

Bergan (2003) suggests that the student engagement agenda assumes that students will become more engaged in quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms if they are able to participate in key decisions about the context and content of their learning. There is evidence to suggest that Bergan may be correct in the assumption that engagement of students may be more difficult than enabling participation. Little and Williams (2010) highlighted that it was often difficult to engage students when programmes were seen as working well, in addition, Little and Williams found that the primary focus for institutions in student voice work was to tackle problems early and relay issues, not to work in partnership or shared endeavours with the students.

As Cook-Sather, (2007) and Bragg (2007) warn, efforts to reposition students within educational research can often reinforce the existing social conditions and dominant arrangements of power and participation. These are often tokenistic with a lack of empowerment or transformational opportunities for the student.

The literature provides a grounding that it may be possible for staff and students to be engaged in collaborative partnerships to promote student voice and improve the collective student experience. The involvement of students in representative structures possesses the potential for active participation with tutors, facilitating learner experience and offering an alternative to consumerism (Carey, 2013b). However, for this to occur it requires institutional staff to be willing to engage with students as equals in assuring and enhancing quality within learning and teaching. In addition, in some instances when staff are willing to work with students this is often met with apathy and institutional staff find it hard to engage students.

Furthermore, feminist critiques have expressed caution and question the hidden coercion in voice initiatives, whose interests it serves and the value of silence (Bragg, 2007). Student voice may be used with explicit intentions for school or education improvement to increase league table scores and rankings. The concern, therefore, is that it might be cynical or manipulative, masking the real interests of those in power and limiting the manner in which students are consulted and involved in decision-making.

It is still not fully clear as to what effective partnership work looks like especially at an institutional level and how best to involve the required parties. The model provided earlier by Healey is theoretical in its approach and highlights specific mechanisms through which to partner with students. However, there is a lack of empirical studies in this area and it is important to establish why students and staff do not engage and what could be done to assist increased collaboration. Carey (2013a) suggests that encouraging students to offer solutions or alleviating the power imbalance by selecting student friendly spaces and encouraging a more equal staff-student ratio in meetings may provide some mechanisms to move towards partnership working and involvement in decision making.

2.4 Institutional Partnership Approaches

The predominant approach to engage students in the evaluation and / or development of learning and teaching utilises traditional methods that assess module satisfaction through questionnaires, evaluating teaching and resources (Gibbs, 2010). The use of summative questionnaire approaches do not always include students in the decision-making process or development of solutions and therefore utilise mechanistic models to involve the student voice. Such feedback mechanisms often occur at the end of the learning process and can be characterised as “impersonal and untimely” (Crawford, 2012, p. 54). The main thrust of their use is often by senior management who utilise the data as means of ranking and determining at risk modules that are underperforming (Gibbs, 2010).

Mercer-Mapstone et al. (2017) identified that from the available literature the majority of partnership approaches in higher education are isolated case-study examples of small-scale practices external to the assessed curriculum to improve an aspect of learning and teaching. However, there are a number of notable examples in the UK of institutions that have sought to develop institutional approaches and are: the University of Exeter; Birmingham City University; Ulster University; University of Lincoln; and University of Winchester. These institutions have looked to move beyond pockets of partnership practice to institutional approaches in a bid to attempt to embed across the institution. Curran and Millard (2016) suggest that embedding a partnership ethos into a university’s strategic planning is an enabler for staff and students to work towards partnership, altering thinking and providing a cultural shift.

Birmingham City University adopted a partnership approach that has been interwoven into the structures and processes of the University, which made it more difficult for academic staff to not engage and participate in partnership activities with students (Curran and Millard, 2016). The model at BCU uses student employment to recognise and value student contribution, in an attempt to engage with the whole student population not just those who can afford to participate. Over a 5-year period at BCU it created 557 staff / student partnership projects, producing 1200 student jobs. The requirement for project funding is that it demonstrates meaningful partnership between students and faculty with a clear intervention that will improve the student learning experience (Curran and Millard, 2016).

The University of Exeter implemented their Students as Change Agents project. The broad framework for the project incorporated four quadrants of practice: the moral formal process of students as evaluators of their HE experience both, internally and externally commissioned; students as participants in decision-making processes, often through representative structures; students-as-partners in institutional development, co-creators and experts, often led by the school or institution; and students as agents for change which is student-driven with an acceptance of students leading the work and has instigated the development of a number of annual student projects (Dunne and Zandstra, 2011). Since its inception the approach has been embedded in the University and continues to be supported.

The previous two examples illustrate how institutions have sought to develop initiatives that enable students to work in partnership with staff on pedagogical initiatives and ideas. The University of Lincoln developed a slightly different approach to assist in the development of an institutional culture of engagement and collaboration. The approach centred on the development of Student Engagement Champions which spanned academic, professional support departments and the Students' Union and was developed on the back of the institutions student as producer approach (Crawford, Hagyard, Horsley and Derricott, In Press). Student Engagement Champions developed initiatives and projects in collaboration with students. Figure 2.4 illustrates how Crawford et al., believe students were involved as partners across the different levels from a curriculum level to beyond the University. Unlike the previous examples of institutional approaches this example incorporates the formal governance processes and demonstrates the importance of viewing student representatives as partners. Crawford et al. (In Press) described student representatives as boundary spanners whose role was crucial in helping communicate, negotiate and support further partnership developments. When considering the role of institutional approaches in developing student voice then it is important to consider how students are involved across all forms of work and partnership with students.

Mercer-Mapstone et al. (2017) highlighted the proposed benefits of adopting a partnership approach from a systematic review of partnership studies, citing the commonly acknowledged benefits: enhanced relationship or trust between students and staff; development of new or better teaching or curriculum materials; increased understanding of the other's experience (e.g. staff understanding student experiences or vice versa); new

beliefs about teaching and learning that change practices for the better; positively shifted traditional power dynamics between students and academics; and positively shifted identity as student / learner / person / professional. One of the overriding benefits of partnership work identified is the relationship that is developed between staff and students: students viewed staff as more similar to themselves and therefore became more at ease when dealing with staff, with a reduction in a *them* and *us* approach providing a greater sense of collaboration and community (Curran and Millard, 2016).

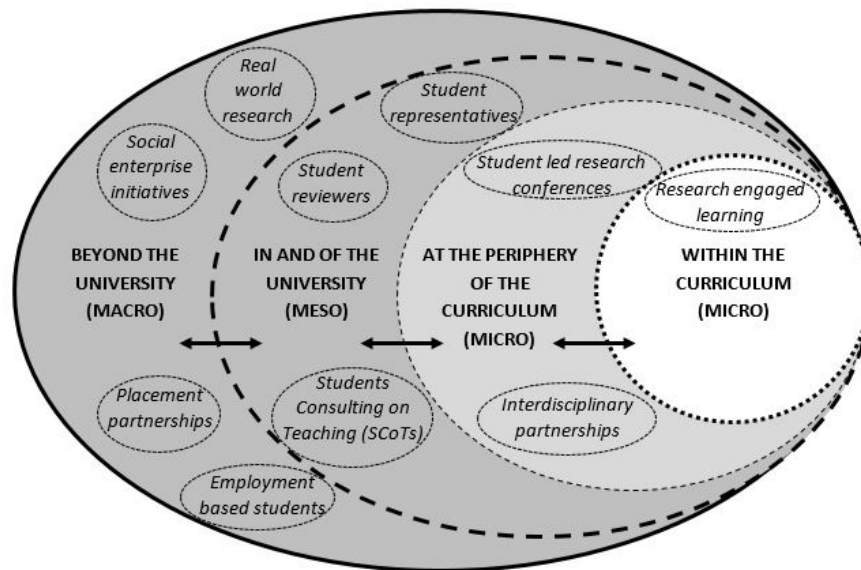


Figure 2.4 An holistic model of student partnerships in university system (Crawford et al., In Press).

Informal arrangements to develop the student experience and enhance learning and teaching is much more difficult to quantify, yet possibly more revealing. Canning (2016) identifies that perhaps the most helpful student voice is through informal discussion, the one-on-one conversation in the corridor, or as Canning describes a *eureka moment* when addressing a particular issue in class.

This section provides an understanding of how a number of institutions have tried to develop models of partnership across the institution. Whilst the development of such approaches may be seen to be trying to offer an alternative to neoliberal consumerist models of student voice it is not evident how effective such approaches are in developing practice and enhancing the student experience. In addition, there are a limited number of evaluative studies that have sought to research how such approaches include students and

whether it is possible to move outside of neoliberal approaches that attempt to regulate the higher education sector. Furthermore, the literature reviewed and examples highlighted do not illustrate the relationships of power between the individuals involved and whether there are approaches that may assist in alleviating power imbalances facilitating and empowering the student voice.

2.4.1 Issues of Structure and Power in the Student-University Relationship

The challenges, barriers and tensions have been alluded to previously throughout the review of the literature and centre on marketisation / consumerism, involvement of the relevant parties and relations of power. The notion and issues of power are discussed frequently within student voice literature and could be identified as a key facet of the student-university relationship (Seale, 2009; Matthews, 2017). The underpinning values or phenomena of successful learner voice practice as defined by Robinson and Taylor (2007) are those of power and the relations between the student and the university. Table 2.3, identifies a number of proposed solutions to challenges in addressing the core values of student voice work.

Plannas et al. (2013) believe that institutionalised participative bodies are antiquated, out of touch with young people, unequal with regard to the participation quotas for different positions and ineffective when it comes to decision-making. Plannas et al. (2013) recommend that work needs to be done to: educate students in understanding university problems; reduce the formal arrangements in meetings, facilitating participation; and improve the attitudes of teaching staff to help students become aware of the important role they have in the university (Plannas et al., 2013). Zuo and Ratsoy (1999) proposed that the challenge is to develop staff members who hold negative attitudes towards student involvement, enlightening them about the role students can play in institutional governance and that greater collegiality and mutual respect will produce more positive results.

From the literature reviewed there is still work to do to convince institutional and academic staff that liberating student voice can have a transformational effect on the collective student learning and teaching experience. Liberating student voice has the potential to provide more democratic and inclusive relations between teachers and students that are not

orientated towards consumer facing approaches (Freeman, 2014). Whilst compulsory education led the way in student voice work, higher education is relatively silent on the issue of power relationships between academics and students in governance and therefore little consideration is given to issues such as equality and empowerment (Seale, 2009). This is echoed by Lizzo and Wilson (2009) who suggest that students are at risk of disengaging from participating in governance because of their disempowering or limiting beliefs that power is solely a function of formal position and therefore they do not have the right to be classed as equals and share power within the relationship. Bishop et al. (2012) and Matthews (2017) also suggest that the extent to which students buy-in to work as partners with staff in enquiry and the willingness of staff to engage in power sharing are key determinants in redefining the student–lecturer relationship at a programme or school level.

Table 2.3 Proposed solutions to the challenges in addressing the core values of student voice work.

Robinson and Taylor’s (2007) core values	Solutions to the challenges, barriers and tensions
a conception of communication as dialogue	An institutional approach and culture change to involving student voice at all levels to improve the collective student experience. Counter consumerism and work in partnership with students in a variety of different ways and in multiple spaces (physical and metaphorical).
the requirement of participation and democratic inclusivity	Engagement of all relevant groups (students, senior management, academic and administrative staff) in a meaningful way and respect to the contribution that each group brings to the table.
the recognition that power relations are unequal and problematic	Working with students as equals, challenging mechanisms of power
the possibility for change and transformation	Closing the feedback loop, evidence of students contributing to key decisions at all levels, involvement in research projects

(Adapted from Robinson and Taylor, 2007, p. 8)

Seale, Gibson, Haynes and Potter (2014) suggest that there is a need for a critical re-examination of how we conceptualise students-as-partners and the presumptions we make regarding the nature of partnerships between academics / institutions and students. If we continue to ignore issues of power and resistance, we will fall far short of the vision of student engagement and the ideals of strong participation and expression of student voice. There is further scope and a need for research into understanding the student-university relationship, to further understand the relations of power between the state, institutions and staff and students in higher education. The reference to issues of power, power sharing and empowerment in the literature are common, what is limited is a conceptual or theoretical analysis of the discourses of power.

2.5 Current Position of Student Voice Literature

The literature and research in student voice and partnership discussed suggests that if students and staff work collectively and democratically together, then it is possible to utilise student voice in more than just a way to benchmark, assign rank and keep the student body satisfied, countering the technologies used to foster neoliberal ideals. Through the previous sections of the literature review it is outlined how there is belief that there is clear scope for student voice initiatives that foster partnership to be successful. Such initiatives and work hinges on a change to the characterisation of the student-university relationship to one of partnership and democratic inclusivity that challenges the traditional hierarchies of power, working to counter the neoliberal forces of marketisation and consumerism. However, it is evident that whilst there are many calls for more emancipatory methods of working with students to engender the learning experience (Freeman, 2016; Canning, 2016; Flint, 2016; Bishop, 2018), the research and evaluation of student voice and inclusion projects / initiatives is limited especially in relation to the focus of how students are incorporated across an institution and the influence they can have on decision making. It is therefore difficult to determine how students can be meaningfully incorporated into university governance mechanisms and requires further investigation.

This section provides a discussion of student voice literature in higher education specifically exploring the value or use of including students in a part of the assurance or enhancement

of the institution or academic provision. The studies discussed are predominantly from the UK and other western countries namely the US and Australia with a limited number of studies from other areas such as Central Europe, the West Indies, Africa and South Africa. It is apparent that there is a growing number of studies that call for the development of student voice in higher education building on from the compulsory sector of education and either problematising or conceptualising how student voice can be used to develop and enhance the student experience (Cook-Sather, 2007; Rogers, Freeman, Williams and Kane, 2011; McLeod, 2011; Freeman, 2016; Canning, 2016; Flint, 2016; Bishop, 2018). Whilst these papers are not examining empirical data to support their views, the authors frequently base their opinions and perspectives on experience of working with students and are advocates of student voice that empowers students to work in partnership with staff.

As highlighted previously, student voice is a broad term which encompasses a huge range of activities from the formal and informal feedback gathered, through to staff-student partnerships and activist activities such as campaigning and protesting (Canning, 2016). The meaning and inclusion of student voice therefore covers a wide spectrum of activities across the practice of higher education institutions, the use of student voice advocated in this study is one which moves beyond the inclusion of student views to the adoption of democratic involvement and decision making through partnership. Involvement of students in this way provides the basis to empower students to work in partnership with staff aligning to the numerous calls cited by previous research to assist the development and enhancement of teaching and learning and the student experience. This view of student voice and involvement is not always adopted by the literature and many of the studies identified utilise student voice as a capacity to gain the student perspective on particular issues, modules or the student experience and therefore do not work in partnership with the student body and are at risk of further promoting models of consumerism.

The main body of empirical studies that exist within the student voice literature explores the involvement of students and student voice in quality practices and processes including student representation (Lizzo and Wilson, 2009; Little and Williams, 2010; Nair, Bennett, Mertova, 2010; Gvaramadze, 2011; Carey, 2013b; Grebennikov and Shah, 2013; Luescher-Mamashela, 2013; Plannas et al., 2013; Blair and Valdez Noel, 2014; Brooman, Darwent, Pimor, 2015; Darwin, 2017; Hampshire, Forsyth, Bell, Benton, Kelly-Laubscher, Paxton, Wolfgramm-Foliaki, 2017) with a single large unpublished doctoral study exploring and

identifying how student voice is conceived in governance (Freeman, 2014). The majority of the studies are small-scale case studies of individual faculties up to institutional level with a limited number of more detailed studies that examine multiple institutions and perspectives.

The role of the student and how student voice is incorporated into institutional governance mechanisms has been the source of a number of studies. The most comprehensive study was conducted by Little and Williams (2010) who utilised a number of research tools to examine the role of students in maintaining quality and enhancing learning in higher education in the UK. The study administered an online survey to all HEI's (receiving a 62% response) and then undertook more in-depth fieldwork in nine higher education institutions and four further education providers, conducting interviews with senior management team members in the institution (although no specific numbers are identified), student representatives (n=57) and student unions (n=10). The study is not overt on how the different data sources were combined, integrated and analysed. In addition, the study fails to provide clear details of how the information was analysed and whether a clear theoretical framework underpinned it. The findings from the study indicated how institutions view student engagement as central to enhancing the student experience, however, there was a perception that more emphasis is placed on the student as a consumer and less as members of a learning community.

Furthermore, the study suggested that the current view and emphasis on quality enhancement and not just quality assurance of teaching and learning and the student experience should be viewed as a positive as this creates a direction of travel to including students as co-producers in a learning community. Little and Williams do however highlight that whilst there is evidence of some institutions trying to actively move beyond student as a consumer there is a need to challenge and change the dominant discourses underpinning the role of students in governance mechanisms.

Gvaramadze (2011) utilised a different perspective to examine the involvement of students in quality processes in the Scottish Quality Enhancement framework, reviewing and evaluating 21 external evaluation reports completed by different institutions. Through the examination of the reports the study suggests how the quality and enhancement structures in Scotland have gone beyond student involvement in quality processes and enhancement strategies creating opportunities for partnership and engagement with students.

Gvaramadze believes that the approaches adopted by Scottish higher education institutes provide the potential for learners to take an increased ownership of their learning and curriculum. Whilst the evaluation reports have input from students it is not clear whether students share the same beliefs and warrants further investigation of the student perspective. Plannas et al. (2013) examined student participation in university governance in a single Spanish institution through the use of a questionnaire to students followed by discussion and semi-structured interviews with vice-deans, centre and faculty staff and analysis of documents / databases. The study looked to establish how students were involved in governance of the institution, suggesting that significant differences existed in the way that student participation is facilitated across the institution. Plannas et al. recommended that there was a need to increase mechanisms and ways of informing students how to participate. Furthermore, they believe that more consideration needs to be provided on how the processes can better involve students, paying specific attention to the role of student representatives, staff and organisations such as the student union that facilitate student involvement.

A fundamental component missing from the previous research is an investigation into the effectiveness of student voice mechanisms that does not just identify where students are involved but how. Furthermore, the studies need to examine how students are conceived in the relationship between them and the staff and institution they work with, considering issues of power and input into decision-making. The previous studies highlight that they believe the role of student representation is a key mechanism to provide students with input into the development of their course and decision-making. As discussed previously an aspect that is expected by the main agencies in the UK as an essential part of quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms. However, there are a limited number of studies that have specifically looked at student voice through student representation and how effectively this mechanism operates to amplify the student voice. Lizzio and Wilson (2009) and Carey (2013b) both examined student voice through representation focusing on different aspects and also from the perspective of different actors in the university, but still do not address the effectiveness of with which students are involved and their opinions valued.

The focus of the study by Lizzio and Wilson (2009) examined the role conceptions and of student representatives and the ability to effectively carry out their duties. The study utilised semi-structured telephone interviews to determine the conceptions of, motivation and

preparation for, and sense of self-efficacy in, the representative role. The study found that representatives identified that managing relationships and making use of personal relationships was the most effective strategies in gaining student perspectives. In addition, representatives were required to challenge attitudes about the role with fellow students due to a lack of awareness, motivation, efficacy and respect. Interestingly the study highlighted that one of the main reason's representatives disengage from participation in governance processes was because of the disempowering nature of the work or limiting beliefs that areas of concern would be dealt with. Instead representatives felt hijacked and were of the belief that it was very much a 'them and us approach' to working with staff and representatives were seen as conduits for students concerns. The study therefore highlights the need for a careful balance to be fostered between all parties that develops trust and legitimises and empowers the student voice.

Carey's (2013b) study looked at the staff perspective of the role of student representation, interviewing 13 members of staff in a single institution, comprising of faculty staff, central service staff and student union staff to explore stakeholder perspectives on course representation in university governance. The study suggested that whilst course representation is a complex, challenging and multi-faceted process, it offered the potential to engage students in authentic collaboration. In addition, the study stressed how the effects of managerialism should be resisted due to its restrictive policies and barriers to effective representation, with efforts instead focussed on creating a culture of student engagement in the development of educational practices. Carey advocates for modified systems that symbolise partnership, trusting students to manage their own representative practices and collaborating with staff to facilitate change. The findings of Lizzio and Wilson and Carey further illustrate the need for more specific research into the relationship and involvement of students and staff in quality processes.

The work of Freeman (2014) however, examined the effects of student voice on everyday practices and discourses of both students and staff by exploring the identities, opinions and beliefs of those involved. The study utilised two case studies at English universities (a pre and post-92), problematising the narratives associated with student voice. Different to the previous studies this study used a number of different research tools, interviewing members of the Senior Management Team (n=7), academics (n=6), students (n=8) and members of the student union (n=3); collection of policy documentation at government and institutional

level and observations of staff student meetings (n=4). Furthermore, the study utilised both thematic and critical discourse analysis to relate aspects of power to the purpose and use of student voice mechanisms. The use of multiple research and analysis tools enabled Freeman (2014) to deduce that student voice means different things to different people and at different times, echoing the earlier findings of Little and Williams. Freeman attributed this to the competing nature of the demands influencing the manner in which managers, academics and students come to regard themselves, bringing into question the fundamental nature and purpose of higher education.

Different to the previous student voice studies, Freeman utilises a theoretical perspective drawing on Foucault to help understand the different influences of power, problematising how student voice shapes practice suggesting it is possible to develop activities that are more productive and empowering. There are therefore a number of similarities between Freeman's study and this research study. However, this study seeks to identify how the different actors in the university construct the student-university relationship, understanding not just the meaning of student voice but also the different imperatives and drivers behind the use of student voice and importantly examining the use and effectiveness of student voice in governance mechanisms and its impact on decision making from both a staff and student perspective.

Similarly, other studies have also established the strong tensions in student voice in higher education, Darwin (2017) assessed the views of staff in the use of quantitatively represented student voice measures, outlining how there are tensions in their use which are propelled forward by accountability and quality assurance discourses rather than the guidance of pedagogical decision making. The study highlighted how the use of ratings as a proxy for teaching and course quality was due to the pressures coming from the market and professional exposure of programmes. Darwin expressed caution that such is the use of student ratings to inform management frameworks that it may if it hasn't already changed the relationship between academics and students. Such examples of how student voice data is collected and then subsequently used is illustrated in the study by Nair, Bennett and Mertova (2010) who provide a clear example of how practices have changed and developed due to the value and importance placed on student voice.

The study by Nair et al. (2010) sought to identify the use of a systematic strategy adopted at

faculty level to develop five modules that had received poor student feedback through module evaluations. The intervention strategy was designed to get the staff to reflect on structure, design, objectives, content, assessment, workload & timetabling. Through measuring the quantitative module evaluations scores four out of the five modules showed significant improvements following the intervention. The paper acknowledges how this illustrates the importance and value of student feedback in creating change. However, whilst the student voice was provided through the numerical scores of student satisfaction to determine whether the intervention had worked. The study utilises student voice in a mechanistic way, stopping at the consultation of the student voice and not interacting or involving students in determining the solutions. The efficacy of the student voice is therefore limited and the input into the design changes could therefore be viewed as an approach to performance manage staff and improve the quality of teaching and learning by increasing the module evaluation scores.

From the studies highlighted it is clear that there are very few studies that have explored how student voice can be used in meaningful ways to empower students to engage and participate in quality assurance and enhancement methods that move beyond provision of information through surveys or at best consultative through staff student forums. The previous studies illustrate the tensions of a marketised sector and how the relationship and emphasis of student voice and the value placed on attaining good performance scores is a fundamental driver behind its use.

Student voice however, is not just a mechanism that is limited or constrained to its use in quality practices, processes and governance mechanisms and has seen an emerging and growing use in academic development and to assist in the development of the curriculum which could be viewed as a form of quality enhancement (Dinsdale, 2002; Campbell et al., 2007; Bovill et al., 2011). The majority of the studies in this area have sought to involve students in helping design, evaluate or enhance a specific part of the curriculum, pedagogical practice or a module (Carey, 2013a; Gray, Swain and Rodway-Dyer, 2014; Kadi-Hanifi, Dagman, Peters, Snell, Tutton and Wright, 2014; Brooman, Darwent and Pimor, 2015; Peseta et al., 2016; Seale et al., 2015; Cook-Sather, 2017; du Plessis, 2017; Woodward, 2017). Such approaches have often worked to develop the field by incorporating students more effectively viewing students as partners utilising student voice in their design,

development, evaluation and enhancement with some studies using participatory research methods or appreciative inquiry to investigate the outcomes.

A number of the studies have sought to evaluate student involvement in the development of teaching and learning and have focussed on developing effective practice and working with students as partners or producers (Seale, 2009; Carey, 2013a, Gray et al., 2014; Seale et al., 2014; Peseta et al., 2016; Cook-Sather, 2017), an aspect that is lacking within the work to involve students effectively in quality and governance processes and mechanisms. The studies in this area primarily report on case studies and the benefits of adopting such approaches and that the use of student voice in this way is a valuable strategy, which can have a meaningful impact on both the staff and students involved. Highlighting that such approaches require staff to be engaged in hearing the student voice and motivated to make changes in academic practice as a result (Campbell et al., 2006), which is echoed by Carey (2013a) who suggests that there is a need for a cultural shift in the practice and approaches by staff. Emphasising the need to consider the importance of the role that we wish students to play and the spaces we wish students to occupy and how this compliments the traditional structures and relationships between staff and students.

Carey's (2013a) study evaluated students as co-producers in curriculum design through interviews and focus groups with students. The research highlights how for work in this area to be effective it needs to diminish the power inequities between students and their institution, developing from one-off exchanges or consultations to continual reciprocal partnership. However, Peseta et al. (2016) suggests that scaling up such initiatives from small niche curriculum or pedagogical projects to working across an institution is difficult due to the intensive nature and commitments of resources such as staff time, administrative support and ultimately cost.

A number of studies (Seale, 2009 and Seale et al., 2015) have adopted a partnership approach with students using participatory research methods that work to develop and empower the student voice. Seale's (2009) paper reported on two projects that sought to develop the student voice throughout the project, through the collection of data and the recruitment of students to work as part of a project team to analyse the data and help produce outputs. The findings of the study drawn from evidence from the example projects highlighted how the use of participatory research methods provides a method to facilitate

the student voice, empowering the learner to not only voice their opinions but to also have the opportunity to be involved in developing the solution. The second study by Seale et al. (2015) utilised reflective narratives from a student voice project designed to develop practice to include the student voice, and subsequently working with students in the analysis and exploration developing a collaborative partnership.

Similarly, Cook-Sather (2009) in another small-scale study sought to develop the student voice to address issues with the problems of summative module evaluations, which were not seen as useful by staff. Students assisted in designing and collating information from students at the mid-point of a module. Cook-Sather describes how they believe that it engaged the students in multiple ways as active respondents, co-researchers and as researchers. The model used challenged the traditional accountability model of end of course evaluations that serve a performative function and instead provided a well-intentioned effort to gather student feedback with students shared and collectively.

The previous three studies provide good examples of how the student voice can be used in authentic ways to develop the student experience in a way that the current study would advocate and support. Similarly, Seale et al. (2015) suggests how the current policy and research literature has the tendency to gloss over the complexities and consciousness of the claims made regarding student voice and engagement. In addition, Seale believes that the limits to achieving strong student engagement and partnership are due to issues of power and resistance underpinned by consumerist forces supporting the notions developed previously in the literature review and those of Carey (2013a,b); Freeman (2014) and Darwin (2017) highlighted earlier.

A large number of the studies that investigate the student voice in higher education provide a descriptive overview of how they involved student voice in a particular project or initiative which serves an important function in the development of how it is possible to work in practice with students. However, few studies have sought to evaluate the effectiveness of how student voice is incorporated across an institution, investigating the power dynamics at play at different levels of the organisation, the roles afforded to students and the input they can make into decision making within institutional governance processes.

Furthermore, it is difficult to ascertain the drivers behind the increased call for student involvement in quality processes by agencies such as the QAA and whether the level of

engagement can move beyond consultative approaches with students to shape teaching and learning practices. Whilst the research in this area has developed considerably and the work of Freeman (2014) adds to this, it is still suggestive of an underdeveloped field. In particular, there are issues around the identity and voice of students, with a need to understand the reasoning for liberating the student voice, how best this can be achieved and through what mechanisms.

There is therefore a need for research studies to further scrutinise and investigate the motives behind why institutions want to listen to the student voice. Is it to assist in attracting further students by the promotion of impressive quality measures / statistics? Or do institutions have the students' best interests at heart? Is it possible to imagine a higher education that is built and developed through collaborative, democratic and reciprocal practice between staff and students to improve teaching and learning? To help address the gaps in the literature this research seeks to identify how the ethos and practice of the institution proliferates down to practice, examining the: nature and extent of student voice; impact of student voice on the decision-making across multiple levels of institutional governance; and the power relations between the institution, staff and students. The research utilises a unique case outlined in chapter one, a post-92 institution the University of Lincoln which has a strong philosophy and tradition of adopting learner centred and innovative approaches that seek to radicalise the consumerist higher education agenda by placing the student as a producer of knowledge. The case study therefore provides a rich and detailed assessment of how students are positioned within the student-university relationship and the reasons for such positioning; adding to the primarily descriptive research that exists, providing a greater understanding of the complexities in practice and the underpinning power dynamics.

To reiterate the aims of the research will be addressed by the following research questions:

- What are the drivers behind how and where student voice fits within the hierarchy of a university?
- Who wants to be involved in improving the collective teaching and learning experience and why?
- Who ultimately makes the decisions and alters policy?

- What are the challenges, barriers and tensions to a more democratic student-university relationship?

Chapter 3. Theoretical Framework

The following chapter provides contextual information about the research project, detailing the philosophical approach adopted. Hampton and Blythman (2006), Sabri (2011), Freeman (2014) and Matthews (2017) are unique in their attempt to link their student voice and partnership work to the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu, Paulo Freire and Michel Foucault on conceptualisations of power and oppression and social constructions of power. Freeman (2014) applied the work of Foucault examining the behaviour of the actors involved in completing student voice activities to try and understand the relationship between student voice, ideologies and power as opposed to how student voice is enacted across an institution and the influence this has on aspects such as decision-making. Furthermore, Freeman (2014) used the work of Habermas to help develop their paradigmatic lenses to frame how the different constructions of knowledge shape or influence how student voice can be viewed. However, Freeman did not combine the use of Foucault and Habermas at a theoretical level at the point of data analysis.

There is therefore further scope to utilise sociological theory on knowledge production and power to help develop the application and understanding of student voice and partnership literature. The chapter details the theoretical framework that has been developed through the underpinning literature on student voice and partnership, the assessment and analysis of the data, and the readings and work of Michael Foucault and Jürgen Habermas, which was developed collectively to help make sense of the data. In particular, the combination of Foucault and Habermas helps conceive how power operates within the different models of the student-university relationship and how this impacts upon institutional governance.

Beyond educational theory many researchers and theorists have sought to conceptualise the existence of power and its social construction. However, Clegg and Haugaard (2009) identify that there is no single correct interpretation of power and ultimately power is a conceptual tool not a single essence that is eternally contested. Constructions of power are therefore developed and arise from overlapping perceptions of power defined by particular paradigms, which shape the understanding of certain problems and questions surrounding the concept. As such, the current research project is specifically interested in the macro influences of power developed as a result of the historical, political and economic influences and how this connects to the domination of the state governing institutions and individuals. In addition, the project is also concerned with how power operates at an individual level, between, over or on each other. Such conceptions of power therefore do not align well with

one specific theorist and has resulted in the combination of two theorists Foucault and Habermas to help expose different parts of the overlapping conceptions of power within the student-university relationship.

Classical theorists working within a critical paradigm are underpinned by models of Marxist critical theory, driven by critiques of capitalism and the way that the economy can shape institutions like schooling to reflect the interests of the ruling class (Kellner, n.d.). Neo-Marxist theories have sought to overcome what they perceive as too narrow a focus on class and economics and instead stress the importance of developing theories of agency, resistance and relations to dimensions of gender, race, and sexuality, and other subject positions in an expanded notion of multicultural education, democratisation, and social justice. Building on Neo-Marxist perspectives enables a philosophy of education to develop that has an inclusive philosophical vision that connects education directly to democratisation and the changing of social relations in the direction of equality and social justice. A critical theory of education seeks to examine the relations of domination, subordination, contradictions and openings for progressive social change, and transformative practices that will create what the theory projects as a better life and society (Kellner n.d.).

The theoretical framework developed is a result of the combination of the analysis, and its interpretation / development through the work of Foucault and Habermas. Michael Foucault's analytics of power / knowledge and concepts of discipline, surveillance and governmentality is used to help understand how truth and knowledge is constructed and influenced by external power, affecting the discursive reality of the student-university relationship. Foucault's assessment and ability to raise issues of knowledge, power and contestation is well positioned to be applied to the context of education and helps interpret the relationship between institutions and its students (Woermann, 2012).

For Foucault his conception of power suggests that subjects are free to act in a number of ways even while they are acted upon. Power in these regards is therefore an aspect of social relations and may take the form of open and reversible relationships. However, often these relations of power may be relatively fixed, often deemed irreversible and hierarchical in their nature, as a result the margin of possibility within these confines is limited. Foucault therefore views power as an aspect of all social interactions, with the focus on what happens in social and political relationships and the means by which power is exercised.

Power as such does not exist through Foucault's interpretation and can therefore not be transferred from one individual to another. Individuals are therefore acted upon by ensuring the provision of public and community services, often in the form of a quasi-market in which the actions of individuals can be acted upon. Neo-liberal programmes in this sense are ones that try to shape the actions of individuals by establishing the conditions under which choice is made. Neo-liberal programmes therefore may have in mind a particular set of outcomes, such as increasing the competitiveness of the population through specified options. It is therefore not as simple as A affecting B, but the thought-out actions by A to act upon the actions of B for diverse and varying ends by specific means and instruments. Adopting a theoretical lens of this nature therefore poses the question on the use of the state's domination through contemporary social policies, or the degree to which it can coerce individuals or groups through surveillance and detailed administration (Clegg and Haugaard, 2009).

Echoing Woermann's (2012) thoughts that Foucault's later work on agency requires development to help consider how subjects can actively work against normalising power and thereby creating the space for ethical freedom and self-formation. Understanding how individuals can purposefully act upon not only ourselves, but also upon our societal institutions is critical. Indeed, to assist in developing such a stance requires looking beyond Foucault's all-pervasive view of normalising power, resurrecting a notion of purpose. It is therefore important to determine or believe that we can make a difference, not only in our own lives but also to the future of humanity.

Utilising only Foucault's conception of power in relation to institutions therefore becomes problematic if resistance is identified as only a consequence of the limited functions or specified options subjects believe they possess. Individuals must feel that they have the capacity to operate freely and make their own decisions if student voice and partnership is to have any real traction or grounding in a modern-day higher education institute. The reality of how power is conceived in a higher education institute, is complex at an individual level, however the use of Habermas assists in helping develop how power operates practically, especially at an individual level and how this defines the student-university relationship at this level.

The theoretical framework therefore combines the work of Jürgen Habermas' materialist theory of knowing and communicative action to help conceptualise how students and staff work together to create knowledge, make decisions and how this is inextricably linked to power. Whilst Habermas lacks a strategic approach it is remediable through an incorporation of Foucault's concept of governmentality (Biebricher, 2007). Foucault is limited in his work on agency and how individuals operate and work and how power is conceived through these relationships, which can be developed further through the work of Habermas.

To help address the research questions of the study it is important to consider how the discursive reality is embedded into the practices and processes of working with students in higher education, considering the historical, political, economic and institutional discourses. Conceptualising the discursive reality of the student-university relationship in this way will enable the research project to construct, reconstruct and work to democratise the working relationship between students, staff and the university institution through its policies, practices and procedures. The examination of discourses through texts and speech shape our knowledge and behaviour, as power is exercised through our texts and conversations (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). Gallant (2008) suggests that dominant discourses are responsible for the development of power and are taken for granted and seen as inevitable and natural. Therefore, to change the power relations requires the identification, analysis and redefinition of the discourses. The following sections in the chapter discuss the approaches and theoretical positioning of how the work of Foucault and Habermas helps to inform the research study.

3.1 Michael Foucault

The work of Michael Foucault guides the methodological approach to discourse and dialogue. Whilst it has been said that Foucault's position is notoriously difficult to pigeonhole, Foucault argues himself that his work functions best as a toolbox, rather than as a coherent system "I believe the freedom of the reader must be absolutely respected. Discourse is a reality, which can be transformed infinitely. Thus, he who writes does not have the right to give orders as to the use of his writings" (Foucault, 1978, p. 111. In

O'Farrell, 2005, p55). As such Foucault does not provide an off the shelf theoretical framework through which to understand phenomena, but rather a set of methodologies:

I would like my books to be a kind of tool-box which others can rummage through to find a tool which they can use however they wish in their own area... I would like the little volume that I want to write on disciplinary systems to be useful to an educator, a warden, a magistrate, a conscientious objector. I don't write for an audience, I write for the users, not readers (Foucault 1974, p. 523).

Foucault was concerned with *histories of the present* that make us see that the present is difficult to diagnose and problematise, and therefore arriving at a definitive understanding of practice is not possible. The function of one's analysis instead is to delimit existing practices and to challenge a phenomenon by taking it apart (Stevenson and Cutcliffe, 2006).

Foucault (1980) uses the concept of regimes of truth to identify how the institution has its own politics and discourse, which it accepts and makes function as true. Higher education institutions and the members within determine which discourses they accept as true, defining the mechanisms and instances, which enable one to distinguish true and false statements in these contexts. The resulting techniques and procedures produced by the institution are accorded value in the acquisition of truth and status charged to individuals and groups to say what counts as true. Therefore, how students, academics and senior management are conceived may look different depending on the acquisition of truth that is accepted. With this in mind, the current study will utilise Foucault's analytics of power / knowledge and concepts of discipline, surveillance and governmentality to help determine how the regimes of truth impact the discursive reality of institutional practices and processes on the student-university relationship.

3.1.1 Regimes of Truth

In higher education, the acquisition of *truth* in relation to its governance and the development of learning and teaching can be clearly represented by a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements. The knowledge that arises out of student voice is a result of a power complex and therefore controls what counts as meaningful, what topics are considered to be legitimate and how facts are produced. Truth is therefore linked in a circular relation with

systems of power, which produces and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and extends (Foucault, 1980, p. 133).

Within any point in time, culture, society and knowledge are always limited and linked to how a discursive object or phenomena is constructed, and therefore there are always alternative orders that are possible. Foucault, suggests that it is important that these orders are constantly challenged as they often exacerbate forms of social injustice and ignorance. Taking Foucault's approach and applying this to the research project there is a need to search for the very principles that give rise to a particular way of constructing order in relation to the governance in higher education and how student voice is included to be able to search for the systems that make it possible to see that an order exists.

Using Foucault's constructs of power, it is possible to determine that regimes of power are constituted by competing discursive formations. Therefore, who does and who does not have the intellectual authority to decide and determine legitimate issues in an institution and how information should be gathered about who and by whom, are defined by discursive formations and what is identified as true through the regimes of knowledge. Foucault suggests that power and knowledge directly imply one another "there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (Foucault, 1977, p. 27).

Furthermore, Foucault (1982) suggests that power is the total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions; in the words of Foucault

it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult: in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely; it never the less is a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action. A set of actions upon other actions (Foucault, 1982, p. 220).

The exercise of power is therefore an attempt to guide conduct and putting in order the possible outcome. However, power is less a confrontation between two adversaries or the linking of one to the other, instead it is more of a question of government. Foucault's notion of governmentality was born out of his thoughts and understandings of the relationship between sovereignty, the state and the family, replacing the role of religion in guiding individuals. Traditionally, the role of government used disciplinary forms of power to provide

order, whereas under sovereign rule there has been a switch to the use of tactical means to attain a number of goals that centre on the wealth and health of the population of the state (O'Farrell, 2006). Foucault, expanded his initial ideas to concentrate on how the subject governs itself and is governed by others and how individuals must be aware of the limits of the systems in which they operate in order to expose the entrenched forms of injustice and exercises of power (O'Farrell, 2006). Under this conception, power relations are therefore rooted in a system of social networks that Foucault refers to as pastoral power (Foucault, 1982). Through this lens Foucault suggests that power relations have become more and more under state control and, as such, pastoral power is exerted by state apparatus or by a public institution such as the police (Foucault, 1982). The role and function of the state and the formulation of pastoral power therefore impacts on how the higher education sector operates and how institutions operate and conduct themselves.

3.1.2 Regimes of Power - Governmentality

At a broad macro level Foucault is opposed to the idea that thought is somehow divorced from action and from the real material existence. Every human institution and action activates some form of thought, even if the individual practising that action is not aware of the thought they are putting into play (O'Farrell, 2006). By *government*, Foucault means the techniques and procedures, which govern, and guide people's conduct and move beyond the powers that might be said to be held by the state (Ball, 2013). Dean (1991, in Ball, 2013) describes this as involving a plurality of agencies and authorities that govern aspects of behaviour, invoking norms, purposes and outcomes / consequences, a rationalised exercise of power. This is what Foucault referred to as *the economy* in today's terms and is the exercising of power by the entire state on its inhabitants, and the wealth and behaviour of each, through mechanisms of surveillance and control (Foucault, 2000, p. 208).

Foucault's notion of governmentality centres on the development of a disciplinary society, describing it as a way of regulating and guiding people's behaviour in the social body. Specifically, Foucault (2000, p. 219) described governmentality to mean three things

1. To target the population and their principal form of *knowledge political economy*, exercising power through a complex web of calculations and tactics formed through institutions, procedures, analysis, and reflections.

2. The pre-eminence of governmental power-based apparatus or practices and the development of a *complex of knowledge* (savants).
3. The process by which a state, based on a system of law, was replaced by a way of administering a population.

Foucault outlines that the state constructs the conditions of possibility for the economy with a whole set of practices co-ordinated with a regime of truth; “a truth that is articulated by the economy and the state together” (Ball, 2012, p. 129). This combination of practices, as outlined previously, is referred to by Foucault as neoliberalism attempting to quantify and rank all aspects of the higher education environment (Foucault, 1977). Applying this configuration to higher education we have seen an ever-increasing development of marketised principles that utilise and assign numerical values to a measure of teaching or outcomes, in an attempt to benchmark and rank all manner of aspects of an institution and its dealings.

The welfare state and the nation state are key social formations within Foucault’s work that are embedded and intensified in the development of governmentality in today’s world (Ball, 2013). The political rationality of neoliberalism tries to justify a reduction in (welfare) state services and security systems to the individual, emphasising *personal responsibility* and *self-care* (Lemke, 2001). Lemke (2001) and Ball (2013), outline that neoliberalism is aimed at producing an active society creating lean, fit, flexible, agile and autonomous individuals, institutions and states. In this sense, the challenge is to gain productive service, gaining access to the bodies of individuals and power over their acts, attitudes and modes of everyday behaviour (Foucault, 1980). The modern version of power takes the form of surveillance in education institutions, factories, and hospitals, attempting to normalise behaviour.

The neoliberal principles of accountability and the production of benchmarks and league tables operate as mechanisms of surveillance to regulate institutions and individuals via objective, numerical rankings (Burrows, 2012; Shore and Wright, 2015). In higher education it is evident that the student as consumer, marketisation and performativity discourses are a result of the neoliberal ideals and practices that are dominant in today’s audit culture. Selwyn (2014) reinforces that the notion of surveillance is part of an ever-increasing digital university, which uses data and metrics for monitoring performance and planning. The

production of visible metrics and data is used to facilitate the development of knowledge as an instrument for control (Strathern, 2000); an integral part of the new governance of universities that is underpinned by the neoliberal principles and devolved forms of control by central government (Selwyn, 2014). Thus, the development of an audit culture in the British higher education sector can be seen as a way to determine the performance and productivity of academic staff.

Strathern (2000) identifies how higher education professionals regard the indicators identified as highly constructed and artificial mechanisms of measuring actual teaching practice or student experience. The information provided is publicly visible, what is less visible is the actual practice itself and the inner mechanisms and working of the institute. One could argue and many do that the inflexibility of audit do not account for the social structures, cultural values and the processes and procedures of a higher education institution and are therefore sceptical about their use to facilitate the development of knowledge (Strathern, 2000). Selwyn (2014) goes further to suggest that the silences of data driven systems and outputs are due to the difficulty in assessing aspects such as professionalism, emotions, effort and the relationships between people in the higher education setting. Furthermore, Ozga (2009) paints a rather dark perspective that describes how such use of data has created a relentless and inescapable set of processes and procedures.

The use of metrics and in particularly the reliance on digital systems in higher education, frames the staff-student relationship in a particular passive manner that does not enable or encourage staff and students to actively participate due to the top-down impositions and false modes of engagement (Selwyn, 2014). Therefore, from an anthropological position the attempt to describe and categorise the student experience and quality of teaching and learning conceals certain truths by revealing others, with realities knowingly eclipsed (Strathern, 2000).

Foucault describes this as the history of knowledge, which is concerned, with the field of discourse and the relationships or rules that determine the extent statements are accepted or meaningful and true at a particular time point (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002; O'Farrell, 2005). This configuration stems from Foucault's archaeological work, which considers the *conditions of possibility* and gives rise to knowledge, and his genealogical work which is

about the constraints that limit the orders of knowledge (Stevenson and Cutcliffe, 2006). Therefore, by examining discourses and investigating the structures of different regimes of knowledge it is possible to help formulate the rules for what can and cannot be said and the rules for what governs truth (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). In principle, there are an infinite number of formulating statements, however, the statements that are produced within a specific domain are often simplistic, repetitive, time-bound and impose limit on meaning (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). Adopting such an approach has both an ethical and political function, in that it is intended to throw into question relations of power and to have a liberating function (Foucault, 1974; O'Farrell, 2005).

Post-structuralists suggest that in order for student voice to be utilised effectively the dominant discourses of consumerism, marketisation and performativity must be challenged and countered by partnership working between students, staff and senior management (Fielding, 2004a; and Bragg, 2007), providing space to construct knowledge and enable individuals to change how they participate in the world (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012). It is therefore, important to understand how the multiplicity of discourses and the consequences of pastoral power are enacted within a higher education institution and how this affects the individuals and their positioning within the student-university relationship (Griffiths, 1995).

3.1.3 Discourse - Discursive Practice

Using Foucault's work on regimes of truth, it is possible to determine the shift in terminology from the archaeological project to a new set of terms: genealogy, power and the will to truth and the notion of the idea of regimes of truth.

Each society has its regimes of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned: the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault, 1980, p. 131).

Utilising this to assist in the analysis of how students are involved and incorporated into the student-university relationship there is a need to determine the regimes of truth or competing discourses that help define what the relationship looks like. A discourse can be

identified as a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation. Therefore, a discourse can be made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined. "Discourse is not an ideal, timeless form [...] it is, from beginning to end, historical – a fragment of history [...] posing its own limits, its divisions, its transformations, the specific modes of its temporality" (Foucault, 1972, p. 117).

Foucault would suggest that, archaeologically, we need to determine which statements are accepted as meaningful and true in a particular historical epoch (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). Knowledge is therefore not just a reflection of reality. Truth is discursively constructed, with different regimes of knowledge determining what is true and false or as Strathern (2000) and Selwyn (2014) suggest what is made visible or invisible by those in positions of power.

As identified from the literature, a number of emerging discourses are discussed within the field of student voice work that are connected to performativity, marketisation, consumerism and partnership. The mechanisms of neoliberalism, performativity and marketisation are key functions of the neoliberal government and are clearly evident within higher education. Last year's efforts become benchmarks for next year's improvement (Ball, 2012); for example, more students, higher student satisfaction scores, increased graduate employment, all of which inform league tables and consumer choice. The increased reliance on data driven processes therefore re-produces and reinforces neoliberal principles and what is accepted as true, not only through an individual's language, purposes, decisions and social relations, but also by the practical relations of competition and exploitation within business. Foucault describes such techniques as *technologies of the self* that require individuals to spend increasing amounts of time reporting, making ourselves accountable and ultimately having a decreased time allowance to enable the day-to-day duties to be carried out. Foucault uses the exemplar of the Panopticon, to term how surveillance normalises individuals and institutions to self-regulate. Therefore, students and staff become unwittingly embroiled in a drive to self-regulate their practice in a bid to improve standards and key performance indicators (Foucault, 1978). Burrows (2012), identifies how this is achieved in higher education through the functioning of a range of metrics designed to not just mimic markets but, increasingly enact them.

The use of data is a clear attempt to turn individuals into governable subjects Davies and

Peterson (2005) identify that there are two technologies at play: the first is a technology of agency which seeks to enhance and improve our capacities for participation, agreement and action; and secondly a technology of performance which turns capacities into something which is calculable and comparable so they might be optimised. The latter provides the opportunity for indirect regulation and surveillance of these entities and is part of a strategy in which our moral and political conduct are put into play as elements within systems of governmental purposes (Davies and Peterson, 2005).

The strategies and techniques are designed to regulate and self-regulate both institutions and individuals, reshaping deep social relations and creating productive individuals, new kinds of subjects, and the central resource in a reformed, entrepreneurial public sector. Those who underperform are subject to moral assessments and appreciation of performance. Systems are set up to support or encourage those who are unable to keep up, continuously teetering on the brink of moral regulation (Ball, 2012). The neoliberal effects on the institution are a *technology of statistics*, which creates the capacity to relate to reality as a field of government (Shore and Wright, 1999). Such approaches therefore have an effect on how staff in higher education conduct themselves, impacting on their relationship with the institution and its students. Practices and procedures have move beyond the automated monitoring of individuals towards a more implicit system of surveillance where the relationships are set up between a control agent i.e. the government or the institution and those being monitored (Selwyn, 2014).

3.1.4 Power / Knowledge

In common with discourse, power does not belong to particular agents such as individuals or the state or groups with particular interests; rather power is spread across different social practices. Foucault believes that power is not exclusively oppressive

What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it does not weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it transverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms of knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network, which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is oppression (Foucault, 1980, p. 109).

Foucault suggests that power is responsible for creating our social worlds and for the particular ways in which the world is formed and talked about, ruling out alternative ways of being and talking (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). Thus, power produces the conditions of possibility for the social. It is in power that the social world is produced and objects are separated from one another and attain their individual characteristics and relationships to one another. Power is therefore always bound up with knowledge; power and knowledge presuppose one another (Foucault, 1977).

Foucault claims it is not possible to gain access to universal truth, since it is impossible to talk from a position outside discourse; there is no escape from representation and truth effects that are created within discourses (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). Therefore, Foucault's coupling of power and knowledge has the connection and consequence to discourse. Discourses, essentially contribute to producing the subjects we are, and the objects we can know something about, informing research problems and questions (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002).

If we take Foucault's concept of governmentality outlined previously, modern forms of power incorporate aspects of sovereignty, discipline, and government, replacing the disciplinary forms of power of prohibition and punishment. Foucault describes more modern forms of power applied by the state as pastoral power (Foucault, 1982). The approach of the theory of governmentality provides space in which the consciousness of the individual is turned into a subject influenced by their social context.

Pastoral power, in contrast to disciplinary power, must flow through the consciousness of the other in such a way that the other internalises the relevant laws, rules, and norms so as to regulate themselves. It must operate not as a direct, immediate form of domination, but rather as a type of influence: and because it must work by convincing the other of the rightness of certain acts, it must treat the other to the very end as a person who acts (Foucault, 1982).

Bevir (1999) suggests that pastoral power recognises the value of the subject as an agent, whereas violence or discipline attempts to extinguish the capacity of the subject for agency. Foucault is explicit that no society, culture, or practice can be free of power and that all individuals are constituted from regimes of power. However, power is exercised only over

free subjects, by this Foucault means individuals or collective subjects can behave in a number of ways from the field of possibilities they are faced (Foucault, 1982).

Analysing power brings into play relations between individuals or groups, which Foucault believes can be divided into three aspects – power relations, relationships of communication, and objective capacities and should not be confused. The application of objective capacities implies relationships of communication, which are tied to power relations (obligatory tasks, gestures imposed by tradition). It is difficult to dissociate the effects of power that permit activities to enable the exercise of power (training techniques, processes of domination, means of obtaining obedience) or those which seek to develop power by calling on relations of power (division of labour, hierarchy of tasks) (Foucault, 1982).

Foucault (1982) applied the relations of power to educational institutions, which have a set of detailed regulations governing their internal life; organising the different activities that take place, with the diverse range of people all having their own function and defined character forming a block of *capacity-communication-power*. The role of the student and the acquisition of aptitudes or behaviours is developed by *regulated communications* such as lessons, orders, coded signs of obedience, differentiation values or status of individuals related to their respective levels of knowledge. Lastly, the means by which *power processes* are enacted through surveillance, reward / punishment set within the pyramidal hierarchy.

Adopting Foucault's notion of pastoral power to the research framework it is possible, as Bevir (1999) suggests, that we may recognise the value of the subject as an agent, whereas disciplinary power attempts to extinguish the capacity of the subject for agency through violence and punishment.

The notion proposed by Bevir (1999) is that through pastoral power there has been a shift from autonomous subjects, who are able to rule themselves uninfluenced by others, to agents. Bevir (1999) suggest that agents exist only in a specific social context and these contexts never determine how they try to construct themselves. In higher education, the agency that students exhibit is through their behaviour and actions and exists within regimes of power / knowledge and the confines of truth. If, as Foucault suggests, that no society, culture, or practice can be free of power and that all individuals are constituted from

regimes of power, students, staff and institutions will behave according to the social context, regimes of power they experience and the limited options permitted.

Figure 3.1 conceptualises and illustrates how history and order influence the discourses, discursive practice and the resultant power-knowledge nexus and the discursive struggle that this provides within a higher education institution and its subsequent effect on power and agency. The development of this categorisation and framework through the interpretation of Foucault's work helps to establish how the relationship of the student – university is constructed and operates and is used to structure the basis for the discourse analysis.

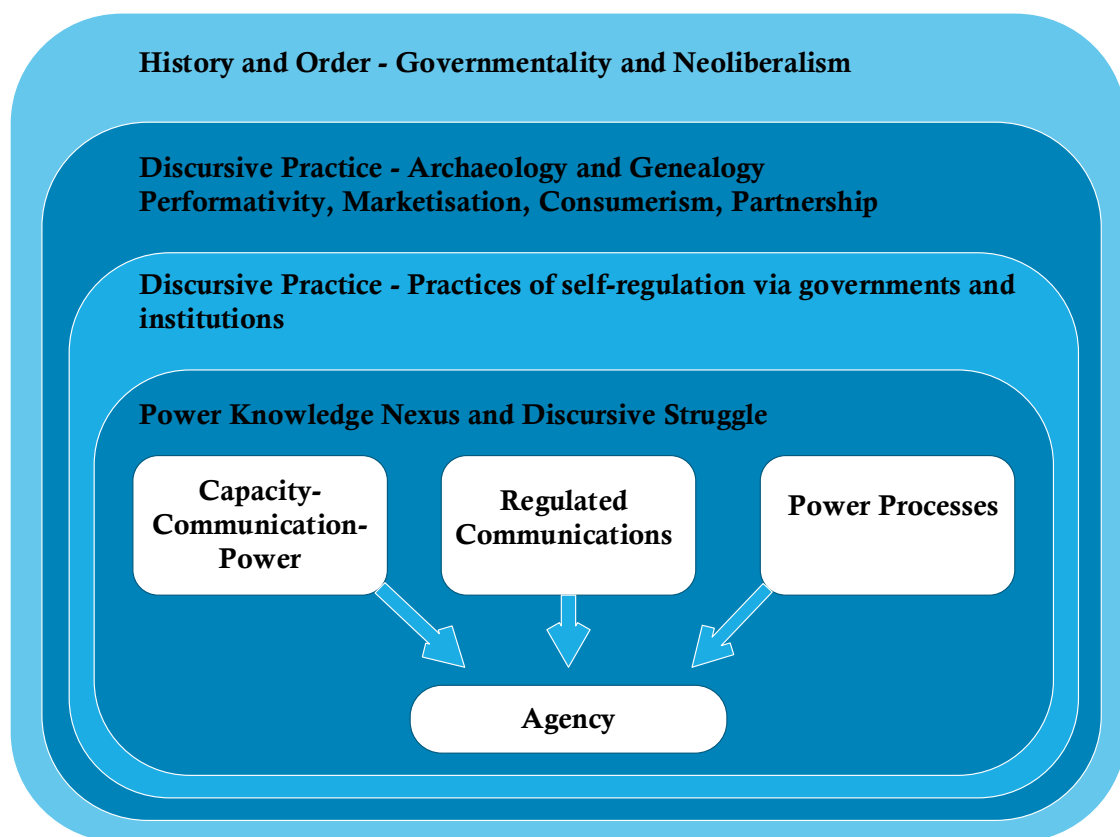


Figure 3.1 Schematic representation of the influences of power and discourse applied to higher education

3.1.5 Technologies of the self

The role of the student and the student representative is therefore guided by the acquisition of aptitudes or behaviours which is developed by a block of regulated communications of power (such as lessons, orders, coded signs of obedience, differentiation values or the status of individuals related to their respective levels of knowledge). As power can only be exercised over free subjects, students must have the capacity to act freely in the role they adopt. As students enter into higher education they come from a particular social background and defined role in society or family. However, Bevir (1999) argues that there is still scope to act creatively, in novel ways that modify their background and enable students to demonstrate agency. Conversely, once an individual adopts the position of being a student or a staff member it is difficult for them to act as autonomous agents as they are governed by a series of power processes implemented through surveillance, reward and punishment and the hierarchy of their institution (Foucault, 1982). In order for students to fulfil their role or adopt a position as a student representative or student partner, each will work to a set of roles and responsibilities, expected behaviours and requirements to act in a certain manner and fit to the governance structures of the higher education institution.

As a result, individuals police themselves by examining, confessing, and regulating their own thoughts and behaviour in accordance with the concept of normality that is surveilled (Foucault, 1978). The specific regime of power / knowledge defines the subject and is conceived in terms of the norms by which we try to live and the techniques by which we try to ensure we do so. What can be identified is that the way students and student representatives behave in a particular setting is representative of the individual social context and is regulated by pastoral power and its associated mechanisms. Ultimately there is a potentially normalising effect of pastoral power produced by the state and the neoliberal practices designed as *technologies of the self*.

3.1.6 Agency - Normalisation vs. Resistance

Whilst Foucault is limited in his discussion of agency, Bevir (1999) suggests that Foucault identifies that agency of a subject can be determined by two factors, morality and ethics. Morality seeks to impose requirements and restrictions on an individual whereas an ethic constitutes a practice through which an individual can negotiate their relationship to such

requirements and restrictions. Morality provides a flexible setting on which one is free to develop one's own *ethic of existence* and so to *affirm one's liberty*. In today's society, social norms constitute a set of rules imposed on us from outside acting as a form of pastoral power, such rules must be obeyed to avoid punishment, it is therefore argued that this has an effect on real freedom in relation to the morality by which we are governed. Therefore, for subjects to become agents, individuals must resist the pressures of normalisation by challenging a morality through their personal and ethical conduct. To achieve this requires individuals to be capable of producing themselves and to question the norms inherited from the position occupied. Therefore, as Bevir (1999) suggests freedom gained through ethical conduct is still restricted to the social influences and contexts at work around them.

Foucault's work encourages us to identify and to place value on forms of agency that resist the normalising effects of modern power (Bevir, 1999). Under the notions of student voice and partnership it could be ascribed that students should be positioned as agents; who can produce themselves by critically interrogating the social norms and the given identities provided by the blocks of resources of communication and power relations constituting the regulated and concerted systems of an institution (Foucault, 1982). If students and student representatives can function to resist the status quo, developing their own personal style provides new impetus to the undefined work of freedom. In practice, this may come across less as a fixed set of categories as defined by blocks of communication-power and more as a flexible framework to be explored and challenged. Bevir (1999) suggests that a good society must look to ethical conduct more than to any given moral system and that a good society must recognise people as agents, encouraging forms of resistance and promoting difference.

3.1.7 Summary of the Application of Foucault

The research will seek to identify the different discursive elements, how they enable the student to adopt or position themselves, what constitutes as truth and how the mechanisms and instances enable one to distinguish true and false statements. Therefore, how students, academics and senior management are conceived may look different depending on the acquisition of truth that is accepted and what counts as meaningful, what topics are considered to be legitimate and how facts are produced.

In addition, the research study seeks to examine the different effects of how the principles of governmentality create self-regulation of the institution and the individuals within, reinforcing neoliberal ideals; or whether different discursive relationships provide more flexible frameworks that allow students to exercise agency that encourage forms of resistance and creativity to enable partnership working that does not just commit to the neoliberal ideals and technologies of the self. The notion is to expose knowledge / power relationships that limit, control and reinforce the student. However, the work of Foucault is limited in helping understand the relationships between staff and students and the ability to emancipate the student, providing a liberation of voice. The following section details how the use of Habermas is utilised to develop the understanding of the individual and how power can influence how decisions are determined.

3.2 Habermas' Theory of Knowing and Communicative Action

The work of Jürgen Habermas' materialist theory of knowing and communicative action provides a theoretical framing to help conceptualise more specifically how students and staff work together to create knowledge, make decisions and how this is inextricably linked to power. This part of the theoretical framework helps develop Foucault's notions of external power and apparatus that are used to control and normalise an individual's behaviour. The work of Habermas was used to help reflect on the individual's understanding and meaning that is shaped in situations within the institution (Stahl, 2004). The value of Habermas's approach is that it enables the possibility of developing a clear picture of the democratic process, and what preconditions must be fulfilled for a decision to be termed democratic (Flyvbjerg, 2000).

Habermas conceives of more authentic ways of knowing, challenging dominant modes of the role of teacher and learner by encouraging engagement and critical reflection, or praxis (Habermas, 1989). For Habermas (1989), social situations should be interpreted as a result of the interplay of the forces of life worlds and system worlds, enabling the examination of the students as active agents in the development of learning and teaching (Mayes et al., 2017). Habermas (1972) was curious on how various knowledge interests and their interaction with both system and life worlds can be developed. For Habermas, this relates to the

development of transformational learning sites that engage the learner through communicative capacity to communicative action, resulting in emancipation and effecting change where it is necessary.

Habermas' work is built on earlier Hegelian and Kantian perspectives and splits the interests into three levels or questions

The first question, what can I know? Is merely speculative. The second, what ought I do? Is merely practical. But the third question, what may I hope? Is both practical and theoretical at the same time. Here the situation is such that the practical serves only as a guide to answering the theoretical question and when this is followed out, to the speculative question (Habermas, 1972, p. 203).

Habermas (1972) believes that the principle of hope determines the practical intention for which speculative reason is engaged. Habermas (1972) identifies that interest is attached to actions and actions both establish the conditions of possible knowledge and depend on cognitive processes, although in different configurations according to the action. What is important is how the interlocking of knowledge and interest become clear by examining the category of actions that coincide with the activity of self-reflection, leading to emancipatory actions. The act of self-reflection has the potential to *change a life* and is a movement of emancipation, as a result, knowing and acting are infused in the same act (Habermas, 1972, p. 212). The processes of interest and action should be maintained in the form of methodological enquiry if the self-formative process is to be continued. "For the pursuit of reflection knows itself as a movement of emancipation... It obeys an emancipatory cognitive interest, which aims at the pursuit of reflection" (Habermas, 1972, p. 208).

In higher education there are many examples of where staff and students have the potential to collaborate and work together towards a collective democracy. Such instances provide what Habermas (1972) terms a methodological framework for the knowledge-constitutive interests of staff and students to problem solve together. The knowledge-constitutive interests can be defined as a function of the constituted problems of the preservation of life or, in the case study, the programme of study and student experience. Habermas (1972) sees that work and interaction should include the process of learning and arriving at mutual understanding. The notion of staff-student meetings that formulate part of institutional governance mechanisms in higher education is exactly one where staff and students should

work together to create and arrive at a mutual understanding. However, the involvement of staff and students in such situations has the potential to produce very different outcomes dependent on how the meetings are organised and structured. Mayes et al. (2017) suggest that Habermas provides us with social-scientific conceptual resources to enable us to consider various knowledge interests and their interaction with both system and life worlds.

Habermas's theory of knowing comprehends authentic ways of knowing through critical reflection and engagement, or praxis, with the potential to challenge dominant notions of the student-teacher or lecturer relationship. Habermas develops an explanation for divisions in knowledge that is derived from his belief that knowing is informed by three cognitive interests or ways of knowing. The three ways are empirical / analytical (technical) knowing, historical / hermeneutic (communicative) knowing, and critical (self-reflective) knowing.

Lovat, Monfries and Morrison (2004) and Lovat (2013) identify how Habermas' theory of knowing can be applied to the different moments in the teacher-learner relationship and how the power that sits behind curriculum approaches and forms of pedagogy can be used to help inform the current research. The first interest in technical control looks to identify and establish all the facts, figures and information in a particular subject area and within the educational setting. This empirical / analytical form of knowing leads to a relationship where the teacher or the lecturer is the expert and the learner / student is the novice. The relationship is a hierarchical one where the lecturer holds the power, with little to none held by the learner (Lovat et al. 2004; Lovat, 2013). This fits with a consumerist approach, where students speak and provide their perspectives, institutions and staff respond, standards rise and attainment increases. The drive is to constantly improve performance, enhancing teaching and learning through processes that do little to explain the results, situations or nuances of student feedback.

The second interest in understanding meaning of an event explores the inner dimensions, relating factors to one another, resulting from engagement, interrelationship and dialogue and stimulates a historical / hermeneutic type of knowing. Historical-hermeneutic knowing conceptualises a teacher-learner relationship in partnership, collaborating and negotiating to develop meaning and understanding of the subject, with power distributed and shared to a certain extent. This form of knowing is naturally more democratic and encourages a level of free thought and speech, with the teacher taking responsibility to guide the learner,

informed by their knowledge of practice and research (Lovat et al, 2004; Lovat, 2013). This approach fits more closely with a student-university relationship that is built upon partnership and aligned to emancipatory critiques of student voice. Staff and students share the power, discussing and negotiating what, how and why things need to be altered to provide an improved teaching and learning experience.

The third interest is self-reflection and the development of autonomy as a knower from critical reflections of the subject matter, our sources and ourselves. Habermas believes that critical or self-reflective knowing is where the only truly assured and totally comprehensive knowing occurs. This form of reflection enables one to be free to think one's own thoughts, the learner is provided with the confidence and power to be in control of their own knowing. To engage in praxis, the relationship between the teacher and the learner is to the point of power sharing, with the teacher relegating power to the learner, therefore moving beyond the historical-hermeneutic level of knowing (Lovat et al. 2004, Lovat 2013).

Within the context of higher education and the relationship between the institution, academics and students and the traditional confines of academia and didactic pedagogy, it would be difficult to imagine that the learner could possibly know more than the lecturer. Therefore, at an empirical-analytic level of knowing it may be difficult to conceive that students can not only provide an opinion about the quality of learning and teaching but also input into decision-making within governance structures. Within the historical-hermeneutic knowing, it is possible to imagine institutions and staff engaging with students to discuss and develop pedagogical approaches to improve the student experience. Whereas, within critical self-reflective knowing, it is expected and celebrated that the boundaries of knowledge and new knowing has taken place that is beyond the first-hand knowledge of the lecturer.

The student-university relationship provides an overview of how the actors are involved in institutional governance and is of a direct concern to the research questions. Seale (2009) suggests that whilst the involvement of students in quality processes is desirable, very few studies have focused on how this can be achieved or have evaluated how students are involved within the institution. Habermas' theory of knowing therefore provides a theoretical framework which enables the current research project to identify what level of knowing the student is afforded within governance processes and whether students have an input into decision making. In addition, does this change between the hierarchical levels of

the university? For example, between the subject, school / programme level, the faculty / college level and the institutional level.

3.3 Summary

Both Foucault and Habermas agree that rationalisation and the misuse of power are among some of the most important problems of our time (Flyvberg, 1998). However, they offer different perspectives on how power is understood and one can act in relation to these problems. The use of Habermas with Foucault is not common, however, it helps to fulfil the critical intention of the research. Foucault helps expose the problematic practices at play in higher education and how this is dependent on external power that influences and shapes conduct and practice. To develop this for the individual, Habermas helps reflect on the individual's understanding and meaning that is shaped in situations within the institution (Stahl, 2004).

The value of Habermas's approach is that it contains a clear picture of what Habermas understands by democratic process, and what preconditions must be fulfilled for a decision to be termed democratic and how the relationships of power between individuals and groups may affect this (Flyvbjerg, 2000). Whilst Foucault believes that one is free to act, he also establishes that the actions or choices an individual is able to make are often confined or predetermined, limiting possibilities. The value of Foucault therefore, is his emphasis on the dynamics of power. Understanding how power works is the first prerequisite for action, because action is the exercise of power (Flyvbjerg, 2000). Determining how the historical, political and economic influences in this manner establish the actions warranted by the state on institutions and individuals and the options or choices available. Adding Habermas's conceptions of power will help establish how the power operates at an individual level and whether despite the broader influences of power it is possible for power to be distributed differently in practice.

The theoretical framework was developed in conjunction with both the data collection and analysis to help establish the role of pastoral power and the development of regimes of truth on the student-university relationship. The research study examines how the discourses operate and effect the systems and structures in higher education. Over time

discourses become institutionalised and become responsible for the development of power and are taken-for-granted and seen as inevitable and natural. Therefore, the study seeks to conceptualise the student-university relationship, exposing the dominant discourses in operation in a UK higher education institute and how this proliferates down to practice and the involvement of students and staff.

Chapter 4. Methodology

This chapter identifies the research design and methods, ethical considerations, my positionality / reflexivity, sampling and methods of data analysis.

4.1 Research Approach – A Critical Post-structuralist Lens

The project is a critical, post-structural ethnography with a blended design of critical theory (constructing and reconstructing the student-university relationship in an English higher education institution) and post-structuralism (acknowledging the historical discourses that influence or limit the conceptualisation of the student-university relationship in this context) within an ethnographic case study (analysing multiple forms of data collection and documentation within one institution to construct a rich picture of these processes / this phenomenon).

The project aims to investigate and examine how student voice is enacted by all those involved within formal and informal approaches at different levels of the institution. To address the central questions of the research in this complex context, ethnographic methods offer a way of illuminating the case features and examining the relationship between research, policy and practice, located within a wider framework of the literature (Elliot and Lukes, 2008).

The ethnographic approach used in this study is not in the traditional ethnographic sense that aims to represent a culture, an event, and people as they really are or see themselves. Instead, as a post-structural ethnography, it acknowledges that the transactions that occur within the student-university relationship are embedded and absorbed in the historical discourse and that reality is therefore transient and relative (Gallant, 2008). In addition, acknowledging such a discursive relationship with reality lends itself to keeping questions about meaning open (Vaughan, 2004).

The benefits of a case study approach enables the examination of simple through to complex situations and allows the researcher to answer how and why type questions aligned to the specific research questions highlighted. In addition, it provides the scope to take into consideration how the phenomenon, in this research the student-university relationship, is influenced by the context within which it is situated and how power is established to create this existence (Baxter and Jack, 2008). Case studies also enable the researcher to gather data

from a variety of sources and to converge the data to illuminate the case, providing similarities with ethnographic research methods.

The institution selected as the case example is the University of Lincoln and has a history of learner centered approaches developed firstly within its business plan and has continued through its development, full details of this were outlined in Chapter 1.5.1 Research case

The University of Lincoln's development and vision of working with students as partners in its informal and formal structures across the University. Students have the capacity to be involved as student representatives in decision-making from a school through to university level, opportunities to work on validation and interview panels and contribute to pedagogical and curriculum development and therefore provides a unique case to examine

Combining both an ethnographic and a case study approach helped answer the specific questions and outcomes within this research. The ethnographic approach conceptualises the student-university relationship through first-hand interaction with the cultural sharing group of student, academics, senior management and administrators over a prolonged period (Gallant, 2008). The case study approach examined these phenomena within a specific case example, the University of Lincoln; which has been highlighted as a unique case example. It is not uncommon for researchers adopting a post-structuralist perspective to assemble a combination of ethnographic and case study approaches (White, Drew and Hay 2009), with ethnography increasingly described as an umbrella term for fieldwork, interviewing and other means of data gathering in authentic / real world environments (Willis, 2007).

Adopting an ethnographic case study approach, gathering data from a variety of sources provided a rich data sample with detailed information to illuminate the educationally significant features related to student voice and institutional governance, in the context of a neoliberal university (Elliott and Lukes, 2008).

At the time of data collection, I was a Principal Lecturer at the case institution and therefore an insider within the University. Taking such an approach needs careful management, as Vaughan (2004) highlights, the researcher needs to be careful not to report a *victory* narrative and must be able to distance themselves from their insider role and the potential pressure from colleagues to report the positive headlines and not the critical elements.

Therefore, the aim will be to represent the participants' thoughts and experiences (Gallant, 2008) and adopting a post-structural approach must tack back and forth, deconstructing and reconstructing the information provided, speaking not only about but also for the group

(Vaughan, 2004; Dencombe, 2014). Gallant (2008) states that for this to be possible the researcher must be self-reflexive, analysing their own thoughts and articulating them clearly, to mitigate any negative effects of bias on the part of the researcher. Further details on how this was done are provided in Chapter 4.6 researcher positionality and reflexivity

4.2 Research Instruments and Sampling

The current research project draws on interviews / group interviews, observations, student questionnaires, texts / policy documentation and field notes, using a wide array of data collection procedures assists in building a detailed picture of the case (Creswell, 2012). Interviews served the purpose of gathering information about a person's experience, knowledge, values, preferences and attitudes and the meaning they make of their experiences, aligning well with the aims of the research and the exploratory nature of the enquiry (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011; Gray, 2014). Individual and group interviews were semi-structured, relating to key themes drawn from the literature. Both the individual and group interviews followed a similar approach to the thematic overview and sequencing of the questions, a sample of the questions and protocol can be found in appendix A. The initial questions aimed to develop a rapport with the participants and gain an understanding of their role in the institutions or their programme and level of study. Following which the participants were asked to provide their knowledge, experiences and beliefs on a number of key areas critical to the research questions, these were:

- understanding of the participants self-construction of student experience and satisfaction, what this means to them and how these concepts link to teaching and learning;
- understanding of the processes and practices across the university that individuals were aware of to help develop and shape student satisfaction and experience;
- examination of how information is obtained in relation to teaching and learning and the student experience, the role of this information and how the participant/s believe this information is used;

- provision of examples of where staff and students are involved in assessing and or enhancing teaching and learning, at what level of the institution this occurs and the relationship between staff and students involved;
- identification of how decisions are made with respect to student feedback and voice mechanisms they were involved in or had knowledge of;
- enhancement and development of mechanisms, processes and practices

Each interview was recorded on a dictaphone, which enabled the interviewer to engage with the interviewee and make any additional notes and was transcribed verbatim post interview for analysis. Adopting a semi-structured approach to all the interviews enabled participants to be able to develop their own ideas, speak more widely on the questions raised (Denscombe, 2014) and allowed the researcher to probe for more detailed responses and to seek clarification on what the respondent had said (Gray, 2014). Use of only a survey or questionnaire-based approach would result in a complex series of open-ended questions where there is insufficient opportunity to seek clarification or understanding of the questions and was therefore not deemed suitable as the main research tool.

To ensure validity when interviewing, the question content was directly relevant and concentrated on the research objectives, drawn from the literature and from pilot work (Gray, 2014). In addition, the interviewer worked to build a rapport and trust with the interviewee to promote expression and illustration on their responses to provide sufficient detail for the participants to provide full accounts and answers (Gray, 2014). An interview protocol and script were standardised as much as possible between the participants invited within the different roles, positions and groups, to minimise interviewer bias, an example can be found in Appendix A. Table 4.1 and 4.2 provides details of the individual and group interviews and the participant codes / pseudonyms assigned for identification in the data analysis and discussion section.

A fundamental part of the study was to seek to clarify what happens in practice at the different levels of the institution and therefore observations are deemed an essential tool within this research study. As identified in the literature review a limited number of studies have utilised observations as a research tool specifically to assist in the determination of how students are involved in governance processes. Non-participant unstructured observations recorded, in as much detail as possible, the behaviour of the participants in the group, developing a narrative account of that behaviour (Bryman, 2012). This included: who

initiated agenda items (prior to the meeting and during the meeting); whether it was possible for participants to speak freely; who contributed to each part of the meeting; whether outcomes or decisions were made; and who was involved in this process.

A clear limitation of such an approach is the reactive effects of the participants; this is deemed as unavoidable and was minimised by the researcher being as unobtrusive as possible (Bryman, 2012). Both internal and external validity of the observations were maximised by collecting data across the whole academic year, to try and determine a true reflection of the events (Gray, 2014). A potential issue with administering research instruments as an insider researcher within the University is that people may be reluctant to take part in the study; however, participants were forthcoming and accommodating of all research requests. A copy of the observer record sheet can be found in Appendix B, Table 4.4 – 6 provide an account of the representation of individuals in the meetings.

Furthermore, the use of observations alongside the individual interviews and group interviews enabled triangulation to occur between relevant aspects of the data, for example in the mechanisms identified and the extent or level of engagement they believed students were involved.

A survey to students was also developed to provide data to identify the thoughts and perceptions of students regarding their student experience, satisfaction and quality assurance and enhancement processes and their engagement with the Student Union and representation. The survey was administered through Qualtrics an online software package (Qualtrics, Provo, UT) incorporating a combination of open and closed questions to assist in developing understanding of student engagement and the representation system in line with the themes identified for the interview questions. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix C and Table 4.3 provides an overview of the individuals who completed the survey.

The University's Strategic Plan (2011-2016) and the Student Union's Strategic Plan (2016 – 2021) were examined to outline the practices and procedures for governance mechanisms and teaching and learning within the University or that have an impact and effect on the quality of teaching and learning or the student experience. Such documentation is seen as important for a number of reasons to identify: how the documents ascribe meaning or language to student involvement and partnership; what this should look like or the ideals; potential measures attached to assess the objectives outlined; the relationship between the documentation, the practice observed and the narratives constructed through interview.

Consent from the appropriate chair or gatekeeper was provided that enabled the researcher to gain access to the relevant documents and committees. A summary of the data collection can be found in Table 4.7.

4.3 Sampling Strategy

One school from each college in the University was purposively selected, providing a range of subject areas and examination of student-staff interactions at this level.

- Interview of elected Senior School Representative, Programme Leader / School Student Engagement Champion;
- Invitation for students within the School to complete the aforementioned survey.
- Observation of School / Staff committees or informal gatherings across one academic year.

The largest college was purposively selected, which contained a diverse range of subjects spanning a wide range of subject areas, with the following data collection occurring;

- Interview of elected College Student Representative and Chair of the College Education and Student Committee.
- Observation of the College Education and Student Committee meeting and informal gatherings between staff and students across one academic year.

The University's committee that deals with teaching and learning and the whole student experience was purposively selected as the main forum for addressing matters at a University level that directly relates to students, with the following data collection occurring;

- Interview of the Vice Chancellor of the University, Chair of the Education and Student Life Committee, Student Engagement Manager, Students' Union Sabbatical Officer for Academic Affairs and the Students' Union Student Voice and Impact Manager.
- Observation of the Education and Student Life Committee meeting and any informal gatherings between staff and students across one academic year.

The people selected at the multiple levels of the institution were identified as the key gatekeepers at the time of the data collection, who essentially manage and interact with students or staff to provide the feedback channels and mechanisms for enhancement to teaching and learning and the wider student experience (Bryman, 2012). The sampling identified selected individuals in specific roles as the ideals of who would be best placed to be involved in the research project, all of whom were happy to take part in the study (Creswell, 2012). A copy of the observation and interview schedules, the participants involved and their assigned codes / pseudonyms can be found in Tables 4.1 – 4.6 and is used to assist the identification of any direct quotations provided in the presentation of the analysis and discussion.

In addition to the above, the research questions seek to identify whether students want to be involved in shaping teaching and learning and their student experience and, if so, why and whether this is formally or informally. Therefore, three group interviews were conducted with specific student groups: 1 x 7 students from the three selected schools, 2 x 3 elected student representatives from the three selected schools, 1 x 4 students involved in University student engagement partnership activities.

The three group interviews purposefully invited students who fulfilled the following categories:

- General students from the selected Schools who are not current Student Representatives. These students were invited to take part to ascertain their beliefs around how students are involved, both formally and informally, to shape teaching and learning and the student experience and covered a range of demographics including gender, part / full time, undergraduate / postgraduate, mature and international.
- Elected Student Representatives from across the University. This particular group were invited to provide an insight into how and why students are involved within the formal mechanisms of providing feedback to their School, College and the University and how this information is received and communicated to the wider student body (3 x students from School A, 2 x students from School C and 1 x student from School B).

Students involved in student engagement partnership activities. This particular group is unique and are involved in activities beyond their academic programme; for example being on interview panels, validations, consulting on teaching or as a peer mentor which all have an aim or input into the enhancement of teaching and learning.

Table 4. 1 Individual Interview Schedule, Participants and Assigned Pseudonyms

Participant	Date of interview	Status
Senior Management Team Member One	16/3/16	Female – Member of the Senior Management Team
Senior Management Team Member Two	5/7/16	Female - Member of the Senior Management Team
Management Team Member One	2/3/16	Male – Manager in academic development unit
Management Team Member Two	24/6/16	Male – Principal Lecturer and College Lead for Education and Students
Student Union Staff Member	14/3/16	Female
Student Union Sabbatical Officer	9/3/16	Female
School Representative One - School A	17/2/16	Female – Full-time UG
School Representative Two - School C	4/3/16	Female - Full-time UG
School Representative Three - School B	7/4/16	Male - Full-time UG
Senior Student Rep	27/4/16	Female - Full-time UG
Staff Member One - School B	8/2/16	Female – Senior Lecturer
Staff Member Two - School C	29/4/16	Female – Senior Lecturer
Staff Member Three - School A	17/5/16	Male – Senior Lecturer

Table 4. 2 Group Interview Schedule, Participants and Assigned Pseudonyms

Participant	Date of group interview	Status
Student Representatives Group Interview One Resp 1 -Vicky Resp 2 -Tracey Resp 3 -Ross	Apr 16	Female, Year 2 UG – School B Female, Year 3 UG – School C Male, Year 1 UG – School B
Student Representatives Group Interview Two Resp 3 -Laura Resp 1 -James Resp 2 -Geoff	July 16	Female, Year 1 UG – School B Male, Year 2 UG – School A Male, Year 1 UG – School A
Student Project Worker Group Interview Three Resp 4 -Trevor Resp 2 -Brian Resp 1 -Clive Resp 3 -Rebecca	May 16	Male, Year 3 UG Male, Year 3 UG Male, Year 2 UG Female, Year 3 U
General Student Group Interview Four Student 1 -Luke PGT Student 2 - Hannah Yr. 1 Student 2 - Donna Yr. 2 Student 2 - Catherine Yr. 2 Student 2 - Chris Yr. 2 Student 2 - Simon Taught PG PT	Feb 16	Male, Part-time Taught PG Female, Year 1 UG International Female, Year 2 UG Female, Part-time Mature UG Male, Year 2 UG Male, Part-time Taught Postgraduate

Table 4. 3 Breakdown of the demographics of the individuals who completed the survey

Student Survey 69 Students	March 16	Split Breakdown by School (n=12 School A; n=34 School B; n=19 School C; n=4 other) Breakdown by study year (Year 1 UG, n=22; Year 2 UG, n=22; Year 3 UG, n=17; Year 4, n=1; PG, n=7)
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Table 4. 4 Summary of Subject Committee Observations and Participants

School A Subject Committee Meetings			
Date	In attendance		Notes
Observation 1 -Oct 15	Administrator Deputy Head of School (Chair)	Staff Members x 9 Student Representative x 3	
Observation 2 -Feb 16	School Administrator Deputy Head of School (Chair) School Representative	Student Union Representative Staff Members x 11 Student Representative x 3	
Observation 3 -Apr16	School Administrator Deputy Head of School (Chair) School Representative	Staff Members x 7 Student Representative x 1	
School B Subject Committee Meetings			
Observation 1 -Oct 16	School Administrator Lecturer (Chair) Student Engagement Champion Head of School Programme Leader x 2	Library Representative School Representative Staff Members x 3 Student Representative x 5	
Observation 2 -Jan 17	School Administrator Lecturer (Chair) Student Engagement Champion Programme Leader x 2	Library Representative School Representative Staff Members x 3 Student Representative x 8	
Observation 3 -March17	School Administrator Lecturer (Chair) Student Engagement Champion Programme Leader x 2	Library Representative School Representative Staff Members x 3 Student Representative x 8	

School C Subject Committee Meetings			
Date	In attendance		Notes
Observation 1 -Nov16	School Administrator Head of School (Chair) Student Engagement Champion Programme Leader x 3	School Representative (Co-chair) Staff Members x 3 Student Representative x 5	
Observation 2 -March 17	School Administrator x 2 Head of School (Chair) Student Engagement Champion Programme Leader x 4	School Representative (Co-chair) Staff Members x 1 Student Representative x 5	

Table 4. 5 Summary of College Observations and Participants

College Meeting			
Date	In attendance		Notes
Observation 1 - Nov15	College Director of Education (Chair) College Administrator College Student Rep Representative Education, Development and Enhancement Unit Academic School Representative x 5	School Representatives x 3 Representative from the Library Representative from the Employability Working Group	
Observation 2 -March 16	College Director of Education (Chair) College Administrator Academic School Representative x 6 School Representatives x 2 Representative from the Library	Representative from the Employability Working Group Representative from Quality Standards and Partnerships Representative from ICT	No College Student Rep
Observation 3 - May 16	College Director of Education (Chair) College Administrator Representative Education, Development and Enhancement Unit Academic School Representative x 5	School Representatives x 1 Representative from the Employability Working Group	No College Student Rep and only 1 School Student Rep

Table 4. 6 Summary of University Education and Student Committee Observations and Participants

University Education and Student Committee Meeting			
Date	In attendance		Notes
Observation 1 – Nov 15	Pro VC TQSE (Chair) Secretariat Officer Director of Library Services Director of ICT Director of Student Affairs Director of Education, Development and Enhancement Unit Head of Academic Quality Head Careers and Employability Student Engagement Manager Representative of Education, Development and Enhancement Unit	Representative of University, College Union Representative of Inter-Professional Working Group SU president Vice-President Academic Affairs Vice-President Activities College Directors of Education and Students x 2 Internal Communications Manager Project Manager Learning Gain	
Observation 2 – Jan 16	Pro VC TQSE (Chair) Secretariat Officer Director of Library Services Director of ICT Director of Student Affairs Director of Education, Development and Enhancement Unit Head Careers and Employability Student Engagement Manager Representative of Education, Development and Enhancement Unit	Representative of Inter-Professional Working Group SU president Vice-President Academic Affairs Vice-President Activities College Directors of Education and Students x 2 Internal Communications Manager Student Engagement Assistant	

Date	In attendance		Notes
Observation 3 – March 16	Pro VC for Teaching and Learning (Chair) Secretariat Officer Director of Library Services Director of ICT Director of Student Affairs Director of Education, Development and Enhancement Unit Head of Business, Planning and Intelligence Head Careers and Employability Student Engagement Manager Representative of Education, Development and Enhancement Unit	Representative of University, College Union Representative of Inter-Professional Working Group SU president Vice-President Academic Affairs Vice-President Activities College Directors of Education and Students x 2 Internal Communications Manager Project Manager Learning Gain	
Observation 4 – June 16	Pro VC for Teaching and Learning (Chair) Secretariat Officer Director of Library Services Director of ICT Director of Student Affairs Director of Education, Development and Enhancement Unit Director of Digital Life	Head Careers and Employability Representative of Education, Development and Enhancement Unit Representative of Inter-Professional Working Group College Directors of Education and Students x 3 Teaching Excellence Framework Officer	No SU representatives

Table 4. 7 Overall outline of the planned data collection

University

- Observation of Education and Student Life Committee over the academic year and informal gatherings
- Interview Vice Chancellor, Pro VC for Learning and Teaching / Chair of Education and Student Life Committee, Student Engagement Manager, Sabbatical Officer Academic Affairs and Student Voice & Impact Manager

One Case College

- Observation of College Education and Student Committee over the academic year
- Interview of Chair of College Education and Student Committee and College Representative

Three Case Schools

- Observations of three School student - staff committees and informal staff meetings over the academic year
- Interview of Programme Leader / Student Engagement Champion and School Representative

Group interviews

- 1 x 7 general students, 1 x 4 students involved in SE partnership activities, 2 x 3 student reps

Summary of Data Collection

- 13 x interviews, 4 x Group Interviews, Observation of meetings (8 x School, 3 x College and 5 x University level), survey of 69 students from the selected case schools, informal journal containing notes of relevant events and thoughts throughout the data collection period
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4.4 Ethical Considerations and Issues

The ethical implications of this research were examined prior to the research being undertaken, with ethical consent to undertake the study provided by the School of Education's Ethics Committee on the 27th July 2015. The following section outlines what were identified as the main ethical implications and identifies how these were addressed through the research, some of which are underpinned, although not exclusively, by the guidelines produced from two relevant bodies: the British Educational Research Association (2011) and the American Anthropological Association (2012).

1. Minimising harm. The potential risks to the participants and the institution taking part in this research were assessed. The risks were considered as low in relation to both the researcher and the organisation. All participants were aged over 18 years old and had the mental capacity to provide consent. There was no risk presented by covert observation, deception, invasive or potentially harmful procedures, repetitive testing or third-party involvement. In addition, no incentives or financial gains other than refreshments were provided for taking part in the study. There were, however, a number of concerns that were addressed.

Due to the nature of the research there was the potential for vulnerability caused by the unequal relationship between the researcher and the students and also between the researcher and fellow colleagues or peers. To minimise the impact of participants being reluctant to provide whole accounts of previous experiences or pressure to take part in the study or provide answers; the researcher assured participants that taking part in the research was completely voluntary and that any information shared was treated with the strictest confidence. In addition, the researcher was available after all interviews and observations in case any of the participants felt the need to discuss any issues that made them feel uncomfortable. No participants requested to discuss any issues further and therefore no referrals to student services or an appropriate line manager were required to provide additional support. As the researcher and a lecturer at the University I am in the position of an insider in the University and an outsider as a researcher. Being an insider had its advantages, as familiarisation with the processes and language of the institution was not required. The researcher was also familiar with the support networks in place within the University to support participants.

Due to the nature of the research there is an on going risk that the research may highlight unsatisfactory or negative findings in the eyes of the institution studied and whilst the institution and participants are not outlined in the thesis or subsequent publications it could still be possible to identify who these are. All participants interviewed were asked to verify the transcript as a true and accurate record of the interview. In addition, participants were offered the opportunity to identify any aspects of the interview that they would not like to be included within the publication of the data. It is worth noting that the nature of the research was developmental and aims to work with and on behalf of students to identify mechanisms or modes of operating that improve student voice within the institution and therefore the research was hopefully seen as desirable.

There is also a risk of non-anonymity of the institution itself; however, the participants were aware of this and were happy to speak about an institution that would be identifiable, particularly individuals such as members of the senior management team.

2. Voluntary Informed Consent. Prior to taking part in all aspects of the research, permission was sought from the relevant Heads of School or Chairs of the meeting and voluntary consent was obtained from all participants via a participant information sheet (which details the intent of the study, a copy of which can be found in appendix D) and consent form prior to commencement of any interviews or observations.

For participants interviewed, the researcher provided a written transcript of the interview to verify with the participants that the record was a true and accurate description of what was said in the interview and authorise for its use within the research.

3. Right to withdraw. No participants withdrew from the study, however, all participants were informed in the Participant Information Sheet that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any point before, during or after the data collection.
4. Privacy. All data has been treated with the strictest confidence and all data was anonymised via the use of codes at the point of transcription.
5. All data and personal information obtained via the informed consents was treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998) and is kept in a locked cupboard in a

University staff office and all recordings / transcripts and observation records are stored on a password protected computer.

4.5 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis was generated from the semi-structured individual and group interviews, non-participant unstructured observations, texts and policy documentation obtained during the data collection period and an informal participant journal of anonymised notes kept by the researcher. The research is focused on the social contexts within why and how student voice is used within an institution and how this affects the practices and procedures. The researcher wishes to work with participants to construct the discursive reality of how the historical, political, economic and institutional influences have affected the way that students, staff and senior management are involved within the student-university relationship and how this proliferates through to working with students and empowering them to have a positive influence on their educational experience.

4.5.1 Discourse Analysis

The research data was analysed using critical discourse analysis methods that aim to identify what is speakable, or what is reasonable or proper and how this is produced through the power relations and discursive practice that occurs at the different layers or levels of institutional governance (Vaughan, 2004). To conceptualise the student-university relationship requires both the study of the objects and subjects to be able to construct meaning about how the structures and practices operate.

The analysis of discourses enables an effective examination of what Foucault terms regimes of truth (Vaughan, 2004) and seeks to identify legitimate or authorised aspects of the relationship and the tensions / barriers to an effective student–university relationship. Using a critical discourse analysis seeks to identify the meanings we create of given texts which shape our knowledge and behaviour, as power is exercised through texts and conversations (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). A discourse is therefore a way of thinking that is culturally or institutionally developed, legitimised often by those with or in power and therefore seeks to analyse the values, views, ideas and ways members of a

community have of looking at the world (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011; Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). Specifically, critical discourse analysis is concerned with ascertaining or making visible how knowledge is connected to power relations and can be used as an instrument and is operationalised in individuals and groups (Jager and Maier, 2009; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). Gallant (2008) identifies that the dominant discourses are responsible for the development of power and are taken for granted and seen as inevitable and natural. Therefore, to change the power relations requires the identification, analysis and redefinition of the discourses.

Adopting a critical discourse analysis as a method allows the researcher to deconstruct the meanings that are evident within the multiple forms of data collected, accounting for the social contexts in which they are set. The theoretical framework established in Chapter three draws on the work of Foucault (1982), who suggests it is possible to identify that truth is understood as a system of procedures for the production, regulation and diffusion of statements. Furthermore, Foucault (1982) suggests that truth is embedded in, and produced by, systems of power. The focus on how effects of truth are created in discourse will be examined by analysing the discursive processes through which discourses are constructed in ways that give the impression that they represent true or false pictures of reality. Different discourses are intimately entangled with each other and together form the *giant milling mass* of overall societal discourse (Jager and Maier, 2009). Aligning to this mode of enquiry and philosophical standpoint it is not possible to talk from a position outside discourse, as truth effects are created within discourses.

It is suggested by Wodak and Meyer (2009) that critical discourse analysis is not a well-defined empirical methodology but rather a bulk of approaches with theoretical similarities and research questions of a specific kind. What critical discourse approaches aim to reveal is the contradictions within and between discourses, the limits of what can be said and done, and the means by which discourse makes particular statements seem rational and beyond all doubt, even though they are only valid at a certain time and place.

The relationship between students and academics is partly constituted but, at the same time, this relationship is set within institutional practices, pre-existing relationships and identities. These practices, relationships and identities are originally discursively constituted and become cemented in institutions and non-discursive practices over time. It is therefore

suggested that discourses not only shape reality but even enable reality; without discourses there would be no social reality (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). Adopting such an approach would suggest that discourses are not mere ideology; they produce subjects and reality. Discourses determine reality by intervening active subjects in their social contexts as co-producers and co-agents of discourses, therefore, subjects are entangled into discourse and have knowledge at their disposal.

Undertaking a critical discourse analysis is not only about the retrospective analysis of allocations of meanings but also about the on going production of discourse conveyed by the active subject. In contrast, a discourse, with its recurring contents, symbols and strategies, leads to the emergence and solidification of knowledge and therefore has sustained effects. The data was examined to determine the different discourses, achieved by identifying the repetition of statements made by the institution, individuals and groups and how they can have influence over discourse. Foucault suggests that everybody co-produces discourse, but no single individual or group controls discourse or can intend its final result. Therefore, it is important to distinguish between the effects of a single text and the effects of a discourse, as it is difficult to identify the impact of a single text, if any (Wodak and Meyer, 2009).

The emerging discourses will reflect the central concepts of how the different groups conceptualise the student–university relationship. Once the discourses were established it was important to identify why or what the underlying mechanisms or causes of this conceptualisation were. The discourse analysis therefore looked to identify the legitimacy of the language and the meaning behind the conceptualisations, how this was influenced or constrained by the context within which it is situated and how power were established or transcended to create this existence. Critical discourse analysis was therefore used to explore the links between the repetitive statements that are evident in the data and the social practice.

Table 4. 8 Outline of the associated relationship between the research question, methods, data analysis and theoretical framework

Research question	Methods	Data	Theoretical Framework
What are the drivers behind how and where student voice fits within the hierarchy of a university?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic Plans for the University and Students' Union - Interview with key stakeholders (School / College Rep, SE Champion, Chair of ESC, SE Manager, Chair of AAC, Sabbatical Officer for AA) - Group Interviews and Survey 	Discourse analysis	Foucault's analytics of power and concepts of discipline, surveillance and governmentality
Who wants to be involved in improving the collective teaching and learning experience and why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Survey to students in the case study school - Group Interviews - Interviews with Student Reps / Programme Leader -Survey 	Discourse analysis	Foucault's analytics of power and concepts of discipline, surveillance and governmentality
Who ultimately makes the decisions and alters policy?	<p>Observations at School, College and University level.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interview with key stakeholders (School / College Rep, SE Champion, Chair of ESC, SE Manager, Chair of AAC, Sabbatical Officer for AA) 	Discourse analysis	Habermas' theory of knowing (empirical / analytical, historical / hermeneutic, critical)
What are the challenges, barriers and tensions to a more democratic student-university relationship?	<p>Survey</p> <p>Group Interviews and Interviews</p> <p>Observations</p>	Discourse analysis	Foucault's analytics of power and concepts of discipline, surveillance and governmentality

As established in Chapter three, Foucault's analytics of power / knowledge and concepts of discipline, surveillance and governmentality were used to help understand how truth and knowledge is constructed and influenced by external power, affecting the discursive reality of the student-university relationship. In addition, the work of Habermas' materialist theory of knowing and communicative action provides a theoretical framing to help conceptualise how students and staff work together to create knowledge, make decisions and how this is inextricably linked to power. The relationship between the research questions, methods, data analysis and theoretical framing can be viewed in Table 4.8.

Foucault (1974) suggests that it is not possible to produce an off-the-shelf theoretical framework through which to understand phenomena, but rather a set of methodologies. However, to help structure the analysis, Willig's (2013) stages of Foucauldian discourse analysis and Foucault's own genealogical work were used to assist in the messy process of structuring and ordering the discourse analysis:

Stage 1: Establishment of exactly what was being discursively constructed (demographics of the institution and respective college and schools) and identification of the systems and structures that formulate the governance mechanisms in place within the case institution.

Stage 2: Using Nvivo, data sources were initially inductively coded to generate the common themes and threads between the interviews / group interviews, survey data from students and the strategic policies of the University and the Students' Union. Following this the themes were coded in relation to the data and literature by moving back and forth between them and then grouped into the following higher order categories: Institutional Drivers, Student Drivers, University Governance and Student-University Relationship.

From the data generated in the Institutional and Student driver categories, the discourses were established by examining the formulating statements that were produced within a specific domain in relation to the literature (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002), see appendix E for example sample data collated. As established by Jorgensen and Phillips (2002), the relationships and rules that determine the extent statements are accepted as meaningful and true at a particular point in time create a history of knowledge that determines discourse.

Stage 3: Following on from stage two it was important to identify how the discursive student-university relationship is constructed, framed by the discourses and therefore establishing the different position students take-up and what function it serves which were established through the examination of the categories and themes gathered.

Stage 4: The positioning of the student within the student-university relationship was examined by moving back and forth from and between the variety of data sources. Additionally, it was important to not only examine the position student's hold but also what positions are offered or created to students by the discourses that are invoked.

Stage 5: Adopting an ethnographic approach, practice was observed to identify ways in which the discursive constructions, and the positions for students and staff offered within them open up or close down opportunities for action. What can be said or done from within certain positioning of students and staff.

Stage 6: Lastly, by examining the discourses and investigating the structures of different regimes of knowledge it is possible to help formulate the rules for what can and cannot be said and the rules for what governs truth (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). The findings establish the consequences of the subject positions that students, academics and senior management take up. In other words, what can be felt, thought and experienced by the speakers or writers from within those subject positions, how power is conceived and the tensions that exist in the context of the specific case institution.

As the study utilises multiple forms of data collection, the data was triangulated by testing different sources of data against each other, trying to identify and locate patterns of thought and behaviour within the key events that the ethnographic case approach has utilised (Cresswell, 2012).

4.6 Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity

As a researcher it is important to consider and question one's own positionality in relation to the interpretations brought to the research embedded within our cultural, social, gender, class and personal politics and the influence this has within our writing (Creswell, 2012). Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013) suggest that positionality is reflected by the position

the researcher adopts in relation to a given study, the subject, its participants and the context and process of the research.

Adopting advice from Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013) I have outlined a positionality statement to try and demonstrate my relationship to the research project and how I have navigated my way through the project.

I am a 40 year-old, white male academic, married with two young children. I was the first member of my family to attend university and have since gone on to study to Masters level. My first role in education was at a further education college in 2001, progressing into a lecturing job. My interest and curiosity in teaching and learning was developed through a number of key events, completion of a PGCE in post compulsory education in 2003, joining the University of Lincoln in 2006 and becoming programme leader of the BSc (Hons) Sport and Exercise Science in 2007. I've always had an interest and a passion to work with students, trying to stimulate curiosity and challenge learners, developing learning environments and opportunities for applied learning. As a result of my work in the area, this has led to me working in specific teaching and learning roles in my School and my promotion to Principal lecturer in Teaching in 2015.

Specifically, my work aligned to the research area started in 2010 and 2011 when I pursued my interests further, collaborating with a colleague from the university's School of Health and Social Care and a group of student partners embarking on two small research projects, funded through an internal research fund (Fund for Educational Development). The projects aligned and was funded via the Universities 'Student as Producer' initiative and Higher Education Academy research project which explored different ways of working with students and collaborating through joint research ventures. The main focus of my research was to try and firstly establish the extent and nature of student participation in quality processes, namely subject committees and programme modifications in the faculty of Health, Life and Social Science. And secondly to try and enhance how students were involved in the processes. The enhanced format was well received by both academics and students within the school's and provided evidence of increased participation and dialogue from all parties with clear action points and plans defined.

My interest in creating opportunities to work with students in collaborative ways and my involvement in the university's Student as Producer project contributed to me attending and

presenting at a number of UK national pedagogical conferences developing both a curiosity and research focus in this area. As a consequence I explored the possibilities of how I could take the work further and explore emerging questions within the field of student engagement and institutional governance, prompting an application onto the Educational Doctorate programme. This is a topic that generated passion and motivation to find out more and to try and create better relationships and ways of working with students. My stance was a critical stance that students should be treated as equals in an academic relationship and that hierarchies in universities were antiquated and out-dated. My belief at the outset is that there is clear scope to develop and add to the research in the area and that it is possible to create democratic student-university relationships and therefore helping address the role of 'what it means to be a student', 'what it means to be a lecturer' and how this effects or contributes to learning environments.

Through the research journey to the completion of this study I have developed my understanding making me question and understand that there are a number of ways of conceptualising student voice and engagement within different models of governance, and that some of them may be more possible than others, which could limit or develop transformative opportunities and inclusive models of working. Throughout the research project my understanding of the role and value of student voice mechanisms has developed, making my question the fundamental role of students and how we work with them and has altered my perspectives and philosophy on the role of higher education and the positions that should be open to students. Drawing to the end of this process in terms of completion of the study I find myself now much more critical of the structures and systems in universities and how application in practice is a consequence of a much bigger macro influence and structure created by the state.

Inevitably, I was positioned inside and outside of this research project and therefore although valid there is a need to accept that my own experiences may not be representative for others. For example, in the research both colleagues and students may not and did not share my views or beliefs that in both formal and informal structures of a university that power can be more equal between staff and students and that students can have more responsibility in the processes and decision-making. Insider status and knowledge in the area provided an understanding of the current context of higher education and student voice and the institutional structures and processes.

Given the nature of this research there is also a concern regarding the power dynamics between the researcher and the participants, which is ever different in the variety of contexts. For example, I had to be accepted as a researcher with members of the senior management, academic staff, members of professional services, engaged students and university students. When utilising the different methodological tools I positioned myself as a researcher and tried to reduce the possibilities of power differentials by considering the language I used, how I set out rooms for individual and group interviews and how I dressed to make the participants feel comfortable and able to provide honest reflections and perspectives. Despite my attempts, it is not always possible to disguise my identity as a lecturer and University member of staff with some of the staff and students involved and therefore there is always the possibility that influenced how the participants behaved. This was countered by the number of different research tools used, triangulation of the data and the number of participants involved in the study.

Due to my background and the projects and work I had undertaken in the University my values underpinned my beliefs that partnership with students was beneficial to all parties and as a consequence I wanted to investigate how others had taken on board the Universities strategy. Therefore, it is important to ensure reflexivity when identifying and discussing the findings of the research. The concept that researchers should acknowledge and disclose their own selves in the research, seeking to understand their part in it, or influence on the research (Cohen, Manion et al. 2011 p. 225) informs positionality. With reflexivity been identified as the active acknowledgement by the researcher of the impact biases, actions and decisions has on the context of the experience under investigation (Berger, 2015).

Creswell (2012) asserts that the research must be conscious of the biases, values and experiences within the study, relaying both their own experiences in relation to the phenomenon being studied and discussing how these past experiences shape the researcher's interpretation of the phenomenon. As a result, careful systematic analysis was required through self-reflection, distancing oneself from the data being investigated. For example, as a principal lecturer and advocate of staff-student partnership it is important to remain critical of the practice in the institution and to not base interpretations upon my own values and experiences, but to take account of all the data collected from interviews through to observations. As previously discussed, it would be easy to report a *victory*

narrative that supports institutional aims, adding to the case institutions reputation, as opposed to being critical of the data and findings. As the researcher, it was therefore important to distance oneself from an insider role and the potential pressure from colleagues to report the positive headlines and not the critical elements (Vaughan, 2004).

In line with the recommendations by Oberhuber and Krzyzanowski (2008, In. Wodak and Krzyzanowski) for reflexivity in ethnographic research I attempted to ensure I remained true to the participants, analysing the data and reporting the findings as best as possible through a number of key steps outlined in Table 4.9.

In addition, to increase the reliability and trustworthiness of the data a number of further practical measures were adopted as suggested by Berger (2015) these included prolonged engagement in the field, member checking of interview and group interview transcripts, reviewing data on multiple occasions, triangulation, use of an informal journal for self-supervision, and use of doctoral supervision to review / discuss the data and findings. In addition, during the analysis process and through the use of NVIVO the description and interpretation was kept apart, enabling transparency and re-introduction of the respective analysis.

In conclusion, this chapter has outlined important philosophical, theoretical, ethical and practical considerations, which framed the project and enabled the examination of the research questions. The detailed discussion provided of these factors is intended to build and promote confidence in the design and the execution of the project and thereby develop rigour and trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In line with critical, post-structural ethnographic studies utilising a Foucauldian discourse analysis chapters five to eight presents the analysis and findings of the research related to previous literature.

Table 4. 9 Steps to Illustrate Reflexive Approach Adopted in the Study

Proposed methods to ensure reflexivity in ethnographic research	Steps carried out in the research
1. Transparency of the research process and presuppositions, his or her objectives, the methods of data gathered, recording and analysis, and the decisions taken in the research process with respect to choosing research sites and sampling.	Chapter 4 has provided transparency regarding the process and decisions made in the research project and have been mindful of the implications these have on the outcome of the data and analysis.
2. Methods chosen should be adequate in relation to the object field and questions asked	The review of literature highlights the lack of research across an institution and specifically the lack of studies that have assessed actual student involvement in governance processes. The study therefore uses a prolonged exposure in the field with a complimentary mix of methods to adequately assess the phenomena and the research questions posed.
3. Ethnographic interpretation and theory-building should be grounded in data – perspectives and concepts employed in the field and not from pre-defined models.	The development and interpretation of the data has been carefully assessed and developed, supported by Willig's model of discourse analysis and the use of NVIVO to ensure the data is grounded and reported as such in through the discussion.
4. Data should be gathered that challenges the previous knowledge (or prejudices) of the researcher that is to avoid 'fitting the data to illustrate a theory' – sampling should include extreme or contrasting cases to test the distribution of patterns in the field.	Data was obtained from case study schools in the university that was unfamiliar to the researcher and therefore provided contrasting cases. Participants were sought from contrasting perspectives, especially student participants who were from different demographic groups and not just those engaged in partnership activities.
5. Systematic self-reflection of the researcher: this could include observing yourself (for instance by using a fieldwork diary), making personal contributions and interests explicit, and systematically reflecting on the development of the relations to the people you observe and work with.	I kept a fieldwork journal noting down thoughts and critical incidents that challenged perspectives or that were of interest. This was used to develop self-reflection and formed part of the data analysis to help question thoughts and beliefs.

Chapter 5. Construction of Discursive Objects and Key Discourses

The involvement of students-as-partners and the prominence of the student voice over the past couple of decades can be contextualised through the neoliberal practices and principles of the state. The introduction of a number of key features such as the change in student tuition fees, widening participation agendas, introduction of the satisfaction surveys, teaching and research assessment exercises and the benchmarking of key performance indicators have produced a system whereby most aspects of the higher education sector are monitored, measured and ranked under the notion of quality and consumer choice (Morrison, 2017).

The notion that students can assist in a role beyond consultation has driven universities and staff to examine their practices, creating new ways of involving students in the development of learning and teaching, such as, students as partners, change agents, producers and co-creators of their own learning (Bovill et al., 2011). Furthermore, advocates of involving students-as-partners in the development of learning and teaching recommend a collective institutional approach that develops a culture of partnership across the institution, offering an alternative to consumerist approaches (Flint, 2016; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017; Bishop, 2018).

As detailed in the methodology chapter, the following sections use an adapted version of Willig's (2013) six stages of Foucauldian discourse analysis (detailed in section 4.5.1) to examine how the historical, political, economic and institutional truth effects have developed over time, influencing the concepts of shared authority and independent responsibility in the development of learning and teaching at the case institution. Examining the student-university relationship using Willig's (2013) approach allows the multitude of different discourses to be contextualised and examined drawing on both the object and the subject in the analysis.

5.1 Discursive Constructions

To help understand the discursive constructions, a case study approach was adopted which sought to gather data from multiple perspectives. The data was gathered over the academic year 2015-16 and included: the strategic plans of the institution and the Students' Union; observations of meetings at an institutional level, college level and three case schools selected from each college;

interviews with members of the institutions senior management and academic staff, staff from the Students' Union and members of the academic representation system; group interviews with student representatives, student project workers and students; a questionnaire to students in the three case study schools returning 69 full responses (equating to 5.15% of students in the case study schools) and an informal participant journal kept by the researcher during the data collection period (See table 4.7 in chapter 4 for additional details).

In the academic year 15-16, the institution had approximately 14,498 students of which the majority were made up of 12,263 undergraduate students with a representative proportion of female 7,596 and male 6901 students. The majority of students were white 11,856 with a smaller proportion 2,326 of BME students and 316 other. There is a mix of young 8,876 and mature 5,622 students with no known disability 12,594 and 1,904 students recording a disability.

The case college covers a large breadth of social science study areas, including the academic areas of Business, Law, Health and Social Care, Psychology, Sociology, Politics and Sport and had 4,209 students with a large proportion of female students 3,134 and a smaller proportion of male students 1,074. The three case schools had differing sizes, School A had 209 students (197 male and 12 female), School B had 529 students (308 female and 221 male) and School C had 602 Students (459 female and 142 male).

The university has a complex structure of committees and reporting functions, which help to formulate the internal governance structure. Figure 5.1 and 5.2 detail the institutional committees in operation and the committees in operation at college and school level in those observed. The Students' Union at the institution provide democratically elected sabbatical officers and student representatives that work from a programme level through to institutional level and feed into the committee structures as depicted in Figure 5.3 In the academic year 15-16, 506 students were elected as course or student representatives out of a possible total of 570 representatives; it is not possible, however, to determine whether all of these students are active and fulfilling their role as intended by the Students' Union. In addition to the formal involvement of sabbatical officers and student representatives, students may meet informally with staff through all levels of the university and as this is informal it is difficult to document these.

At a module level, students are requested to complete module evaluations upon completion through a centrally run system. There are also a number of institutional surveys that run across the

undergraduate and postgraduate cycles with information and scores fed through committee structures and gatekeepers at college and school level. All programmes in the institution are required to complete an Annual Programme Monitoring form, which evaluates and actions the programme based on performance data (for example: student performance, recruitment, progression, attainment, retention, graduate employment statistics and National Student Survey scores) and student and external examiner feedback through the aforementioned structures. In addition, all programmes are required to produce a Programme Enhancement Plan and a National Student Survey action plan which feeds into an overall school teaching and learning action plan for audit at a college and institutional level.

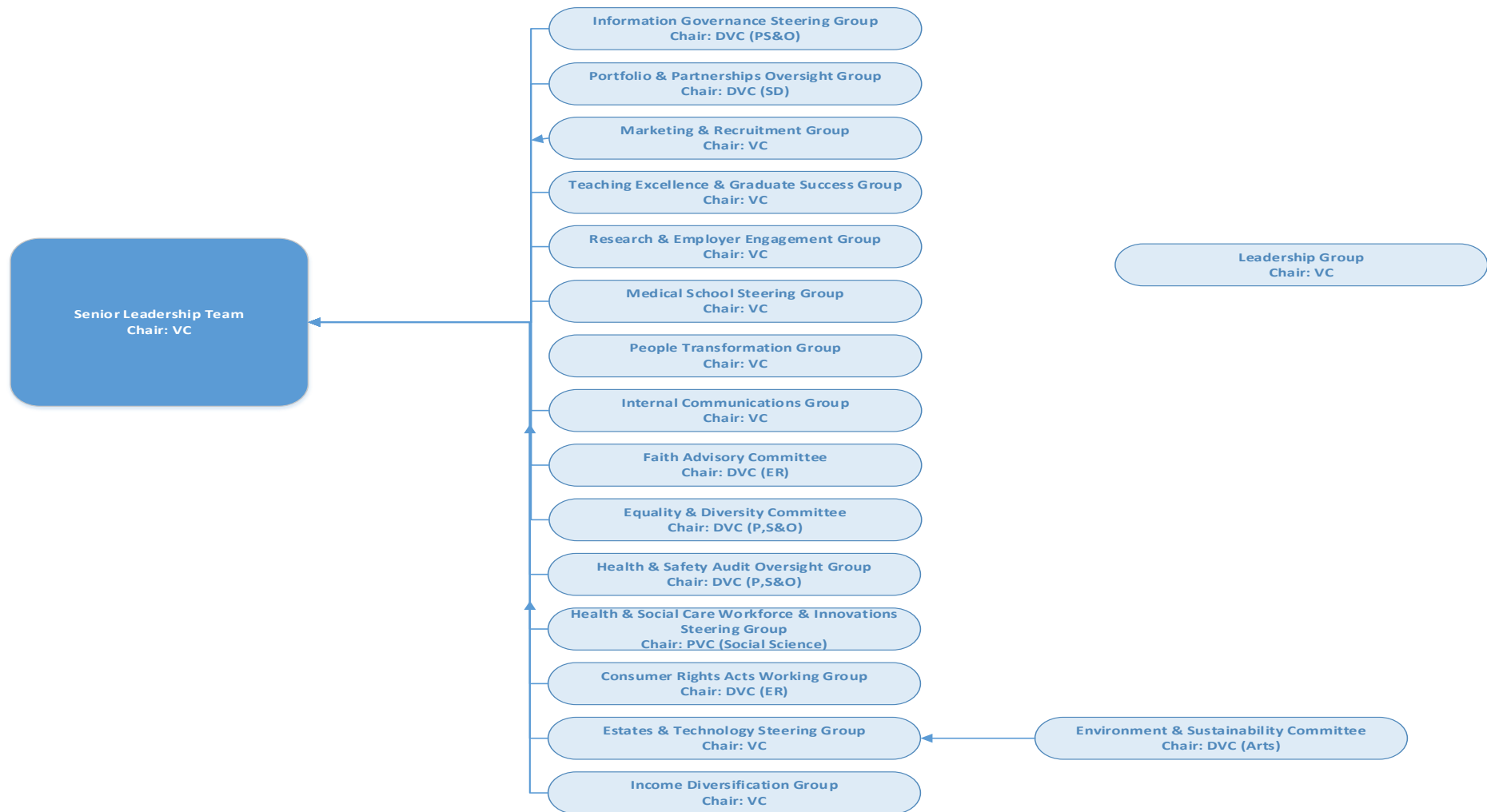


Figure 5. 1 University Senior Leadership Structure

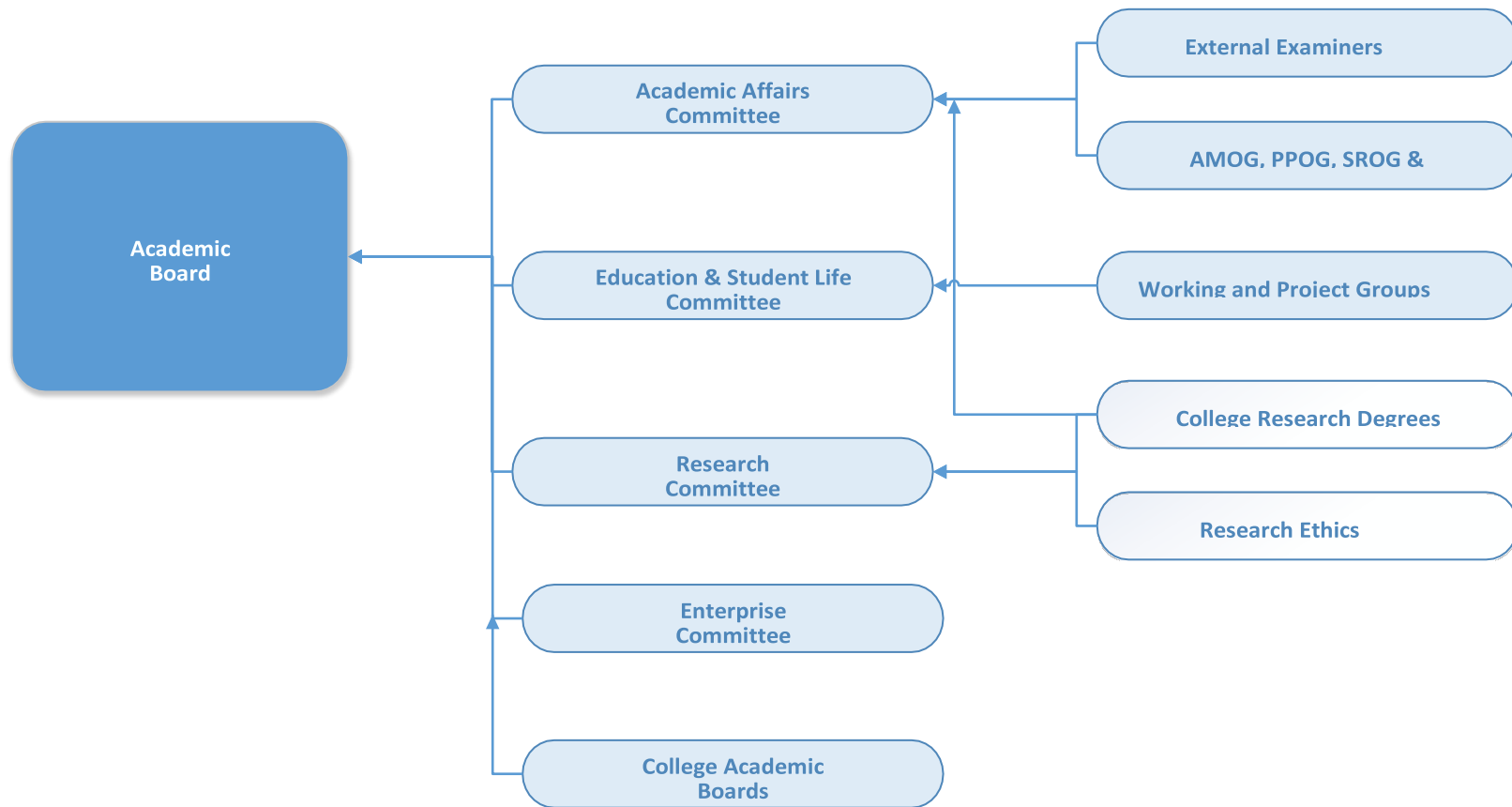


Figure 5. 2 University Academic Board Structure

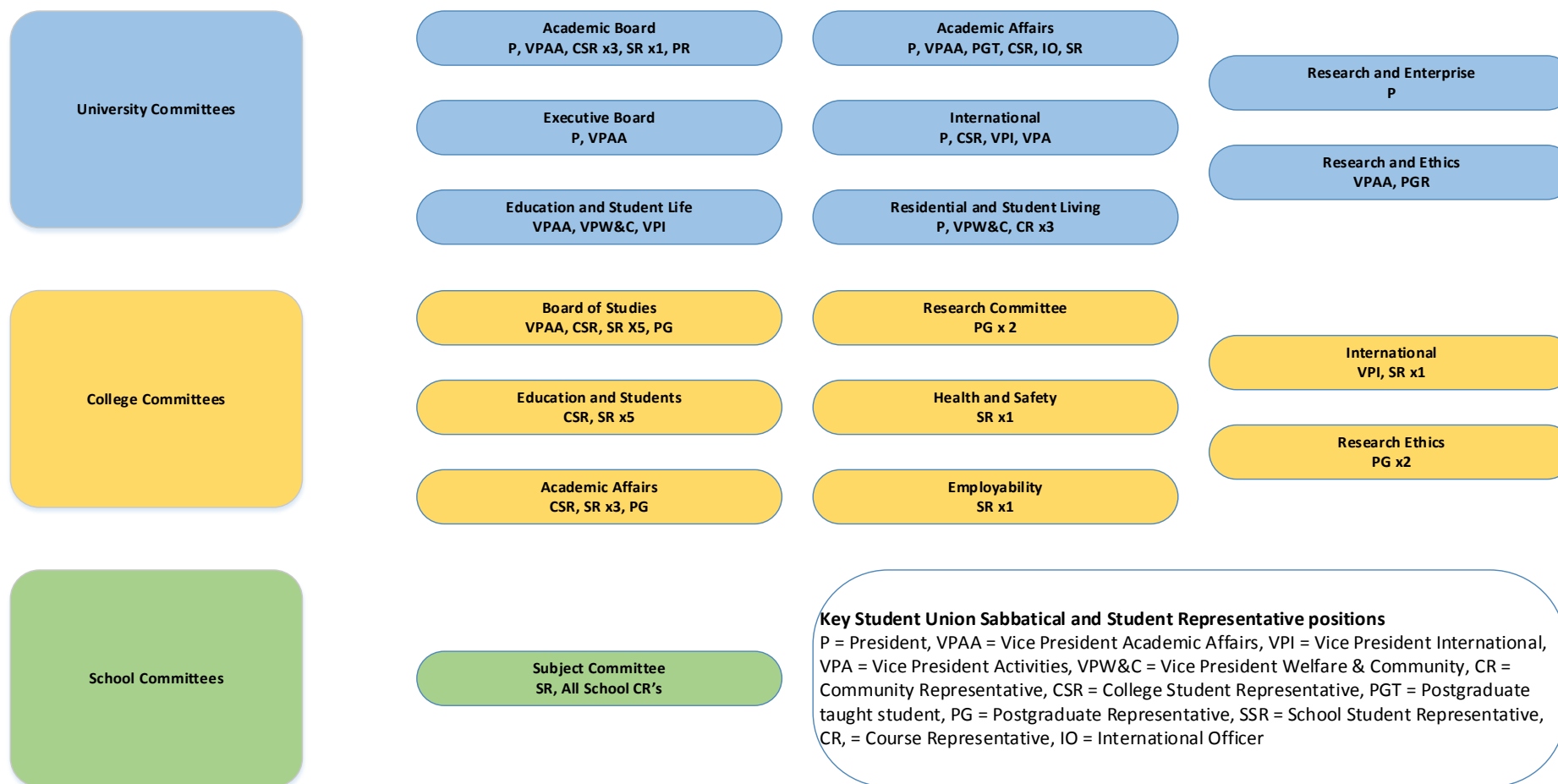


Figure 5. 3 Students' Union Representation Structure

5.2 Critical Discourses

Toschitz, (2017) proposes that higher education is a complex yet relatively stable discursive structure that provides a number of regulatory behaviours, identities and relations of power. Whilst these systems and structures have been institutionalised over time, they are susceptible to change as the different discourses come into tension with one another morphing and struggling to gain traction, providing new relations, practices and systems to organise higher education. As new discourses become more established they define the role or function of an institution and in turn questions the role of a student, an academic and the positionality of power within the institution.

As detailed in section 4.5.1 the discourses were established by examining the formulating statements that were produced within a specific domain and contextualised in relation to the literature (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). By examining discourses and investigating the structures of different regimes of knowledge it is possible to help formulate the rules for what can and cannot be said and the rules for what governs truth (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). In principle, there are an infinite number of formulating statements, however, the statements that are produced within a specific domain are often simplistic, repetitive, time-bound and impose limit on meaning (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). It is therefore possible for different discourses to exist side by side or struggle for the right to define truth as previously outlined in Chapter 3.

5.2.1 Overarching Neoliberal Discourse

The wider historical, political, economic and institutional discourses surrounding higher education have a function on determining and influencing policy and practice. The current context of higher education is situated within the neoliberal reforms that started in the mid-1980s and saw the introduction of state apparatus setting new norms of conduct and behaviour. The shift, focus and scrutiny is one of an audit culture, with a primary focus of driving up standards and increasing external control on universities (Shore, 2008). The case institution has implemented business models of operation to meet the expectations of increased scrutiny, for example implementing an increased use of surveys, use of data, dashboards and key performance indicators which has fundamentally altered the way it functions and operates, aligned to the wider literature in higher education. This has been accompanied by a change in the senior leadership team that increasingly comprises of both

people who have worked their way to senior management positions in higher education, alongside staff who come from a business, marketing or a management background. In addition, the institution has dedicated marketing teams and a business intelligence and planning department which is under constant expansion.

Neoliberalism can be described by the development of policy by the state, with the intentions of acquiring the services of the population as subjects influenced through the macro discourses. The working definition of Ball (2012) who draws on the work of Shamir (2008) helps define neoliberalisation as how it is contextualised in this study:

a complex, often incoherent, unstable and even contradictory set of practices that are organised around a certain imagination of the market as a basis for the universalisation of market-based social relations, with the corresponding penetration in almost every single aspect of our lives (Ball, 2012, p. 18).

It is important to acknowledge that in the last 20 years institutions including the case institution, have been subject to large changes, which include: changes to higher education funding in England, with the introduction of tuition fees and subsequent tripling to £9000 per year; the deregulation of caps on student numbers institutions could recruit; the self-regulation of institutions through performance; introduction of student satisfaction measures; metrics related to graduate employment and outcomes; and exercises to assess teaching quality. The changes have created a marketplace where institutions are in direct competition with each. The notion is that students will survey the marketplace to select a degree programme or course based on the information provided through the metrics, placing institutions into institutional and subject level rankings. The university's strategic plan acknowledges the need to be able to use data to inform practice in order to be able to make strategic changes and maintain its position in the market aligning to the neoliberal discourses

We will use data to create success and to ensure that we are able to respond to initiatives in a swift and well-informed fashion (University Strategic Plan).

Staff in the institution outline that the metrics created by government drives agendas in the institution informed by performance in the league tables and development of internal key performance indicators around these. They also acknowledge that whilst people don't like them they are now an important aspect of the model of higher education and very much inform and guide practice internally and across the sector

Well, I think you know they're government driven objectives around teaching quality, and kind of whether we agree that those metrics, fully represent what teaching quality and teaching excellence represents. They're kind of, we're kind of stuck with them in, in, in some respects, so we've kind of got to make, make the best do with what we have (Management Team Member Two).

I guess... the fundamental level is to do with league tables and, you know, the university as an institution has ambition to be a top 40 university, and I suppose it feeds into that... in particular the NSS is such a, you know, whatever we think about the NSS or however we feel about it, it is... it's there, and we can't get rid of it, and we have to work with it (Staff Member Two).

The function of neoliberal practices is to drive economic and political practices in higher education as Ball (2012) suggests by accessing our *minds* and *souls*, impacting on the ways we think and what we do and our social relations with each other. Neoliberalism therefore, has an ability to affect and change our social relations and the positionality of the institution, the academic and the student, how we relate to our students and the forms of pedagogy and knowledge production we see as possible. The following quote from a member of the senior management illustrates how the imposed measures of student satisfaction are influencing institutional approaches not necessarily in a manner that is comfortable

We've now moved beyond that to a point of... it is necessary to look to simply moving these numbers... and I think that stretches... how academics feel about the way they teach and stretches the way they feel about the trustfulness of the institution because are we really saying we want excellent teaching, or are we saying we saying we want excellent NSS results? (Senior Management Team Member One).

What is also evident is how the practices of neoliberalism inform and underpin other discourses such as marketisation, performativity and consumerism, which will be expanded upon in the following sections.

5.2.2 Marketisation: The exposure of an industry to market forces

Staff at the case institution identify that metrics of teaching quality are an important feature of the higher education sector and a key part of creating a competitive marketplace. The examples

provided by Staff are associated with the metrics such as the National Student Survey, Teaching Excellence Framework and Destination of Leavers in Higher Education and suggest that such measures are an attempt by government to assess teaching quality and excellence. This narrative links to the utilisation of a web of different techniques and practices of governance by the state to control markets, importantly this is a way of governing as opposed to a bounded entity (Morrison, 2017). The premise and development of previous modes of governing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was through disciplinary power; the shift to pastoral power is an attempt by the state to focus not on the exchange of goods but on competition to try and enable markets to function optimally (Foucault, 1978).

The University's strategic plan, illustrates how the institution is responsive to the conditions created by government:

We expect providing excellent customer service will enhance our overall success and, in recognising that we are all customers of each other, we will improve our community and the experience of those who work and study with us (Institutional strategic plan).

As Naidoo and Jamieson (2005) suggest, the success of higher education is now measured by the numbers of students it attracts, by the number of graduates securing well-paid jobs, and by research and consultancy revenue prominently displayed in league tables. The use of such approaches by the government has therefore become a driver for change and development in the institution. League table positions and their related metrics feature as a key performance indicator in the University's strategic plan and the vision outlined by Senior Management in briefings to both staff and students

with things like the National Student Survey, we as a university depend on that survey returning a good outcome for us because it defines our position in the league tables... (Senior Management Team Member One).

The quote provided is an example of how the institution is reliant on performing well in league tables, due to its relationship as a form of marketing to prospective students. Staff at a school, college and programme level also identify how they believe that survey data and league table position is of great importance to the institution and heavily drives a number of processes in the institution. For example, the following extract illustrates how a staff member embodies and adopts the need for measurements of performance as a benchmarking tool

I kind of do have a quite a, a strong view about the use of performance measures, not disregarding in anyway the use of qualitative narratives around that, but you know in order to continuously improve we need to be able to benchmark ourselves against something (Management Staff Member Two).

The mechanisms used to drive a competitive marketplace by the government, provides a certain configuration of the processes and practices within the institution. The development of key metrics that inform league table positions and now inform the new Teaching Excellence Framework, has created a very strong discourse within the institution. As a result of the visibility of the metrics implemented by the state, this orientates the institutions gaze and it's use of data and associated dashboards. In the case institution league table position is very much a key performance indicator that is provided as a marker that the institution uses to benchmark performance and to formulate targets for subsequent years. What emerges is an increased usage of data to inform learning and teaching development and, to some extent, the way teaching is performed. From the meetings observed in the case institution data was frequently presented as an agenda item for analysis relating to teaching and learning with the discussions focussed on how the data could be improved. For example, in a subject committee meeting in School A the agenda of the meeting as identified by the Chair (a senior member of the School) was set around how to become number one in the National Student Survey for the subject area. Through the meeting staff members and students discussed different thematic areas, followed by a plenary, during which the following discussions and remarks were made by staff members, which represented the nature of the general discussions

'Motive is to improve the NSS' Staff member A 'NSS is pragmatic but what we should be doing is improving the quality of the teaching and learning within the School' Staff member B 'NSS is just a measure' Staff Member C

The agenda and discussion illustrates how the NSS and league table position creates institutional drivers, tensions and motives for staff within the institution and how the use of data or position in league tables informs activity and deemed important at all levels of the institution.

The reliance on the use of data in the institution can be explained by the shifting of the funding base for undergraduate higher education, which demonstrates a concerted attempt to create a market within higher education. Morrison (2017) outlines that this is the clearest expression to date of the commodification of higher education in England. The senior management at the case institution

identify how the changes to funding streams in higher education have removed any *safety net* and therefore institutions have to teach in a way that *serve* students well, with students going on to get good jobs which is recognised through league tables / benchmarks that are subsequently used to attract prospective students to study at the University.

Students at the institution also illustrate how the marketisation of student satisfaction and league tables has influenced student discourse and is part of the conversation among students both prior to and during university

It's kind of, if it's all positive then it's kind of a little bit like, oh advertising point, come to our university our students are satisfied with us whereas, I don't know, I don't really know how well people respond to them... (Luke, Group Interview Four).

And student satisfaction is highly ranked among other universities, like I know *institution x* has one of the highest student satisfactions (Hannah, Group Interview Four).

... the Sunday Times does like a best university guide and I looked at that (Chris, Group Interview Four).

The quotes taken from the group interviews with students not only illustrates how students are discussing student satisfaction, how this was in their thoughts prior to attending university and for some was part of their decision-making process. Whilst the majority of students took the data at face value there was also an element of scepticism from students around how reliable the data is based upon student completion.

5.2.3 Performativity

The neoliberalist political and economic culture identified through the previous two discourses not only has an impact on the regulation of institutions but also the individual. Individuals must increasingly look into their own resources for personal survival and it is within this context that higher education plays a key role in the production of workers and consumers (Morrison, 2017).

The data collected in the case institution provides numerous examples of a plethora of measures used to assess the performance of the institution including the aforementioned measures of student satisfaction, graduate employability, value added, entry requirements and research income which

feed into national league tables, the Research Excellence Framework and the new Teaching Excellence Framework. The net effect of this is the development of a whole raft of internal measures monitored through data driven dashboards that measure every aspect of the student journey, monitoring entry requirements, applications, attendance, engagement with learning technologies, retention, achievement and value added, echoing Ozga (2009) and Williamson (2018) who observed the huge increase in data gathered in higher education. In addition, staff performance in the case institution is now assessed through the monitoring of minimum standards of expectations that identify activities, outputs and assessment of the quality of teaching and learning activities through the use of university wide administered surveys.

The use of data in this manner, turns individuals into governable subjects and what is evident is how the technologies of agency seek to enhance and improve our capacities for participation, agreement and action, as witnessed across all levels of institutional meetings, reports and strategic plans. This was witnessed right from a modular level through to programme, school and college requiring the evaluation of data from surveys, outcomes and dashboards, with subsequent actions plans created to ensure accountability. For example, widening participation, student progression and continuation data and the number of good honours degrees awarded were presented and discussed across the different hierarchical levels of the institution and were subject to comparison against the sector and institution, with action plans required to improve data if it was lower than the respective comparative benchmarks. Such action plans are subject to scrutinisation by more senior staff and oversight committees, monitored throughout the academic year, increasingly by automated software provision that prompts for updates.

The relationship between the students' union and the university also seeks to ensure the constant improvement of modules and student satisfaction, again trying to ensure accountability as can be taken from the following extract of the Students' Union Strategic Plan which explicitly identifies this as a priority.

We will work in partnership with the University of Lincoln to facilitate Module Evaluations, Module Evaluations will be a tool to gather student feedback. Reps will close the feedback loop and work with the University to improve the satisfaction of students on their course (Student Union Strategic Plan).

The use of technologies of performance in this manner within the institution turn capacities of

learning and teaching into something, which is calculable and comparable so they might be optimised (Davies and Peterson, 2005). Such strategies and techniques are designed to force institutions and individuals to self-regulate, reshaping deep social relations and creating productive individuals, new kinds of subjects, and the central resource in a reformed, entrepreneurial public sector (Ball, 2003).

From an institutional point of view the first order effect of performativity is to prioritise and re-orient pedagogical activities and scholarly activities towards those ones, which are likely to have a positive, impact on measurable performance outcomes. As already established the National Student Survey is seen as a very important survey and proxy measure by the institution, and as such its importance is constantly emphasised through a number of mechanisms witnessed during the data collection period: briefings and guidance to staff; dashboards detailing sector and institutional rankings; marketing and publicity to prospective students; and the requirement to create actions plans for all programmes, based on the quantitative and qualitative feedback gleaned from the survey. The following quotes by a senior student representative and a student from a case school suggest the importance the institution places on such approaches and how students also synthesise this internally

in my opinion, the university focuses so much attention on what the NSS says (Senior Student Representative).

Being able to ensure and improve the quality of provision to enable the university to progress, rise in league tables etc. (Reese, School C, Student Survey).

From the information and examples witnessed in the case institution, aspects of teaching, writing and research have been rendered into calculability's, written into contracts of performance, and are identifiable across the practices of the case institution. The concern in the sector is that the effect of the examples witnessed create the production of a tyranny of metrics over and against professional judgement, such approaches are a deflection away from the aspects of social, emotional or moral development that have no immediate measurable performative values (Ball, 2012).

Bragg (2007) identifies how a key function of governmentality is the ability to influence the individual through technologies of the self. Such neoliberal practices impact the form and function of institutions and the individual to assess and scrutinise their practice to meet the demands identified by the government. At the case institution, the provision and emphasis on data creates what could

be identified as a technology that assists individuals in self-regulating. The wide use of data driven dashboards produced at a programme and module level are designed to increase the awareness and visibility to staff of the determined key performance indicators. The dashboards are frequently accompanied with a Red Amber and Green (RAG) rating, publically available to staff in the institution via dashboards. For example, module evaluations are coded green if 70% of students agree or strongly agree with the statements, such as “Teaching on this module helped me to understand the subject”. Use of internal rankings in this way is an attempt by management on staff to regulate and influence change to increase performance and meet the required benchmarks, rankings and levels created by the institution.

The use of data by institutions in this way is a consequence of the regulation by the state, with institutions and their staff becoming a unit of resource themselves. As units of resources the performance and productivity is constantly audited in order to try and improve it, sometimes through strategic action and other times through self-regulation of the individual. The neoliberal regimes on the individual by the state have reduced the boundaries on the welfare state not to remove power but to entrench it further at the level of the individual. The notion is one of governing less through the formal institutions of the state and more through forms of expertise that seemingly lie beyond it, such as, healthcare, media and the family, that focus and encourage action on the self by the self (Bragg, 2007). The result is that academics take responsibility for working harder, faster and better as part of their sense of personal worth and self-regulation, as opposed to a form of disciplinary power that would control the population (Shore and Wright, 1999; Ball, 2012). The use of action plans and targets in the institution do not acknowledge experience and instead build on last year’s efforts as a benchmark for improvement – more publications, more grants, and more students.

Through this perspective, the investigation of the student-university relationship and student voice produces and constructs identities and understanding of the self and enables the examination of what questions or whom or what is problematised or rendered abnormal or off limits. It is not the conscious intentions, decisions or actions of individuals in the process but rather the social and cultural effects of broader societal shifts that enable a focus on aspects of student voice that are often ignored or taken for granted (Bragg, 2007).

5.2.4 Consumerism

Students at the case institution were quite clear that a driver for an increased emphasis of student voice in higher education was due to the increase of tuition fees to £9000 per year. Students involved in the research consider the tuition fees as a high financial and economic cost to the individual and therefore believe that they have a “right to influence” and universities “should provide the student with exactly what they want”. There is a clear sense that the majority of students see themselves as customers and are therefore entitled to influence their programme and have a right to value for money as the following quotes from students in the case study schools suggest

The primary reason would have to be the increase in student tuition fees being paid directly by the student. Now that we're being asked to pay for so much at such a young age means we need to be satisfied for what we're paying for (Ashley, School B, Student Survey).

feedback in every situation in life is as important for the person giving the information (to be empowered and valued) as it is for the organisation receiving (it incrementally improves quality / standards, respects the customer and creates a responsive organisation) (Jo, School C, Student Survey).

I have found myself getting very annoyed when I go to a lecture and it's just like a video for the hour. When I've only got eight hours a week, as in a lot of money per lecture, so for them to just use a video for it, I find myself getting annoyed because I'd be able to do that in my own time and I do then see it as a waste of my money (Donna, Group Interview Four).

The introduction of student fees and the increasingly liberal model of regulating student numbers, and promotion of competition in the higher education sector, has caused institutions to take a business-like approach, promoting services via its brand (Molesworth et al., 2009). The effect of neoliberalism has seen a massification of the sector with the effect of developing competition to attract student numbers to higher education promoting marketing discourses. The resulting effect of the dominant neoliberal, performativity and marketing discourses is the positioning of students as rational economic consumers whereby the student is required to make themselves, whilst the type of self that can be made is heavily regulated by what is deemed to be acceptable by the state and society (Molesworth et al., 2009).

However, a number of students did not view the relationship in quite as simplistic a manner, not seeing the money as theirs and not tangible until it needs to be paid back. It could be suggested that the change in tuition fees has had an influence on the importance of learning and teaching and what happens in the classroom and module, due to the association with value for money (Brown and Carasso, 2013). Students expressed their dissatisfaction when they felt that they could not see where the £9000 was being spent or they received lectures or seminars where there was a perceived lack of effort or that they could have done it by themselves. Students therefore now question not only the quality of the staff member and their research but the quality of their teaching

You're paying quite a bit of money to be taught by someone who's an expert in that field, but at the same time, being an expert in your field doesn't necessarily make you a fantastic teacher (School Representative One).

Despite the consumerist focus of students and the claims in some research, a member of the senior management team does not believe that students have moved to a point where they see themselves as buying a degree; in addition, students did not associate cost to outcomes, i.e. gaining a degree of a particular standard

They don't think yet that they're buying the degree, but they are absolutely clear that they're buying a context. So, if they choose to spend £9,000 a year, as they would see it, to have a student attend xxx xxx, they feel it's permissible to ask questions about support levels, structures, ways that student will be helped to thrive. They don't yet, or I haven't heard yet any of that moving into the teaching and learning space (Senior Management Team Member One).

Nixon et al. (2016) however, suggest that students desire a 2:1 and this is framed fundamentally by its potential bargaining power in the job market and that students do not demonstrate a wish or desire to become a learner or a scholar of their chosen subject. This is reinforced by the metric calculating good honours, a grade of a 2:1 or higher which sets this as an aspirational benchmark for students, but also raises expectations for the institution to be developing students to this level. Staff in the institution do not believe paying to attend university entitles an individual to gain a degree especially of a particular standard. However, the thoughts and discussions from some of the students in the case institution provided in this section, centres around *rights*, *entitlement* and *being able to get exactly what they want*. An entitlement culture severely questions the role and extent to which it is possible to engage students in student voice and partnership opportunities.

The data collected in the study did not provide overwhelming evidence that students believed that their tuition fees entitled them to a degree. However, the introduction of the Consumer Rights Act in 2015 now plays a key role in the framing of the relationship between staff and students, with some students in the case institution referring to complaints, value for money and refunds if things are not up to standard. Senior Management acknowledged that students are consumers in respect to accommodation, refectories and the library and should be viewed as a good thing for the young person. Senior management also identified how increasingly time was been taken up by dealing with complaints, but wanted to avoid a consumerist focus in the classroom due to the associations with outcomes

I think we (the institution) ...at the end of the day there are some transactional consumer-like elements to that wider student experience, em, and when you, err, want to go and have your initial appointment with the Disability Service, you expect service standards, in the same way as you might from...other types of services that you pay for. When the university is also your accommodation provider, you expect value for money, in a market, and so on. When you go and buy your lunch and so on. So, there are elements, which make it awfully difficult to say that students are not consumers...it's just...it's not a binary divide, it's complex. In the classroom is where I think we are most interested in saying consumerist relation won't really work (Senior Management Team Member Two).

Marketised approaches ensure that institutions are beholden to the approach of a student as a consuming subject. Nixon et al. (2016) therefore, suggest that the reason so many may offer little resistance to such approaches is due to organisational narcissism for the institution itself, where market successes are evidenced in high rankings and league table positions. Furthermore, they believe that many higher education providers may prepare the student for a life of consumption by trying to focus students' attentions on achieving employment or a good job at the end of their university education. It can be asserted that consumerist discourses are very much part of the language of how the institution portrays itself but also how students view the relationship with their university and how this is closely aligned to the increase in tuition fees.

5.2.5 Partnership

The liberal humanist view of the university is to enable people to think, become critical thinkers and scholars of their subject areas. As such, Nixon et al. (2016) suggest that for those institutions who retain their core values, purposes and ideals of higher education a student as consumer relationship forms unrealistic expectations for students for both their experience and their attainment in a higher educational culture. From the data collated the case institution's approach and narrative provided offers an alternative to consumerism and aligns with the thoughts of Nixon, as detailed in the following quote by a member of the senior management team

the institution needs to be clear about its *defence* to student consumerist perspectives, which in the language of the institution, is if they're engaged and co-producing, then the learning has the potential to be a lot richer (Senior Management Team Member One).

The narrative created by the senior management team is embedded in the rhetoric and strategy documentation of the university and is developed on the premise of engagement of its members, where students, academic and professional service staff are included in the community. The ethos is to try and reduce the gap between its members which has developed as a result of increased student numbers and staff / student ratios. It is important to acknowledge that a partnership model of working is in direct tension with discourses of consumerism and marketisation, yet it is evident that the two co-exist in tension in the case institution. The senior management team assert that in the current climate it is necessary and important to offer an alternative to the consumerist model of higher education, reframing the debate and replacing it with a model where staff and students work together and in the words of Senior Management Team Member Two "a citizenship model". The model offered by the institution builds on its tradition of students as producers of knowledge, engaging students in collaboration with university staff to develop new ideas.

The University senior management team have invested in staff to work specifically on student engagement, something that a member of the senior management team believes is "innovative" and "unusual". Furthermore, the University's strategic plan and vision draws reference to placing students at the heart of everything they do, providing a full experience where students and staff work together to enhance the community and the University's reputation and popularity, as a result of its strong partnerships with students. The narrative provided describes how the university will develop an inclusive community, with students playing a key role in the engagement in research,

contributing to the success of the university and ultimately trying to provide students with the skills, knowledge and confidence to create their futures effectively. It could be suggested that whilst this may be in opposition to consumerist perspectives such an approach still fulfils the requirements of a marketised sector and has the potential to offer something different and can therefore be used as a marketing strategy, as the following quote from a student implies

You gain, you gain so much more from university than just your degree title, there are so many more experiences, so much more transferable skills, they love it. It is that, having, leaving university to be able to adapt to whatever's thrown at you, rather than just saying, 'Well, I've got my degree. I'm done now'. So, I wouldn't say it's a consumer, it's more partners. It's more a work in progress (Rebecca, Group Interview Three).

Students interviewed who were involved in partnership work spoke passionately about their experiences and identified how they valued the relationship and work with the institution that they were involved in. When reviewing the literature, interviews and focus groups a number of terms are utilised in the language provided by both staff and students when they refer to staff and student work; these are partnership, collaboration, student engagement and student involvement. A partnership approach advocates a shift from passive models of higher education, engaging students in their learning. Practical examples can be found across different levels of the institution and can be broken into those aspects that help shape learning and teaching, for example: students as consultants on teaching and learning, students on curriculum design; students as researcher (producers); student representation and membership across the university; students on interview panels and validation events. Not all of these examples necessarily provide confirmation of students-as-partners or the amplification of student voice, however, they do indicate the multiplicity of approaches the institution has tried to implement and the involvement of students in the development of learning and teaching and the democratic processes of governance of the institution.

As the following quote details, students involved in partnership believed that there was an ethos of partnership at Lincoln that was different from other institutions and were immersed in the work of partnership.

it's very much now... students-as-partners in their learning, in their education, in their university as well. That's generally what I think anyway... and has been built up through being at Lincoln and the activities I've been taking part in so much. Like we're doing this

together for all, rather than... just taking all my lectures in... Some students are like that, some students may think, 'Well I'm just a consumer... I come to uni, I follow my timetable, I go back home. I do my assignment...' But, very much I think the focus at university is on students-as-partners and those students as producers as well (Clive, Group Interview Three).

However, when speaking with students from the case study schools or student representatives, not all students were able to draw upon the partnership work in the institution. The examples provided by students did not illustrate partnership, collaboration, involvement or engagement and was not embodied in their language, suggesting that whilst there is evidence of partnership in the institution this does not extend fully across the institution and those engaged in the work. This once again illustrates the tensions between the forces at play in the university but also how it is difficult to embed and engage approaches across the whole institution.

5.2.6 Summary of Competing Discourses

The discourses of neoliberalism, performativity, marketisation, consumerism and partnership have been established through both the data collected and the literature. The data provided, illustrates the tensions of the neoliberal approaches by the state to develop a competitive market driven by data and statistics, impacting on the requirements for institutions, staff and students.

How we construct the role of student voice depends on the discourse accepted. Those in more senior positions have the power to identify what counts as true, defining the purpose of student voice, its value and how this looks within different contexts. The relationship between these discourses is complex and in no way complimentary to each other and illustrates how difficult it is for an institution to navigate the higher education sector within the constraints of market principles, especially if the vision is to try and provide an alternative democratic model of partnership to counter the neoliberal approaches. Foucault outlines how each society or institution creates its own regimes of truth.

Each society has its regimes of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned: the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault, 1980, p. 131).

Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2008) drawing on the work of Foucault outline how discourses are not objects but rules and procedures that make objects thinkable and governable, therefore in the case of student voice they do not determine events but intervene in the relations of what can be known, said or practised. The construction of the individual through discourse brings with it a set of images, metaphors and obligations or possibilities / constraints. Individuals can accept their position and fulfil the obligations of their position; for example, student as consumer or student as partner. In addition, the person can place themselves within a discourse and their audience can accept or reject this positioning. The following section will outline the mechanisms of student voice in the case institution and how the different discourses are visible in the case institution illuminating, shutting down, developing, enabling, or limiting student voice in the development of learning and teaching.

Chapter 6. Positionality of Students

6.1 Student Voice as *Agent* Through Representation

The representation structures in universities provide a very important function in governance mechanisms in higher education institutions. Student participation in the governance of higher education institutions has consolidated over the last twenty to thirty years with student governments providing an important representative function in the quality process system (Klemenčič, 2014). As previously identified the case institution have an organised and well-structured student representation system, the function of this system is to try and shape the concerns of management and academics incorporated in the day to day running of higher education institutions (Freeman, 2016).

Students involved in the data echo how they saw the main mechanisms to influence change in the institution is through student representation and feedback forms. Of the students surveyed 82% of identified that they were aware of the representation system and 78% knew who their course representative was demonstrating that students are aware of the system. However only 47% of students claim to have spoken to their representative about programme matters, with 56% believing the system was effective.

Student representatives across the three case study schools identified that their main role was to work with the student body to gather information and then engage with academics to provide the student point of view, which often occurred in subject committee meetings. The identification of this function of a student representative aligns with previously identified role formation of student representatives which is to *speak* for their fellow students on educational-related issues at programme related committees (Carey, 2013b) across the institution's governance structures. A benefit of the use of representation assists in the development of the student's understanding of the complex procedures in place to ensure the effective day-to-day running of the institution as illustrated by the following quotes from students

it was a good opportunity to get to talk to lecturers about stuff and actually figure out... cause I've learnt a lot more about the uni and how it works through student rep (Tracey, Group Interview One).

I think the only way to fix it is to try and get the students more involved and make them more aware of how the university process works, and what goes on at university and let them know that what they say really does matter. They can make changes even if they... aren't course reps or... they're not a student recruiter... They can still make a difference. (Trevor, Group Interview Three).

The variety of assigned roles and functions in an institution could be seen as a mechanism to ensure the effective operation of the university; student voice and representation can therefore be seen as part of what Foucault (1972) defined as capacity-communication-power demonstrating how the different activities that take place are part of the institution's detailed regulations and how it assists in governing its internal life and working to meet its intended aims and objectives. Brooks et al. (2015) supports that student representation systems are the main mechanisms utilised by the Students' Unions to increase student voice, which was supported by both the staff and students in the case institution. However, the model of representation in governance processes differs greatly between institutions. At the case study institution students are provided with representation on every committee that involves or affects students in the university, at school, college and institutional levels (see Figure 5.3 for details). However, students are less clear of who their representative is at a school or college level and therefore works through a hierarchical system of information moving up or down the chain.

The main reasons cited for becoming a student representative by the students was to try to make a difference, or because they had already had some issues and wanted to try and address them, or because no one else would do it. This demonstrates that students who have become representatives have exercised a degree of agency by becoming a representative and are providing a commitment to facilitate change in learning and teaching. The opinion on how much agency students feel they have through the amplification of student voice and representation is quite divisive. The general student population involved in the data sample when questioned describe how they do not have much faith in the representation system and believe that they do not have a voice that is heard and often any voice they do have either takes too long or only affects subsequent students. The power exercised through capacity-communication-power controls the mechanisms through which students can exercise agency in the formal processes in the institution. However, this highlights how students as a homogenous mass may feel that they have limited scope to exercise *agency* in themselves and influence decisions and must therefore, rely on the representative function or use of surveys.

Student representatives and students involved in project work at the institution are much more confident that they have the capacity to affect change confirm that through the representative system they can often exercise a degree of agency, which can have a meaningful impact on university life for students. As the following quote from a student involved in partnership work identifies

It's every course and every module, everything you do can always change. It can always become better, it can have parts removed, it can have parts added. So, I'd say the course rep system affects more, more students at the university than any other. (Trevor, Group Interview Three).

However, again there were conflicting views with the following student highlighting that in practice they do not believe that the student voice has a great deal of agency and suggests that what can be achieved is bound

it just feels like it's tinkering at the edges really, the teachers are there to teach and lay out and do the curriculum and plan the lectures and I don't want it to feel like we're teaching ourselves, you know. So, it can only be tinkering at the edges because you know, we're aspiring to something beyond our knowledge at the present, so how could we possibly be involved in that with any value (Ann, Group Interview Four).

Student representatives describe how they believe there is a hierarchy in the representation system and the more senior representatives such as school and college representatives have more agency, especially with large issues or cultural aspects that may need addressing. There is, therefore an indication of a pyramidal hierarchy of power within the process of the student representation system. For example, Senior College Representatives are asked by the Students' union and representative colleges to address or work with schools and student representatives on things that have emerged from poor survey data such as the National Student Survey. Senior management, the Students' Union and student representatives are therefore working collectively to try and improve national student survey scores, demonstrating the role of the Students' Union is more than political activism. The more senior student representatives can be seen to have a foot in both camps, demonstrating agency on behalf of other students to improve their experience and working with the institution to improve survey scores that will ultimately link to benchmarks and league tables. The positioning of students in this manner could be seen as another function of pastoral power that has a normalising effect on student representatives, who are conforming and assisting within regulated

communications that provide coded signs of obedience and power processes utilising pyramidal hierarchies to set the boundaries of what is considered legitimate.

The value and use of student representatives to assist students and work with staff on programme related matters up to more broader aspects is complex and requires many parts to be synchronised for the system to function effectively. A successful system is hugely dependent and reliant on the people adopting and performing the assigned roles and functions. Considering the number of student representatives, staff and committees it is understandable that there is variation in practice and whilst some students may believe it works effectively on behalf of the students many do not share the same opinion due to their experiences and helps understand the diverse views provided.

6.2 Student Voice as *Market Force* Through the National Student Survey

Viewing student voice as a *market force* is a very neoliberal concept legitimised by the development of higher education as a competitive market underpinned by consumerism and choice. Both the sector and the institution relate to measures of student voice through the National Student Survey, utilising student voice in this manner does not meet the definition of working with students through partnership. Conceptualising student voice in this manner is therefore mechanistic and consultative, however, voice in this form is influencing decision making and is a prominent driver for not only the inclusion of student voice but also for its improvement, as outlined by the following quote from a member of management in the institution

I'm not sure we ever talk about engaging students in those kinds of conversations to increase their student satisfaction with teaching and learning, however implicitly that is an objective. We want to see scores in the National Student Survey go up... the post-graduate equivalents go up (Management Team Member One).

Staff highlighted that in the case institution they believe that the performance in the National Student Survey drives "a lot of the very bureaucratic perspective around user voice, student voice, around NSS data and module surveys..." and is a "mechanical" way of getting students involved in the conversation (Staff Member One). Internally, within the institution a series of mechanisms are used such as module and programme surveys with accompanying action plans and module reports, created to improve measures of student satisfaction. In addition, as alluded to earlier the case

institution publicises its data internally via data-driven dashboards to enable staff and management to drill down from university to programme level utilising RAG ratings to benchmark performance across the university and institutional and sector norms. The combination of data dashboards with the requirement to produce action plans provides a performative function for continuous development of performance.

The linking of external surveys to league table position and rankings to inform consumer choice has placed universities in to direct competition with each other. Senior management at the case institution identify how they believe the University depends on the outcome of external metrics such as the National Student Survey due to its relationship with league table position, linking higher scores in such surveys to an improved ranking and potentially higher or lower intakes of student numbers. Such a position creates a tension between providing excellent teaching and simply moving the numbers and the metric to try and achieve this, as outlined by a member of the Senior Management team

So, because there's no good proxy for measuring good teaching, we have to teach well, but we also have to meet these inefficient proxies. That's not comfortable, but it's true (Senior Management Team Member One).

It is evident that the language used by staff internalises and embodies the notion that there is a requirement to improve poor National Student Survey performance addressing the qualitative and quantitative comments via the production of an action plan to address the issues raised, with the hope that this will lead to better scores (Staff Member 2). This confirms the concern from Gibbs (2012) that institutions change their behaviour to improve the indicators and metrics utilised, at the potential expense of educational effectiveness. In addition, it is also evident that students and student representatives are acutely aware that a key driver behind the internal mechanisms such as module evaluations are designed to try and improve scores in external surveys and their associated relationship with league table position and future recruitment of students.

Students identified how the metrics also impact on their view and perception of the implications of what this potentially means to the value of their degree and therefore how they discuss this amongst themselves as illustrated by School Representative One

it enhances the way the university looks, so that when you go off to get a job somewhere, this is kind of...this is how I have to sort of market it to them - when you go off to get a job

somewhere, if you say 'I've got a degree from Lincoln University and it's very good and well rated, and has a strong student satisfaction and is, err, higher on a league table of some kind, it's going to make you look more attractive as an employment prospect (School Representative One).

This raises an important point and questions the validity of such measures as the National Student Survey; if students feel that negative scoring of external surveys may provide a perceived negative perception of their programme and *value* of their degree, it makes it more difficult for students to rate their student experience honestly. The student body also question the authenticity of a lot of the mechanisms in the university that are geared around establishing a reputation for producing *quality* students, achieving high student satisfaction in learning and teaching and therefore promoting the university's league table position and attracting students to study.

The marketised principles formulated and used by the government to increase the regulation and make higher education institutions accountable for the quality of the learning and teaching provided develops mechanisms of student voice that could be seen to try and gain the productive services of the Students' Union and student representatives to help achieve better outcomes. Student voice in this manner does not align with that of partnership or a model of working with students that demonstrate that has the interests of students at heart. The use of benchmarking and league tables to increase consumer choice and allow students to survey universities and programmes as a market therefore becomes a critical driver.

6.3 Student Voice as Academic Partner

As has been suggested in part previously, the relationship between staff and students in the case institution as defined by the state and external organisations is frequently consultative and linked to a neoliberal view of ascertaining information with an intended purpose to drive up standards and increase student satisfaction. Is it, therefore, possible to offer an alternative model that looks afresh as to how the construction and role of a student is positioned in higher education? Adopting a Foucauldian lens, a partnership model would have to offer an alternative view to how truth is constructed, questioning the role of a student and the relationship they have with academics and their institution, in order to break out of the neoliberal constraints.

Society in general, the culture of an institution and regimes of knowledge or truth have the potential to limit how we can interpret, develop and conceptualise this relationship. In order for a partnership model to be adopted institutionally, it has to be conceived that students are part of a wider learning community and can work as partners within the institution. From the data examined it is evident that across the university there is clear evidence to suggest that alternative relationships are being defined and implemented, as outlined by a member of the senior management team

I think the biggest one is that, ... marketisation is... it's just a creeping thing, and we desperately need... to when students.... and even before they join us... explain that... at Lincoln, it's a partnership; and... you know, set out the benefits of that kind of activity (Senior Management Team Member Two).

A sentiment that is echoed by the following university student

I think consumer makes it sound like you're getting like a package deal. Like it's one big lump sum that everyone gets, and it's all exactly the same. Whereas that's not at all... my experience of it... you can really adapt all the three years or however long you're here for to do whatever you want to do (Rebecca, Group Interview Three).

Members of the senior management team outline that unless you offer an alternative to consumerist approaches then it is very difficult to define anything other than just that and suggest that increased student engagement in the practices and processes of the institution will more likely result in a rejection of a consumerist model of education. Proponents of engaging with students identify that there is a big difference in an institution that *listens* to students and one that provides students with the opportunity to co-create areas that they believe require change and development (Dunne and Zandstra, 2011).

The case institution's support department to learning and teaching has created and embedded a number of opportunities to foster relationships and partnerships between staff and students. For example

- *Student recruiters*, academic appointments to the university include a student as a full member of the interview panel;
- *Students as Consultants on Teaching*, staff in the institution could request a student to review an aspect of their practice;

- *Student Insight scheme*, members of the senior management team were paired with a student who undertook a reciprocal arrangement of viewing their partner's activities, practices and experiences across a period of time;
- *Students on curriculum design*, included students as a reviewer on academic programme validations; students as producers of knowledge, an annual call for students to work as paid researchers to work with staff over the summer on a defined research project, culminating in a dissemination event.

The positions were advertised across the university's communication strategies to all students, followed by the requirement to submit expressions of interest, with those successful receiving training and development to assist the student in fulfilling the role. The examples in the case institution offer an alternative to traditional models of incorporating students through representation systems in the mechanisms and processes of the institution such as those prescribed by Elassy (2013). The examples provided are more closely aligned to the definition of student voice adopted in this study and the student as partners model proposed by Healey et al. (2014) fulfilling aspects of engagement in learning, teaching and assessment, curriculum design, pedagogic consultancy, research enquiry and scholarship in learning and teaching.

Through the group interview with engaged students it was very evident how much value this particular group of students placed on the role and the opportunities that they have experienced as the following quotes identify

But the student recruiter, it's great because you sit with a load of staff and it's kind of like, when I first heard about it I was like, Oh, is that just a student sat on the table outside, just observing it with a sheet of paper, ticking boxes? But no, when I actually found out that you sit on the panel and you have questions, and that you are very much a part of the process, I said; 'Now, I've never heard anything like that at any university before.' And... it's great that students get a chance to have an input on what kind of staff come into the university. (Trevor, Group Interview Three).

... some of the roles are sort of with heads of departments who aren't necessarily student facing, so I'm shadowing staff in the Estates at the moment, whose student contact is quite minimal really. So that's a good chance for me as a student to see what they do. Because a lot of these departments can be a bit closed off almost. But also, for that department then to have that idea of what students are doing. (Brian, Group Interview Three).

We set up at the start and we said, right we're doing this partnership, and it's between me as part of the students' union to... them as a career service, and the college as well... And we worked together, we worked with people in the library to put it together... so it was really a full staff student partnership-led week of events. And it worked out really well, and I think it was a really good case study, because it proved that, you know... if you go to staff, then you know, you've got an issue, you've got an idea, you want to plan an event, you can do it. Put your time into it, and it actually comes out really well at the end of it. (Clive, Group Interview Three).

From a staff perspective it is about identifying "what does a good student learning experience look like? What are the kind of things therefore that you're going to be looking for in programme specifications or self-evaluations?" (Management Team Member One) and trying to get students to think critically about the student experience. The student partner examples provided illustrate how the projects have been utilised to try and develop a culture within the institution that enables students to input and be part of the development of the university. It is also evident that partnership working has been extended to support departments of the University including careers, the library and others such as estates, ICT and catering

It's academic related, but it's a service department..., and they have...one of their main services is the provision of space and the building that the library operates in. They work through their student advisory group to inform the design of new spaces, library..., 1.5 the extension...the design was very much influenced by students... The policies around eating and drinking and noise and so on are...now those decisions are made with the students (Management Team Member One).

Such approaches are suggestive of positioning the student as an *expert* in the relationship. For example, the collaborative approach to programme / module design uses the first-hand student experience and knowledge to help shape what a module or programme may look like and can often link students' academic content and community, as the following example illustrates

We've been working on a new *** module and we've had a collaborative approach to designing a module, so we've had students involved in helping us design the module, and working with the *** service, and so what I think we've got is something that's really creative, it's really valuable, it enhances student experience because we've got guest

speakers coming in, so when we do the session on the *** *** we've got the *** *** officer coming in (Staff Member One).

A member of the senior management team outlines how such examples shift the relationship and the interaction of student from more of a passive to active relationship within a student's programme and therefore provide *agency* to the student to assist in the development of teaching and learning

some places in the university that have explored the idea of students sitting on curriculum design bodies... and I think that's a really interesting way forward... because again, it's quite passive to say, I rate this course and it's quite active to say, I create this course (Senior Management Team Member One).

At a senior management level, the university have a partnership agreement with the Students' Union, which covers student representation through all levels of the University and access to a wide breadth of committees, module evaluations and other larger projects or consultations. The relationship between academic schools and the Students' Union provides opportunities and examples for student and staff to work in partnership, however, this is very difficult to determine and track and depends on the school and both the staff and students in the school. However, it is evident that at a school level a critical factor is the relationship and rapport that is developed and built between the student representatives, who are often the more senior School Student Representative and the Student Engagement Champion, an academic member of staff whose role it is to try and engage with students in the school. The creation of such roles as Student Engagement Champions and Senior School Representatives provide an indication as to the value assigned by the institution and the Students' Union to promote and advocate partnership.

At a school and programme level the focus is often to develop resolutions to programme issues. A number of schools / programmes take the approach of asking the student/s what the solution should be to the issue identified, with the student then involved in the implementation of the idea or initiative. This was reinforced by the survey of students in the case schools with 65 % of students expressing that it should be the responsibility of staff and students to enhance student's satisfaction, however, a further 33% felt it was more the responsibility of staff. In addition, some academic schools have also looked to address how students are engaged in meetings and can enable all members to feel like partners as outlined by a member of the senior management team

moving away from out-dated models of... confrontation and hierarchy and power and structure in committee meetings, to more open... collaborative discussions about anything and everything, has been... nothing short of inspirational for the rest of the university, in that we've had a whole range of subject areas do it proactively, to...to follow that model, follow the lead proactively... and now student reps have the ability to influence in ways that they could never before across a range of schools... (Management Team Member One).

The main benefit that has been highlighted by those involved is that staff get to understand and see things from a student perspective and how particular aspects impact on the individual student. From a student point of view, they witness first-hand all the work that occurs behind the scenes and gain a better understanding of the governance structure of the university; something that is enlightening for both parties and provides a greater level of trust and mutual respect.

Students involved in partnership activities describe that such models of working develop an interactive staff student relationship that is akin to that of a colleague rather than a student-lecturer. Students identified that if they have an idea or suggestion, that there is an openness from staff to accommodate it and try it out, which is echoed by staff. Students outline that they gain much more from partnership work than developing the student experience but they are also able to develop transferable skills that have the potential to make themselves more employable. As described by a student project worker.

... you gain so much more from university than just your degree title, there are so many more experiences, so much more transferable skills, they love it. It is that... leaving university to be able to adapt to whatever's thrown at you, rather than just saying, Well, I've got my degree. I'm done now. So, I wouldn't say it's a consumer, it's more partners. It's more a work in progress. (Rebecca, Group Interview Three).

Despite the rhetoric of offering an alternative model to consumerism it is very difficult to avoid consumerist approaches as the two worlds are interconnected and bound, ultimately, what students experience and the impact of this on their satisfaction features heavily in the purpose of partnership. Set within a neoliberal culture perhaps partnership and consultation have to co-exist? Do consultative approaches identify areas that need work / development and can partnership approaches therefore help address these? Or is it the responsibility of staff to carry out the suggestions made by students in a consultative manner? The university's student engagement team outline their approach

our focus as a student engagement team has been predominantly around getting students involved more actively in reflecting on evaluating the student experience and coming up...partnering staff coming up with ideas for improving, designing and what it might look like. And sometimes being involved in implementing those ideas, so that the experience, the learning experience, is more effective and implicitly, so that student satisfaction increases (Management Team Member One).

But you...when you listen to the students who've been involved in that speaking at external conferences about their experience and about how they've been able to contribute their different views... into that process and how they're seeing those views turned... into reality, that's really quite rewarding and starts to show where students are being taken seriously, but also that is an example of where the conversation has changed. It's not the out-dated model of taking your module evaluation forms and your NSS results from the last few years, pulling out some key themes and maybe weaving those in, so that you can get your way through a revalidation (Management Team Member One).

There are a number of things that can be gleaned from the data as illustrated by the previous comments from Management Team Member One. The value of partnership work from those involved seems to be extremely positive and rewarding for both the staff and students involved and also has provided some positive changes to programmes and mechanisms within the University. However, there is also a concern raised about the legitimacy of such approaches, in that there is a danger that models of co-creation or partnership work further legitimise marketing ideology as a core-principle of social organisation. As the previous quotation stipulates, implicitly a lot of the work is aimed at increasing student satisfaction, this could be seen in different ways; firstly, that ultimately staff want students to enjoy their studies and therefore want high student satisfaction; or secondly, that partnership work is used more cynically to gain the productive services of students to assist in developing how students perceive their programmes and to assist in developing the metrics due to the importance of them in the competitive market. In the context of neoliberalism and governmentality, adopting aspects of partnership work could still retain and fit with the perspective of technologies of the self and the development of the individual. As the individuals involved in partnership work assess and scrutinise their practice to meet the demands and the targets of the institution, or to help themselves individually by enhancing their skills and experience and therefore their employability prospects.

6.4 Student Voice as Customer Satisfaction

In stark contrast to the student adopting the position as a partner, if a student adopts a consumer focus this shifts the position of the student as a proponent of a product, in this instance a higher education programme. The introduction of tuition fees has placed further emphasis on the student as consumer or customer and has been established by the increased expectation of students to fund tuition fees and the invitation to students to navigate higher education as a market, making informed decisions and judgments about the value for money of knowledge, learning, teaching and space. All students from the case schools surveyed identified that they believed that it was important for students to have a voice, with 86% suggesting it was very or extremely important. Furthermore, students involved in the data collection did not overtly relate to the consumer act during data collection or identify that they believed aspects had been falsely advertised or were holding the university to account. However, the radical increase in tuition fees alongside the introduction of the Consumer Rights Act in 2015, has positioned the university as a trader and supplier of educational services, creating contracts between students and their institution. A number of students did discuss how they were aware of students submitting complaints and requesting their money back.

In addition, students identified the expectations they held in relation to the programme and university, as the following extract from a group interview identifies

... stuff like issues with timetabling or room allocations, ...stuff like that. Those kinds of things will obviously have a negative on satisfaction, I suppose it's more, sort of, feeling that your £9,000 a year is, is worthwhile for the facilities and the teaching and the, sort of, core university things (James, Group Interview Two).

From the data collated there is an association between the governmental policy changes and developments and the increased emphasis on student satisfaction with the resulting effect of needing to respond to both the demands of students as individual learners and indeed student demand in aggregate (Streetling and Wise, 2009). As the following extract from a School Representative indicates, student satisfaction is very much a part of the University's governance processes and is operationalised through the many surveys and questionnaires that students are requested to complete during their studies

student satisfaction...that's more...I probably relate that more to kind of strictly the university. It's quite a university term for, you know 'Are you happy with what we're giving you?'. So, I see that more as, em, 'Do you get enough support? Do you get enough feedback? Do you get enough from your course?' So that's more kind of the satisfaction thing to me, really (School Representative One).

Student representatives also contribute to this association with consumerism by invoking the language and ethos of *small wins* (things they have been able to change), for example: a change to an assessment type or hand-in date. Representatives outline that they consider the following as legitimate territory: course issues, deadlines, inconsistency in delivery / assessment, types of assessments, clear marking criteria, assignment support sessions to develop new skills, access to materials such as lecture notes. In addition, it was highlighted that evaluations and surveys can be used as evidence for representatives to go to senior staff, e.g. Student Engagement Champions and highlight a particular issue to try and influence change and use this as a bargaining tool to instigate changes.

The staff view of student satisfaction equally reflects closely with the consumerist notions around what students want, or what makes them satisfied and describe this as a very one-sided perspective, as detailed in the comment by a member of the University's management team

The problem with student satisfaction is it very rarely considers...I think...very rarely gets the student to reflect on how they take up those opportunities, how they engage with them, and it's a very one-sided view (Management Team Member One).

From both staff and students, it was identified that such approaches create a constant requirement to meet and respond to the current group of students. Therefore, the processes shift the relationship from one of partnership to one of consultation requiring staff to consult students regarding their programme and action changes to satisfy their responses. Staff and students outlined that a problem with such approaches is that often the changes made to satisfy a previous cohort do not always work for the next cohort, either requiring it to be changed again or it taking a number of attempts to find a model that fits with the students' expectations and requirements.

In agreement with students it was also outlined by academic staff that the institution frequently used mechanisms such as surveys and module evaluations aligned to satisfaction approaches, seen in the business and commercial sectors. Therefore, adopting and reinforcing the notion of the

student as a consumer of a product and a customer of the university. Whilst not all forms of consumerism can be viewed in the same way, the concern is that students may start to behave as passive recipients in higher education models of the student-university relationship, restricting their full involvement in a learning environment and limiting the scope for partnership work

6.5 Student Voice as a Greater Good

Lastly, in the case institution there is a sense of value to improving teaching and learning and ensuring a good student experience which comes from across the different levels, demographics and groups of the institution. The institution has a history of student-centred approaches and investment in staff and student innovation projects and the development of knowledge. This is reinforced by the strategic plan that outlines that the institution should be renowned and at the leading edge for teaching excellence, creativity and innovation. Senior Management Team Member Two describes some of the student engagement work as a “Laboratory for innovation” which is created by a network of Student Engagement Champions who are prepared to experiment.

Whilst a small number of students expressed some contempt as to the way staff and schools worked to develop student issues and complaints, the majority of students involved in the data collection from across the institution often spoke about the feeling that their school and the institution genuinely want to understand and develop student satisfaction and their programme of study. This is also echoed by staff who also believe that they should engage in reflection of their modules and programmes to provide a good and positive student experience.

Furthermore, the Students’ Union Sabbatical Officer identifies how student representatives are invested in trying to make a difference and want to facilitate change and developments in their schools and programmes. It is possible therefore, that this could be a shared endeavour and one that provides mutual benefits for senior management, staff and students. As highlighted by a student involved in partnership project work

...it would be nice to know that everything works, but it’s well known that not everything is perfect, so if you come with a problem and you want to try and come up with a solution, staff are more than happy to help you do it. Because at the end of the day, satisfaction and experience does reflect on them as well (Trevor, Group Interview Three).

Furthermore, the key message from the students' union sabbatical officer, student representatives and students involved in partnership work was that they got involved in this type of work to help develop the course not only for themselves and their fellow peers but also for students in subsequent years studying the programme. The following quotes were extracted from the group interview with student representatives and student project workers, providing a sense of why students were involved in this form of work and how it extended beyond their immediate peers

And then obviously there's the more sort of altruistic, helping to improve everyone and the course in general, um, so, sort of, those two factors that, kind of, appealed to me, sort of, pushed me in to it (James, Group Interview Two).

I think my massive thing with experience and satisfaction is helping first year students with that initial adjustment to university life, to lectures, to how to handle, for BTEC students how to handle exams. And for A-level students how you write an essay. Kind of dealing with those initial things that everybody struggles with, but everyone thinks they're alone struggling with them. So that was a massive thing for me, err, because I found first year difficult, and so to be able to help students all the years I've done it has been fantastic (Rebecca, Group Interview Three).

A limitation to the scope of the altruistic nature of student involvement is that not all students want to engage in or with the representation system. It would therefore suggest that this is not something that is exhibited within the whole student population and is possessed by what is known in some of the literature as *super-students*, students who want to get involved in everything. This form of wanting to develop the student experience as a whole is therefore maybe only exhibited by the select few and therefore there is a limit to the extent students wish to get involved. This is supported by the experiences of Management Team Member One who illustrates how despite concerted efforts they have learnt that student involvement in developing teaching and learning may not be the student's number one priority and there may be bigger influences

so...teaching and learning will be hopefully...be one of the biggest influences on what students see as their student experience. I guess what I've learnt in my job is it's not necessarily the biggest or most important. And maybe that's okay, I think that's a debate in itself, as to...whether students should always see their core formal teaching and learning activities as the centre or most important part of their...their student experience.

The chapter has outlined the different positions students adopt within the institution. The data and narrative provided shows how diverse the roles are that students adopt in the institution and how complex the arrangement is between the different competing imperatives as previously identified by Freeman (2014). What this chapter also clearly illustrates is that the student body is not a homogenous mass or a single entity and that different students want to and seek to gain different things from university. It may therefore always be hugely problematic to orchestrate a culture across the student body that wishes to engage in student partnership and co-creation, especially when the positions that students adopt or are required to adopt can pull in many different directions and serve so many different competing functions.

Chapter 7. Positions Offered to Students through Institutional Governance Mechanisms

The previous chapter demonstrates the complex arrangement and somewhat conflicting picture of the position students adopt in the student-university relationship, illustrating how student voice is influenced by the discourses and discursive positions offered to students in the institution. However, what this does not expose is the influence students can have within the positions or opportunities offered to them, to influence their learning environments within the constraints of the institution's governance mechanisms. As previously described, the institution has a very organised structure of how and where students can provide and input into the governance mechanisms influencing decision making formulating a block of capacity communication. The study sought to examine the impact of student voice on decision making in learning and teaching across the multiple levels of the institution and the power relations that exist between the institution, staff and students. This section draws upon the data collection tools and observations conducted, to examine both the positions offered to students and how student voice was incorporated within the mechanisms and process of the institution and the influence this has on decision-making at the different hierarchical levels.

7.1 Quality Assurance through Surveys and Module Evaluation

The use of metrics and data is common practice in higher education and is used by the case institution to help understand aspects of student performance and student satisfaction, taking a perspective across the whole institution. The case institution's strategic plan, identifies the aim of becoming a *Top 40* institution in relevant league tables. To achieve this the institution must perform well in key metrics utilised in public information that make up league tables, rankings and ratings, for example, the National Student Survey, employment statistics and student performance. The imposed measures by government to regulate the sector has developed the use of business models of operation by higher education providers to meet the expectations and increased scrutiny (Raaper, 2018). In practice, this is evident in the use of metrics utilised across the institution filtering down to use at college, school, programme and module level through surveys and tracking of performance. Senior Management Team Member One outlines how they aim to collect a lot of data across the different levels of the university and at different points of the student journey and from

classroom level to the national picture. On a number of occasions the senior management team highlight that data is very important, but it must be built up with other information to achieve the total picture. However, Management Team Member One highlights how nearly all questions across the surveys used in the institution assess student satisfaction on learning, teaching and the surrounding services and not on a student's own engagement. Externally the National Student Survey is seen as a key indicator of student satisfaction and is very prominent as one of the institutional drivers and forms part of the benchmarking, ratings and league table position theme.

Organisations such as the QAA advocate student involvement in the mechanisms of quality assurance and enhancement that inform governance mechanisms. However, the rhetoric utilised by government and creation of policy centres on the notion that the changes will empower the student (consumer) to be able to make informed decisions that will drive up standards (Morrison, 2017). As a result Naidoo and Jamieson (2005) suggest that the success of higher education institutions is now measured by the number of students it attracts, by the number of graduates securing well-paid jobs, generation of research and consultancy revenue, all of which is prominently and conveniently displayed in league tables used to assist consumer choice. These measures are therefore acting as proxy measures of quality to try and assure what happens in practice. The framing of the relationship between universities and students is therefore heavily consumer-focused and drives the emphasis placed on how student voice through such mechanisms is used. Under neoliberal notions of consumerism and competition universities must post impressive student satisfaction scores, league table positions and more recently TEF ratings to attract a student to study at a university. Therefore, student voice through surveys and how a student performs academically during their studies and in the job market have a direct impact on the metrics used to attract students.

The creation of such measures develops institutional practice to try and meet the external requirements set and used by the state. In the case institution emphasis is placed on the importance of the completion of the National Student Survey to staff through email communications and briefings. The focus of such communications is to provide an update on the internal strategy of how students will be alerted to the survey and encourage completion accompanied by the guidelines produced by IPSOS MORI (administrator of the National Student Survey) of what is and is not permissible to discuss with students. The guidance provided by the institution during the data collection period focussed on the relationship between the National Student Survey and the opportunity to students to provide their voice through the survey, the identification of the scale used to measure satisfaction and to alert students of the current national average which was 4.2/5.

The incentive to encourage students to complete the survey was via a media campaign offering free coffee and cake for completion. Heads of school and programme leaders are then updated weekly on completion rates to further encourage students to undertake the survey and meet the required rates to register a return.

The following Staff member discusses how they have become conscious that the number of surveys is increasing and believe that this is linked to the National Student Survey

... those kinds of mechanisms (the NSS and internal surveys) feel to me like we are very reliant on them in order to then construct... how we see our staff / student relationships or our institution / student relationship. And certainly, it's felt like there has been a shift (Staff Member Two).

Internally within the institution, students also identified how they feel sometimes overwhelmed by the number of surveys they receive across their time at university and describe it "as another thing to do, on top of everything else". Students suggest that there need to be different ways to gather information

students do wanna be engaged but they hate surveys because it's all we ever have... it is practically every week we've got a new survey... (School Representative Two).

In addition, it was highlighted by student representatives and students completing the survey used within this study, that one of the main problems is that the results are only valid for a particular group at a particular time and experiences are therefore constantly changing. Furthermore, students are not always clear on the relevance of the respective surveys and therefore do not see the need to engage with them or understand how the information will be utilised. A long-standing issue in higher education with respect to the use of surveys and obtaining information from students is the need to close the feedback loop (Robinson and Taylor, 2007; Little and Williams, 2010; Rogers et al., 2011; Carey, 2013b).

Student representatives and students surveyed considered that module evaluations were the main mechanism through which they could influence their learning and teaching and student experience. Elassy (2013) placed the opportunity to answer questionnaires as the lowest level of involvement a student could have in quality processes, but also identified that this form of interaction has the potential to include the most students.

At the case institution, the use of module evaluations has been long-standing. However, during the data collection period, centralised module evaluations were introduced for all modules across the institution; as a result this was a *hot topic* of conversation during the data collection period.

Students from the case institution highlighted that the previously run surveys by tutors at a module level had benefits, as all students were requested to complete it in class, increasing completion rates. However, they also highlighted that they had a perception that this was never recorded or evidenced anywhere and therefore tutors could choose to ignore the feedback provided. An aspect that also concerned senior management as staff were not *forced* to address poor feedback and scores. It was therefore highlighted that the use of central module evaluations has the potential to bridge the gap in helping influence change that was not there before.

On launch of the module evaluations, completion was incentivised by placing students in a prize draw with the winner receiving £5000 cash and 100 runners up receiving £100 each. In addition, this was accompanied by a media campaign run by the students' union

Module Evaluation – with just six questions it's as easy as ABC –Anonymous, Beneficial, Constructive

Tweets sent from the Students' Union Twitter account:

30th Nov "Fancy winning £5000? Complete your module evaluation with 100 prizes of £100 on offer too"

6th Dec "Fancy Five Grand? Or 1 in 100 chances to win £100? Fill in the module evaluation survey"

8th Dec "Like money? Complete your module evaluation and you could win £5000 or 1 in 100 for £100" (Students' Union Tweets).

The prize money put on offer was not perceived well by student representatives who believed that people were just filling out feedback not caring what they were saying to be in with a chance of winning the top prize. Students in the focus groups also agreed that they believed that most students were doing the evaluations to try and win some of the prize money, demonstrating how such forms of gleaning information from students may not assist in helping understand the student view.

Ownership of the survey and what questions should be included was heavily contested. Whilst the university senior management team describe that the evaluations are entirely independent from the University, the Students' Union report that the senior management team decided on the questions with no say from academics or the SU which caused conflict amongst staff. The students' union and student representatives acknowledged that they promoted completion of module evaluations as an opportunity for students to have a voice and document their issues in modules. It was rarely outlined that this was an opportunity to start a conversation and develop the teaching and learning through curriculum development projects or partnership work.

As a result of enforcing a centralised system some schools valued their own evaluations and tried to run these alongside the institutional ones run by the Students' Union, which the Students' Union outlined was not acceptable and requested student representatives to report offending schools / programmes. Staff perceptions were that centralised module evaluations are very consumer-focused and do not help staff add value to the module yet provide a supposedly objective perspective of the school and the university by "which we are ranked". In addition, staff highlighted that the focus of evaluations of this nature are negatively focused and therefore extrapolate the weaknesses of the module.

In its first iteration at the end of semester A (Dec, 2015) the module evaluation gleaned a 57% response rate, which dropped to just over 50% at the end of semester B (May, 2016). These statistics were deemed as favourable by the senior management team who believed that the norm in the sector was as low as 15-20% completion. Elassy (2013) identifies how the number of students completing such surveys is important as long as students are completing them carefully and considerately, which is difficult to assess in practice. On closing the module evaluations, the data was then provided back to the University whose business and intelligence team then applied RAG ratings and cascaded the information through dashboards to be accessible by the senior management team, heads of school, programme leaders and module leaders. However, it is evident that staff across the institution could view both the qualitative and quantitative comments, something that alarmed both staff and the Universities staff union. Modules that performed below the aspiration levels set by the senior management team and were identified that they may benefit from additional support were then passed to the University's learning and teaching support department.

The senior management team identified that the module evaluations provided a high number of suggestions that were very practical and gave some good proposal or ideas – to help us teach better. Through individual conversations with colleagues in the case institution, staff highlighted how they feel module evaluations are used as a surveillance tool to assess and monitor staff performance through comparisons and dashboards. Approaches such as this are an example of how proxy measures of quality are designed to encourage staff to self-regulate performance by reflecting on their student satisfaction scores, making changes to future delivery, developing and improving their modules and subsequent evaluation scores.

The Students' Union and student representatives highlighted that it was good that the evaluations were now centralised, as it was possible to be able to quantify the data and identify trends. Whilst the students' union believes it highlights very clearly where the issues were and provided a clear platform for students to provide and voice their opinion, it wasn't clear how staff would be required to address the results. The University's strategic plan suggests

Reps will close the feedback loop and work with the University to improve the satisfaction of students on their course (University Strategic Plan).

The use of module evaluations could be viewed as a potential opportunity to work in partnership with student representatives, however, in reality it was suggestive of a *student as consultant* role as staff and students were not clear of the mechanisms in place for students to work with staff in addressing solutions. Students from the case schools completing the survey indicated the following in relation to their thoughts on student input into the development of teaching and learning: 45% identified they should have an active role; 29% identified they should be partners with staff and 27% believed they should act as consultants. This demonstrates that there may be some appetite amongst students to support more active approaches to the development of teaching and learning, however, at the time of data collection this wasn't in place

The data provides evidence of criticism from both students and staff, identifying that they: were poorly timed before the module had finished; used generic questions that were not useful and did not accommodate the nuances of the individual modules and degrees; were a tick box exercise; provided polarised views on the same content; and that they did not influence the module whilst studying it. The data illustrates the disparity and inconsistencies in the use of surveys in particularly module evaluations. For example, students involved in the study identified that they believed module evaluations were one of the main mechanisms to provide student feedback, however,

students involved in the group interviews and the survey also indicated that they did not have much confidence in the use of module evaluations as often the comments did not result in any changes with reoccurring problems evident in specific modules and with certain tutors time after time.

A small number of staff and students did highlight that, as a result of module evaluation feedback, staff had followed up the scores and comments with cohorts to try and discuss the issues and identify a solution; however, from the interviews with students and staff this was not common practice, again demonstrating that using the evaluations is predominantly a consultative process as opposed to an active process to engage students. Staff did suggest that the qualitative comments can be very useful in understanding the strengths and weaknesses of a module, although they commented that often they do not always match up to the quantitative score provided. For example, low quantitative scores and good qualitative comments or lack of comments to suggest how the module could be improved.

Lastly, the use of the module evaluations created a lot of anxiety for staff and the feeling that they were being watched and that the data and the RAG ratings of module performance is visible to other staff across the school and the university. On a number of incidents colleagues expressed how troubling they were finding the use of module evaluations in this way and that they felt undermined, under scrutiny and that they were constrained to using tried and tested methods as opposed to new ideas in favour of being scored poorly. The following quote was taken from a personal conversation “A member of staff in my school tried something different and got really bad scores and is now worried how this will look to Senior Management – especially as she is going for promotion to Principal Lecturer” (Personal conversation as recollected).

The use of data and tools such as module evaluations and surveys fits with Foucault’s (2000) notion of governmentality and the development of a disciplinary society that is regulated through tools and tactics intended to guide and regulate the behaviour of individuals as supported by the evidence from staff discussed previously. The introduction of external surveys and metrics by government have placed institutions into competition causing institutions to regulate their own internal affairs through the creation of their own tools such as module evaluations that mimic customer satisfaction surveys and business models of practice. In addition, the introduction of RAG ratings and data dashboards as reported in the literature and data from the study allows staff across the institution to view university, college, school and individual module averages, creating an internal league table in itself and increasing pressure on staff to perform. The transition from staff undertaking their own

module evaluations to a centralised version has further positioned their use as a mechanism to get staff to self-regulate and address student feedback, reinforced by the students in the study as something they felt was positive and orientates to a consumerist position. Foucault (1980) outlines how the use of such techniques and strategies gains the productive service of individuals, gaining access to the bodies of individuals and power over their acts, attitudes and behaviour. The culture created by techniques of data dashboards and module evaluations and their visibility is one of surveillance, regulating practice to conform and score well in the prescribed metrics, meeting the customer demands of the student, attending to their needs in the hope of achieving good scores and feedback. There is a concern that engaging students in this manner does not encourage active participation and neglects the social structures, cultural values, relationships and practices of the relationships between staff and students and the practice of academic staff.

The use of satisfaction scores as a proxy measure for quality positions the use of student voice through evaluations and surveys and provision of their perspectives in a consultative manner, with institutions and staff responding in isolation in an attempt to try and increase standards of learning and teaching and keep the student body happy. As Fielding (2004), Rudduck and Fielding (2006) and Bragg (2007) highlighted previously the trend to consult learners about their experience is an attempt to raise standards and increase attainment, as opposed to reasons of personal and social development or active membership of their learning community. To change the current model of practice and emphasis on consulting with students would require a shift in practice to use the information gathered from surveys and evaluations as a start point and platform to work in partnership with students. Adopting such an approach would provide more agency to students and staff to develop teaching and learning collectively, repositioning the relationship and framing it more positively; instead of it feeling like a critical examination to staff where their performance is scrutinised and an end point they must seek to address and develop personally.

7.2 Student Representation within the University's Committee Structure

7.2.1 The Role of the Student Representative in Meetings

As previously outlined one of the main formal mechanisms that exists for students to provide feedback or contribute to decision-making is through the student representation structure. Student representatives are recruited via the students' union to provide a democratic and political function

on behalf of the student body. Part of the role and relationship between the university and the student's union is to provide student representation at all levels of the university from programme / school level to college / faculty level and finally institutional level, forming a key part of the University's governance structure and adhering to the QAA's Quality code. The following quote from a member of the senior management outlines the relationship

... the Students' Union has a responsibility to make sure that student representation works effectively. Erm, and that's all set out in the Partnership Agreement, and it's all set out what we give them their block grant for, what we give them their money for... and they know they have responsibilities, but as part of that, they also have rights... as our Students' Union, even though they're a separate organisation (Senior Management Team Member Two).

Part of the role of the research study was to identify how much agency student representatives had within the meetings, specifically looking at the relationship between staff and students and the input students have on decision-making. This section utilises Foucault's overarching power knowledge nexus to determine the influence students are provided in meetings. As Bevir (1999) identifies, for a subject to be recognised as an agent, resistance must be encouraged that promotes and tolerates difference. In addition, the work of Habermas helps reflect on the individual's understanding and meaning to the contribution of knowledge that is shaped in meeting situations within the institution, as illustrated in Chapter three.

Adopting observations of committees across school, college and university level helped to understand how the relationship between staff and students operated and how this linked to decision-making. What was overwhelming from the meetings was the level of reporting or dissemination of information in the committees, which was generally provided by a more senior figure in the committee. Almost 60% of the interactions that occurred in the meetings were reporting and or dissemination of information. The general premise of this information was to either cascade the information up or down the hierarchical pyramid from schools – college – university. Such use of committee structures could be described as a *super highway* of information through the University with different inlets and outlets, illustrating the organisation and flow of information through the institute, for further details see Figure 5.1 and 5.2.

In addition, it was evident that a key role of the committees was to receive papers and reports from other committees or reports from projects; members of the meetings were required to review these documents for information often with limited scope to ask questions or discuss their implications.

Working in this manner works on the assumption that staff and students will take this information and utilise it where necessary. There is an emphasis on how the hierarchy of the university and the chair attempts to gain the productive services of individuals, attempting to get members to self-regulate and adopt tasks to meet the needs of the organisation (Foucault, 1980).

At a practical level the observations illustrated how the reporting and dissemination function in the meetings was set by the agenda in most instances from the more senior figures in the meetings. One school observed did set the agenda with student representatives through a pre-meeting but in large this was the exception. Such an approach demonstrates the controlling the narrative of what can and cannot be discussed, and limits the input from individuals in the meeting and therefore the majority of members (staff and student representatives) are passive recipients and not active agents. The meetings are so heavily burdened with the requirement for reports and papers to formally pass through that the opportunity to engage in dialogue and discussion by members is sparse.

Beyond reporting, staff-led discussion accounted for approximately 17% of interactions on the agenda. Frequently the debate, especially at a college level, did not actively invite student input, with the discussion mainly led by the chair with staff input. The types of issues often centred around aspects such as: quality assurance; student satisfaction, retention, achievement data generated internally and externally; reports from academics in service departments and schools to advise on pre-determined matters, all with limited scope for discussion. It could be viewed that the examples provided is illustrative of Foucault's (2000) notion of governmentality, exercising power through the use of surveillance mechanisms and tactics that attempt to normalise behaviour and alter practice, procedures, analyses and reflections. For example, the reporting of employability statistics and salaries or achievement data represented as a percentage of *good honours* classifications benchmarked against previous years, college, university and the sector levels.

Such strategies are performative and promote what Lemke (2010) and Ball (2013) outline as the development of an active society by the production of autonomous individuals that are lean, fit, flexible and agile. The neoliberal mechanisms illustrate how pastoral power utilises surveillance and data as technologies of the self to regulate the institution as a whole, which transcends and feeds down through the hierarchical levels of the institution, to the practice of individuals. As Ball (2012) outlines, the regimes of performativity do not acknowledge experience and instead build on last year's efforts as a benchmark for improvement, for example, staff are required to meet the key

performance indicators determined by senior management that are then transcended down the chain through the various levels of committees and gate keepers to identify the need for increased output: better student satisfaction data, increased student numbers, increased number of students gaining good honours degrees and getting graduate level employment, more publications and generation of external income through grants and consultancy. Examining the function of how committees operate and the endemic use of data to inform its every function and practice it is evident that the approaches of neoliberalism, marketisation and performativity are accounted as true in the case study institute, regulating practice through the exercise of pastoral power.

The input of students and staff in meetings through open discussion items were used infrequently and only represented 7% of the interactions in meetings and were often set up by the chair as discussion items requiring formation of groups from the committee on a particular area. When students were provided with the scope and opportunity to engage in the meetings, students were much more animated and interactive even when they were not central to deciding on the discussion item. In addition, student representatives would frequently feed this information back to the group in the meeting illustrating that these items were not solely staff led.

At an institutional and college level the chairs of meetings that have a central function to discuss learning and teaching acknowledge that the agenda and purpose has led to the meetings becoming a recipient of minutes and reports from sub groups (Senior Management Team Member One and Management Team Member 2). As a result of the highly ordered procedures and regulations that govern an institution the chairs of the meetings have limited scope to be able to offer any alternatives and models of working with students that reimagine the relationship as an active democracy and promote student and staff voice to work in partnership (Habermas, 1972). The relationship between staff and students in meetings is therefore constrained by the overarching governance mechanisms and the procedures and regulation that restrict the members to act freely.

From all the meetings observed only approximately 14% of the interactions were student-led discussion and centred on areas they would like developing or problems that affect their studies such as feedback (timing / quality / quantity), rooms (space / facilities timetables), and quality of content. Considering that one of the main roles of these meetings particularly at a school level is for students to table items for discussion, this is a particularly low level. At a school level, there is some evidence of trying to incorporate or promote a more active student voice and partnership approach, through the terms of reference for subject committee meetings that indicate a student

representative should co-chair the meeting. The use of a co-chair provides the process of interest and action to enable the pursuit of reflection and emancipatory cognitive interest (Habermas, 1972). However, out of the three schools observed only two schools (B and C) had a student co-chair, who was the School Student Representative, partnering a more senior member of the school.

In addition, from the subject committee meetings observed in the three schools, representing each college, two of the schools (B and C) provided opportunity for students to raise discussion items. School B had a pre-meeting between the co-chairs and student representatives to determine the agenda items. School C provided the opportunity for students to table *issues* in the meeting. Over the course of all three-subject committee meetings spread across the academic year in School A, there was no evidence of co-chairing. In addition, in School A students were not provided with any opportunity to raise or add to the agenda. The agenda in School A was determined by the Chair of the meeting who was a senior figure in the School, the meeting format did enable students to engage in pre-determined discussion on matters central to learning and teaching but students were not able to influence what was discussed. This was identified as an issue by student representatives in this school

I think if they're going to invite us to the academic subject meetings then we should be able to have five minutes where we can just, you know, air our grievances and just bring up some things, if there is something that needs to be brought up. Those are quite useful meetings if, if we had, you know, the ability to speak up in them. There's not even like an any questions, sort of, area for the staff, you know, it's just telling, it, it's just, kind of, led and telling the, err, the staff what's going on (James, Group Interview Two).

In terms of agency and the level of knowing that is afforded to student representatives this is clearly dependent on the local arrangements and illustrates how within an institution it is difficult to adopt institutional procedures that promote a partnership approach, such as the one advocated by Healey et al. (2014). It also demonstrates how the power processes and regulated communications provide coded signs of obedience and a hierarchical structure that can work to silence student voice in the very structures designed to promote it. This demonstrates an empirical / analytical form of knowing between the institutional staff and student whereby the power relationship is unequal and in favour of the academic staff and administration.

7.2.2 Transformative Relationships in Meetings

From the meetings observed the general trend across the institution was that meetings were structured in a hierarchical manner that did not work to alter the power relations between staff and students, promoting democratic relationships with students. However, there was evidence in some schools across the university of more transformative relationships in meetings that encouraged open discussion and dialogue with students. In such spaces, students highlighted how they valued the open nature and discussion of the meetings and in some instances both academic staff and students seemed to be much more willing to both provide and accept student ownership and let them lead on solutions or suggestions, aligned to the definition of student voice in this study. As the student below highlights, when they are involved in decision-making it is valued by the students who contribute

It really is amazing that at university we still have such a great say in what we're doing. So, a lot of the time it could be minor changes to how a module is assessed. Or it could be an entirely new module where we're trying to decide who it should be open to (Trevor, Group Interview Three).

Subject committees and meetings involving students could be seen as what Habermas (1972) identifies as a knowledge-constitutive interest where staff and students can work together to create and arrive at a mutual understanding. From the observations carried out it is evident that the format of the meeting was critical in helping develop more equal relationships where staff and students could contribute on an equal footing, in agreement with Carey (2013b) and Canning (2016) who identified this as a previous concern. When committees are structured to encourage participation by all members then there is a shift in the relationship between the academic and student to a historical / hermeneutic type of knowing (Lovat et al., 2004). During the data collection School B's subject committee meetings progressed over the academic year towards more discursive agenda items that encouraged and fostered student representatives and staff to engage in discussion. In the last subject committee meeting of the academic year in School B, staff and students discussed a number of agenda items related to classroom management and welcome week (induction of new starters to the institution). Students were placed in small groups with academic staff, with both parties contributing openly to the discussion, debating, challenging assumptions and developing solutions and agreed actions.

The following information highlights the specific nature of the discussion taken from one of the discussion items denoted during the observation. A member of staff outlined the discussion item which centred on classroom management by staff and the inappropriate engagement of students in a classroom / lecture environment.

The staff member highlighted the following examples, use of YikYak during sessions (an anonymous messaging app, for people within a 5 mile radius) in an offending manner regarding staff and students, watching you tube, signing register then leaving. The staff member requested groups to discuss how these issues should be addressed. The following extract illustrates how one group undertook this task.

Group 3 –Straight away the students were involved and wanting to provide their opinion in a free flowing discussion. Initial ideas proposed by the student representatives were quite radical such as enforcement approaches –outright ban on mobile phones / laptops. Some staff in the group felt uneasy by this and also felt uncomfortable approaching students about conduct. The staff and students agreed however, that they needed a policy and the question was raised whether this was in the student charter – this was identified by a member of staff who accessed the student handbooks. There was a sense that this isn't enough and staff should set boundaries and expectations – staff were clearly reflecting on this issue during the meeting and questioning how they did or didn't deal with this problem. Students also expressed how they believe some staff command authority and whilst others don't. Students also identified how YikYak works and how students can get around the block on the University server by using network signal as opposed to the central University Wi-Fi. Students themselves also identified how they believe they have a role as reps in helping deal with the situation alongside staff members as they appreciated the difficulty in dealing with the issue.

Following the discussion and feedback from other groups, which represented similar views to the group that was focussed upon. Actions were agreed and outlined following open discussion between staff and students. Which for this example was that a School Policy on Classroom Management needed to be circulated with an accompanying message from Head of School regarding use of YikYak. In addition staff were encouraged to outline the ground rules in the first lecture of the term.

The open discussion and debate in the example provided was very different to the majority of other examples observed through the data collection of meetings. The students engaged with staff on an

equal footing, in a manner beyond consultation with each group accepting each other's view and taking this on board to produce collective actions that would hopefully benefit both groups. This was the last meeting observed in School B at the end of the second semester so it was not possible to follow the example through and see whether the actions addressed the issues raised. The key difference between this meeting and others was that the discussion was fluid, open ended and ultimately engaging for all involved and much more discursive than other meetings and formats that did not encourage engagement due to the regulated communication and signs of obedience that members felt compelled to demonstrate in highly ordered meetings, controlled by formulated agendas. Following the meeting there was a buzz in the room that something meaningful had been achieved, I overheard staff members discussing how they'd enjoyed the meeting "I enjoyed today's committee, I don't often normally say that!" and illustrated that meetings of this nature brought staff and students together, creating engagement, development of relationships and mutual respect. Meetings conducted in this manner provided space and time for discursive topics that enabled student representatives and staff to collaborate, negotiate and develop a shared understanding and meaning of a subject. In a Habermasian sense these examples illustrate how power was distributed and shared, aligned to emancipatory critiques of student voice and provide the basis for a more democratic and inclusive relationship between staff and students

7.2.3 Legitimacy of Student Issues

Beyond the provision of space in meetings to openly discuss aspects of student provision there are also clear contradictions in what can be termed legitimate issues that students are allowed to table, discuss and work together on in meetings. The definition of student voice adopted in this study, provided by Seale (2009) is to work with staff in partnership, adopting a shared responsibility for developing learning and teaching. A number of students and representatives demonstrated frustration around perennial issues with certain lecturers' teaching styles, marking of work and provision of feedback, which was a constant source of angst amongst students. Students identified that following conversations with peers from previous cohorts it was evident that some staff were notorious for receiving criticism from students and never being able to do anything about it

... it's a sensitive issue, to say to someone 'You're not a very good lecturer', and when it comes to things like that... it's kind of almost like we can't really do anything, for someone who's not an effective lecturer, and is not kind of engaging with students the way they could. But then, at the same time, I think 'Well, why shouldn't we be able to talk about that

or say something about that?' ...they almost sort of take it away from the students when it's really the students they should be listening to. So obviously, I wouldn't want to sit across from the table at a lecture and say 'Your lecture's boring'... I'd kind of want to say, you know, 'Have you thought about maybe doing this? The students have told me that this would be really effective in your lecture' or 'Students have said they're not sure about this bit and they were hoping that you could do more of this'. So, I feel like, if anything, students should be more involved with talking to lecturers about their teaching style more than they are (School Representative One)

I think...the idealistic view is it should be working with the staff and working to solve issues. The reality is essentially you complain to staff and hope for the best... sometimes that works, sometimes it doesn't, it's...it should be more of a dialogue (Geoff, Group Interview 2).

The above examples illustrate the type of issues that students believe are important. Members of the senior management team identify that they believe that student representatives are good at collecting and using the student voice and that noisy disagreements are good. However, a member of the senior management team outlines that in order to engage students, student representatives and staff to a deeper level requires some discomfort and potentially threatening situations

it means those students, if they're causing the degree to be real, should increasingly as they go through it, they should become agents of what the reality is... and that would be, kind of, unbounded. But at the moment I think that runs the risk of... threatening. And sometimes appropriately threatening and sometimes inappropriately threatening that sense that academics know what they're doing. We do know what we're doing. We know how to teach a degree in our discipline... but it's quite useful to be challenged in that all the time... It's quite difficult to give students enough responsibility and voice to really challenge that, rather than just, you know, could we have three lectures on a Wednesday rather than a Friday, or could you give us your PowerPoint's a bit ahead. But going much deeper to the level of maybe, you know, can we question what we're learning. We explore different domains (Senior Management Team Member One).

However, in reality it does not appear that students are always able to provide 'noisy disagreements'. For example, both students and student representatives identified that generally they have had greater issues when dealing with aspects related to teaching quality, poor or inconsistent delivery, or lecturers not following school policy. However, student representatives are briefed through

training provided by the Students' Union that they should not identify specific staff and modules when highlighting issues. In addition, in practice, there is a clear sense of what can and cannot be discussed in a public forum and therefore a sign of obedience on the student's behalf to stick to what may be identified as legitimate issues, indicating the power processes in effect in the University's governance structures. This may be due to the sensitive nature of the discussion and the criticism that a staff member may be required to deal with in a public forum. However, when this becomes a perennial problem, students feel powerless to be able to influence change and feel let down by the system and utilise consumerist rhetoric to legitimise why they should not have to "put up with it". The student representatives therefore feel devoid of agency and that they do not have the power or authority to be able to develop solutions. This illustrates how the student voice is silenced on certain issues and it is not clear what processes or mechanisms are in place or how aspects such as this can be addressed. Bevir (1999) suggests that in order to develop a good society and recognise the subject (student) as an agent, resistance must be encouraged, tolerated and differences promoted, something that is often lacking in this context of the case institution during meetings.

7.3 Student Voice through Informal Channels

Canning (2016) has suggested that student-voice not only encompasses the formal feedback and mechanisms but it also includes the informal feedback provided by students to their institution. This was evident from the focus groups and interviews with students, who highlighted the value they placed on informal opportunities such as impromptu conversations or emails through to schemes such as the student recruiters or insight scheme. Such processes often resulted in communication between staff and students at various levels and often provided illuminating information about the student experience or ideas and solutions. Canning (2016) has illustrated this previously by identifying that perhaps the most helpful student voice is through informal discussion, the one-on-one conversation in the corridor, or as Canning describes a eureka moment when addressing a particular issue in class.

Students suggested that the most commonly used channels to provide feedback were to the school office or to academic staff at the end of sessions or in one to one and group tutorials. This emphasises the importance of the role and prominence that the personal tutor and academic can

play and was highly valued by students. This is possibly due to the relationship and rapport that is developed between students and staff, reducing the formality and power relations. Some students suggested that providing feedback via these channels may be more authentic and valid as opposed to the formal, more impersonal and untimely mechanisms (Crawford, 2012). Students also valued it when staff took the time to check-in regularly throughout a module instead of at the end of a module via evaluations, as the following student describes

I have found that the modules I tend to be happier with are the ones where they sort of check-up and instead of just doing like a module evaluation at the end, we had, it was a new module this year and every few weeks my lecturer would check up and say, look do you want things different, is this focusing on areas that you want it to because like these are the sort of things we can cover, is this good. And it felt like we were really engaged with what we learning and it also felt like she cared about what we were doing, which was really nice because sometimes it does feel a bit like lecturers are very disengaged and they just sort of put a PowerPoint on every now and again. But it is, I find it really nice when a lecturer seems to care and wants to hear your feedback and is happy to sort of ask you further about things you've got to say (Donna, Group Interview Four).

A member of the management team also highlighted how students in schools with strong communities often created better relationships between staff and students

It might be the tutor having those smaller individual conversations that picks up the issues or what's going well and we don't...we kind of let those happen and we want to encourage more of them, but we don't try and...force them to happen, because we turn it into another process and...so the informal stuff is really very important and I would argue that its schools where we anecdotally know there are better relationships and more of a sense of community where students are happier...and certainly the staff become more engaged in developing their own practice and in teaching and learning... So it's very important. (Management Team Member One).

Student representatives also suggested that using formal channels was often not the most efficient way to get something changed or actioned and acting as a go between the staff and students verbally or via email was often more productive. For example, seeking clarification or reassurance on small matters such as questions regarding assessments or timings that required a quick response. The student representatives highlighted the key to effective informal channels is the relationships

and rapport that students and staff have developed. In addition, student representatives highlighted that it was a necessity to have informal channels of communication and dialogue as the more formal approaches such as subject committees would only occur 2 or 3 times per academic year. As a consequence, the data collection exposed how schools have developed a number of different approaches:

- scheduled monthly meetings for a small number of staff and students to discuss items in an informal manner, although in some areas the meetings are recorded and minutes are taken;
- themed school events with staff and students to discuss a particular area or problem;
- informal meetings for students to discuss course related aspects with the Head of School.

Staff also spoke about how they felt that it was their duty to be available after sessions to assist students if they had any questions or that they were happy to discuss aspects in the corridor or in informal spaces such as the café without the requirement of prior notice. It is important to note that these comments came from staff members who had the title of Student Engagement Champions and therefore have a willingness and openness to want to assist students. Furthermore, when students and student representatives have issues regarding a higher issue than school level, students will often try to get the help of a staff member who may have a contact in a relevant department who can assist. However, student representatives still expressed that there was a lack of metaphorical space to discuss informally with whole student groups or cohorts, which was also echoed by some staff members. Scheduling time and space around busy academic calendars was seen as problematic and a challenge.

At a college level, senior staff also tried to create ways of interacting with the student body through informal themed areas, such as physical space for students, consistency and feedback for assessment. These were however, not very well attended and often did not engage with many students. At a university level a number of events are held to try and engage with the wider student body, such as suppers or rep reception with senior management, with selected students invited to such events and subsequently attempting to communicate with a representative sample. However, when discussing such approaches with student representatives they highlighted how such approaches often still felt intimidating. Even when informal events that were designed to try and reduce formality and power and run in an informal manner, students reported that they still appear formal and overwhelming. For example, an informal tea or meeting with the Head of School or with

the Deputy Head of College or College Director of Learning and Teaching are seen as a big deal due to their status in the academic hierarchy. As the following quotes from students highlight

I think when I advertise the event to students; I was like Deputy Head of College and Director of Education Studies, everyone was like, 'Woh! This is gonna be very, very formal.' (Laughing) But like it's quite a laid-back atmosphere, they both open the floor, I know that ***** was going round last time we held an event and talking to students on an individual basis (Senior Student Representative).

there's usually a couple of times a semester you can go talk to like the Head of School and different people... And really if you've never met them before that's a really intimidating thing to go and do, so I feel like even though for us that opportunity is available and if we had ideas, but really, it's probably a lot easier to go through the formal channels of school rep and course rep (Donna, Group Interview 4).

It is therefore evident that as suggested by Foucault (1982) that the effects of pastoral power created by government and the discourses discussed previously flow through the consciousness in such a way that the individual internalises the laws, rules and norms of how to regulate themselves. In higher education institutions the power-knowledge nexus is complex and established through the clearly ordered and regulated communications and a pyramidal hierarchy of power from the senior management through to staff and students. Therefore, the nature of power that comes with status and hierarchical position creates regulated communications in social situations and, whilst informal ways of relating to students may seem open and accessible, they are still bound by the pre-established communications and power processes and seen as daunting and intimidating by students. In addition, the reasoning and motives behind such informal processes is governed by the overarching discourses that define their use and purpose. There is therefore a presiding tension between performative and marketised discourses and student voice in this manner. Management members also questioned the legitimacy of such events and whether students would actually provide open and honest responses given the dynamics of power at play in conversations with senior managers.

In addition, it was highlighted how formal schemes, such as the insight scheme or students as recruiters / validation panels, brought staff and students together, creating and building a rapport between senior staff members and students and providing a more open casual discussion as a by-product. Such opportunities and discussion enabled aspects of learning and teaching and the

student experience to be discussed on an informal level with management that would not have occurred otherwise. Therefore, under the notions of student voice and partnership such schemes may position the student as an agent and as an individual who is willing to interrogate the social norms and given identities, challenging the status quo.

Important aspects to consider are whether these channels actually lead to change, whether informal discussions of this nature are representative of the student body or a single voice and whether staff have the right to utilise the information provided. As the following extract highlights from a member of the senior management there are some important issues to consider when examining the scope of formal and informal mechanisms and processes.

...I think you need both (formal and informal mechanisms)...because if you just have the formal, then you're only going to, quite frankly, you're only going to deal with a certain set of types of things, that always go through that kind of arena, and you'll miss out on all sorts of other stuff (Senior Management Team Member Two).

Whilst the use of informal feedback was highlighted as useful, it is perhaps important that it remains just that – informal. Any attempt to create it into a process or include it within a governance model has the potential to stifle its use and risks being used as a mechanism, there are however, some points that need consideration. Opportunity for discussion and dialogue needs to be provided to students in friendly spaces, further to this, space needs to be provided for students in their programmes to consult with their peers. Thought and consideration should also be provided as to whether the information gathered through informal situations can be utilised effectively to create and develop meaningful actions where staff and students work together proactively. The Following example provides a great example of how the provision of the right environment can develop initiatives from student enthusiasm and creativity.

Both the School representative and Staff Member interviewed in School C were able to illustrate how the informal sessions produced some meaningful outcomes; they identified how School C met once a month in a communal area in their building generally led by either the Head of School or the Student Engagement Champion. The regular get together provided an opportunity to discuss the programmes, ideas or related issues. The following example was taken from the interview with the School Representative from School C who set-up a new initiative in the School called Directors Challenge, something that was presented in an informal get together

yeah, it was a student idea, it came about last year... when I was running for school rep, someone suggested it. Erm, they said they wanted more directing competition kinda chances and director's challenge is something I did at secondary school, so I pitched the idea to the students and the students loved it... so then I brought it forward to **** and **** and they loved it and they were like, "We're fully behind you," and then we sent emails round tutors... to get their opinion and it got really good positive feedback, so from there we've had help from **** who is the **** ****, he's worked really well on it... He's helped me... book out the theatre, book out the tech team, as well as the reps helping me with the student side of it, the publicising it and getting the guest list ready and they're gonna help me on the night... so it's worked really well. It's been really nice as well to like have that whole like school involved and have a full-on event.

For Foucault, power is always bound with knowledge and suggests it is not possible to talk from a position outside of discourse and therefore there is no escape from the truth effects that are created through these. There is therefore a need to exercise caution and consider the authenticity of data provided by students to senior managers in both formal and informal settings and whether the data is a product of the discourses it is confined within or whether there is the potential for students to challenge the status quo.

7.4 Discursive Position of the Student Voice in Decision-making

Bergan (2003) and Plannas et al. (2013) identify that a key function and purpose of a university is to serve as participative spaces where students learn through example and practice, including democratic principles and how these can be applied to society. Monbiot (2017) also suggests that restoring a community focus in institutions offers an alternative to neoliberal approaches. The previous processes highlighted in Chapter 5 indicate the formal and informal processes through which students can be involved in governance mechanisms in the case study institution. However, to develop democratic relationships with students and provide shared responsibility of the institution through democratic processes it is important to consider how decisions are made through the formal and informal channels at school, college or university level. In particular, it is important to consider how staff and students can work more co-operatively and are provided with space and opportunity to input in to the decision-making processes of the institution. In a marketised sector,

institutions and staff wish to assess and improve performance in all manner of aspects of learning and teaching, as a result of a requirement to meet the expectations of the regulatory bodies in the higher education sector and to assist in developing good relations with students, producing satisfied customers and scoring well on surveys and benchmarks.

The data provided thus far illustrates the potential that the student representation structure has on enabling students to input in to decision making, which is in agreement with previous work undertaken by Brooks et al. (2015). At the case institution students are provided with representation at all levels of meetings that have a direct relevance to students. Specifically, as highlighted previously at a school level, subject committee meetings are a critical space where students should be provided with the opportunity to discuss and influence learning and teaching related matters (Carey, 2013b) and could be seen as a site for students to engage through communicative capacity through to communicative action (Habermas, 1972).

Therefore, the role and function of student representatives and their involvement in decision-making is a key determinant in identifying the level of agency students have within the University's governance structures. From the observation of meetings at school, college and institutional level a large proportion (approximately 55%) of the meetings' agenda items failed to provide a decision or outcome due to the reporting and dissemination nature of the items as highlighted previously. From the remaining interactions on the agenda approximately 13% of the decisions were made by the chair, 20% by other members of staff in the meeting, 2% by students and 9% by staff and students.

Working with students in a consultative capacity was prevalent in the meetings, the issues or areas of the agenda items were frequently documented with little discussion and then taken away by staff, to work on a resolution and reported back to students at a later date or subsequent meeting.

Utilising Habermas' theory of knowing, the majority of the interactions in the meetings represent a technical level of control which looks to establish all the facts, figures and information regarding learning and teaching at the relative institutional level (school, college and university). According to Habermas this is again illustrative of an empirical / analytical form of knowing, where the relationship is a hierarchical one in which the staff and senior managers hold the power, with little to none held by the student, student representative or sabbatical officer. Carey (2013b) has previously highlighted that programme-based committees are not fit for purpose and are often viewed as intimidating places by students. As suggested by Brooks et al. (2015) previously, that

whilst there was lots of conversation between students and staff, decisions were often made outside meetings or at times students' union representatives were not available.

At the case institution students and student representatives taking part in the focus group, highlighted that they did not necessarily have an issue with staff making decisions, as the representatives have a sense of fulfilling their role and, at the same time, not overburdening themselves and interfering with their studies. As illustrated by the following student representatives

I think it's an issue of trust and, you know, we've got to trust them... we trust them to go away, look at the issue and try and come up with a satisfactory... solution for both parties (Ross, Group Interview One).

I think... I think it's good that they listen to how we want things resolved, cause obviously, they affect us. So, we know, like, how it could be fixed. But we, we are just students and ... they know a lot more about the procedures and that (Vicky, Group Interview One).

Therefore, for some students they feel that the University and staff should be making the decisions and echoes the notion of a consultative consumerist relationship. In addition, student representatives appear to accept their role and lack of decision-making power within this relationship

Although I am a Rep, I don't really have any sort of decision-making power, in terms of actually affecting change. All I can do is present a good case for something and let the staff members or the actual university make a decision. Which is totally fine with me, because most of the time they'd make a good decision, or a decision in favour of what I've put forward (School Representative One).

Staff in the institution also agree that the decision-making powers are held by staff

I think staff still hold a lot of that decision-making power, more than I would like them to. I think I'd like to relinquish a bit more to students (Staff Member One).

At an institutional level the University's Strategic Plan outlines that they will create workspaces, which facilitate debate and discussion, enabling better decision-making. Senior Management also outlined that they believe students have a lot of influence on decisions in the support services, such as the library and catering, which tried to engage in joint decision making with students. Senior

Management at the case institution suggested that students have the potential to have the biggest decision-making influence at an institutional level, supporting both Brooks et al. (2015) and Raaper (2018) who identified the greater emphasis that is now placed on the student representation structure and the relationships held between the Students' Union and Senior Management of institutions.

However, senior school and college student representatives challenge this notion that the requirement to sit on a number of boards and meetings between college and university level leads to the promotion and development of student voice. Senior school representatives identified that they felt they had little impact or power in these meetings and often felt that they couldn't contribute. Echoing the suggestions made by Brooks et al. (2015) and Raaper (2018) who noted that whilst institutions are providing students a stronger voice in governance structures the relationships are still unequal, limiting critical questioning and activist positions. The structure of the governance mechanisms again illustrates the influence the capacity-communication-power and its organisational structure of meetings and the level of involvement provided to students has on the opportunity for students to engage in decision-making. In reality, the following quote by the Senior Student Representative identifies that they feel they do not have any decision-making power or influence in higher up decisions, illustrating that students sitting on a committee meeting does not automatically lead to students being able to adopt the position ascribed to them, due to the pyramidal hierarchy and power processes experienced

Because it's okay saying, 'Yeah I'm sitting on all those boards,' but do I really have a say in what's happening? Not really (Senior Student Representative).

Adopting Seale's (2016) amplitude framework would suggest that it is important to consider and plan how it is possible to enable meaningful mechanisms to respond to the student voice and for university personnel to consider how they can act on this information. An important factor contributing to the willingness to engage in partnership with students is therefore down to the readiness of both staff members and the school / student representatives to contribute to the meeting and the inclination and enthusiasm to engage in collaborative methods and distribution of responsibility and power. As the following student representative highlights, there is still some very difficult challenges that need to be faced on how students can provide feedback when it may affect or question someone who holds a position of influence as a lecturer or a senior member of staff

And often...a lot of the complaints that I have with modules are based upon direct action from the tutors, and often those tutors are in the subject committees. So, to, sort of, in the middle of a committee go, Well, the reason we don't like this module is because of the way you're delivering it and the way that you've done this, and it becomes more of an attack on that person (Geoff, Group Interview Two).

There is still therefore a fundamental issue with the legitimacy of the student issues and the difficult position in which students are placed, during student-staff meetings. Meetings can often feel intimidating to the student and echoes the points highlighted by Carey (2013b). Consideration, therefore, needs to be placed to what Seale (2016) terms participatory and ethical validity in student voice projects which extend to student representation, providing *space* to enable students' appropriate opportunities to input in meaningful ways with reciprocal opportunities for staff to act and work with the student/s.

In addition, to the pyramidal hierarchy and influence of power that constrains the involvement of SU officers and representatives to provide the student voice, it is evident that student representatives or sabbatical officers make up a small minority of the individuals in these meetings. Therefore, whilst students are represented at an institutional level and have formal voting powers at academic board, the student body do not have equal representation and are outnumbered by staff, thus diluting their impact, which again echoes the findings of Carey (2013a). However, despite the unequal representation a member of the management team believes that sabbatical officers are able to influence decisions at an institutional level

I think they (sabbatical officers) probably have the most potential to influence decision making at the university level. I think that Students' Union officers do have the potential to put things onto the agenda and determine the decision...determine what decisions are being made and influencing the outcome of the decisions. I don't think they do very effectively at the minute... for a number of reasons, but that's where they have the most potential but it's probably one of the less effective areas (Management Member One).

From the observations undertaken at an institutional level, it was clear how sabbatical officers had the opportunity to provide comment on a number of issues. For example, a member of staff presented a proposal at a university level committee that students should not be allowed to submit assessments due to poor attendance. Following the proposal the chair provided opportunity for open discussion which staff members contributed to, the sabbatical officers, however, did not

contribute to an issue that could have a large impact on its student constituents. Through this example staff in the meeting fought the corner for students and not the sabbatical officers present and it is not clear why the elected officers did not offer their views or oppose such a proposal and could be viewed as an example of how the unions may becoming depoliticised (Klemenčič, 2011) due to the relationship between unions and senior management and their reliance upon one another to maintain competitiveness in institutional rankings (Klemenčič 2014; Raaper, 2018).

The forms of relationship and positioning of the student within the formal decision-making processes fit with the neoliberal discourses that place an emphasis on the need to constantly improve performance often via consultation with the student body as opposed to more collaborative partnership models. Student voice under this conception of truth is therefore defined by one which provides or allows students to speak and provide their perspectives, with institutions and staff responding in isolation in an attempt to try and increase standards of learning and teaching and keep the student body happy, again representative of an empirical / analytical form of knowing where the academic staff are the experts and hold the power in the relationship (Lovat et al., 2004; Lovat, 2013).

As the previous section suggests, how, where and the level of engagement students are provided within the institution's governance processes, is a product of how discourses are coupled together by power and knowledge, producing subjects and shaping practice. The subjects, in this case students, academic staff and senior managers, are constituted by the overarching discourses and social context influencing the practice of individuals. Whilst the move to include students in democratic relationships with their institution is apparent, it is influenced and defined by a truth that is articulated by the economy and state together (Ball, 2012), which in turn inhibits, constrains and helps formulate the rules for what governs participation of students in the institutional governance mechanisms.

The specific formulation of the rules that govern truth are evident through a number of factors that are limiting the input of students as agents in meetings. The first is a result of external power and apparatus used by government to control and normalise individuals (Foucault, 1982, Bevir, 1999). The second is connected to the structure and function of the governance processes and the attempt to involve and engage students. Brown and Carasso (2013) suggested that quality assurance is provided by market competition and is shared between institutions, individually and collectively, the state and the market. It could therefore be suggested that the conditions created by the state to

create market competition, filter down to the governance processes of the institution to the individual. The result of the engrained and embedded discourses and the coupling of power and knowledge creates subjects that internalise the relevant laws, rules, procedures and norms of the meeting or environment of the institution, regulating the students' involvement, speech and actions in the particular setting and has an important influence on decision making.

Chapter 8. Unpicking the Student-University Relationship

The previous chapters have highlighted the discourses that contribute to the development and regulation of truth in the case institution and the effect this has on how students are involved in governance mechanisms, promoting, enabling or hindering the student-university relationship. The discourses identified open up a number of possibilities for what position or function it is possible to take up and are defined as student voice: agent through representation; market force through the National Student Survey; academic partner; customer satisfaction; and lastly a greater good. The discourses and the positions students take up, opens up the possibilities of how student, staff and senior managers can input into the conversation. The previous sections have highlighted how the main mechanisms to enable students to contribute to the quality assurance and enhancement and decision making was through the use of internal and external surveys, module evaluations, student representation, institutional committee structures and informal mechanisms. This configuration of how students fit within the student-university relationship open up and close down the possibilities for action and what can and cannot be said or done through the confines of the aforementioned structure. The following section is the last section of the analysis and discussion and outlines the effect that the current system has on the student-university relationship and the consequences and tensions that are born out of the relationship and conflicting discourses.

This section will examine the consequences of adopting student voice in different ways and what can be felt or experienced by students, staff and senior managers through these conceptions. Jorgensen and Phillips (2002), drawing from Foucault identify how discourses dominate how we define and organise both our social world, and ourselves whilst other alternative discourses are marginalised and subjugated. Through the identification of the discourses it is has the potential to offer sites where hegemonic practices can be contested, challenged and resisted. As Toschitz, (2017) identifies the systems and structures in higher education institutions have been institutionalised over time, however, they are susceptible to change as the different discourses come into tension with one another morphing and struggling to gain traction. Therefore, over time new relations, practices and systems to organise higher education are produced.

8.1 The Role of External Power

The external regulation provided by HEFCE, the QAA and now the Office of Students identify what counts as true in the current context of higher education. The measures included in the Teaching Excellence Framework define how institutions are required to regulate their behaviour. In agreement with Saunders and Blanco Ramirez (2017) the discrete observable units used by the state, reshapes institutional systems and processes and the relationship between academics and students. The previous chapter suggests how the use of internal surveys and evaluations created and administered to students centrally by the institution and the assessment of data are used to track the performance of the institute through data dashboards and profiling of performance. For example, the use of centralised module evaluations and the profiling of data internally and externally. The use of organised activities in this manner represent a regulation mechanism that enable the institute to assess how they are performing against the metrics, comparing against: student entry tariffs; good honours degrees; National Student Survey scores; employability statistics and widening participation data against school, college, university and sector averages or norms (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005; Molesworth et al., 2009). The development and use of data and dashboards enable senior management to be able to assess where improvements are required, utilising the complex myriad of committees to filter down information and gain the productive services of staff to assist in improving the data through the requirements of reports and action planning.

The regulation of staff through the monitoring and surveillance of performance creates a constant cycle of development across modules, programmes, school and college, linking to what Ball (2012) suggests is where last year's score is next year's benchmark. Staff in the case institution are required to action plan and identify how the data and performance will be improved across each academic cycle, reviewing and evaluating regularly this at regular points alerted through automated data management systems. The effect of external regulation on the university in the case institution has developed internal practices that help the institution work to perform well in the metrics. As Gibbs (2012) identified previously the concern is that institutions change their behaviour to improve the indicators and metrics utilised, at the potential expense of educational effectiveness. Whilst it is not possible to explicitly identify that this is the case in the institution, the aforementioned points suggest that the mechanisms used in the institution are designed to ensure market competitiveness and the recruitment of students. The use of regulated communications in this manner across the quality processes forces staff and students to interact and work together in a particular way,

reinforcing consumer perspectives, driving the focus and formulation of the structure of committees, reports and action plans. Such approaches provide limited scope to enable students and staff to work in more creative manners due to time pressures and the requirement to fulfil the institutional commitments.

Since its inception the university have demonstrated a commitment to developing learner centred approaches, the institution and senior management team are therefore required to balance the market forces and need to improve the metrics with a genuine desire to improve student satisfaction and work with students in partnership. The external regulation provided by the state in the manner identified fulfils Foucault's (2000) definition of governmentality as an attempt to control and regulate institutions through a web of power-based apparatus and practices that ultimately alter and limit conduct and the order of knowledge (Stevenson and Cutcliffe, 2006). The changes to the funding model and relaxation on the number of students universities can recruit have increased the competition between institutions. This form of direct competition between institutions increases the financial pressure to recruit student numbers.

The use of league tables, benchmarks and ratings such as the Gold, Silver and Bronze awards provided by the Teaching Excellence Framework are designed to enable students to survey the marketplace and use the created metrics as an assessment of the product and value for money (Neary, 2016). Universities must therefore perform well in the metrics that are used in the relevant rankings and league tables if they wish to promote their institution as one that has good satisfaction scores and graduate outcomes, which Molesworth et al. (2009) identifies, could be in direct opposition to sound pedagogical practice.

The partnership movement and amplification of student voice as an alternative model to try and increase student engagement and partnership is an attempt to resist the neoliberal discourses. The previous analysis indicates that whilst the inclusion of students in its governance practices and processes has undoubtedly increased the involvement of students, there is a danger that such models are used to influence the metrics and become a unique selling point for the university. The narrative developed is therefore one of teaching excellence and the promotion of how students are part of the development of the institute and does not necessarily position the student as a partner in the relationship. The tension is that in a marketised sector it is very difficult to offer partnership approaches that operate outside the metricised system and there is a danger that student voice and

partnership could be seen as a mechanism to improve scores and therefore reproduce the neoliberal discourse as opposed to offer an alternative.

For academic staff in the case institution the amplification and importance that is placed on external metrics becomes a driver for many of the internal quality assurance processes and procedures (Bergan, 2003; Little and Williams, 2010) that have been developed and leads to a very bureaucratic system that limits the possibilities of what staff can perform and achieve. Staff interviewed identify how the use of data has developed over recent years with an increased emphasis and use of dashboards and RAG systems linked to the continuous development and benchmarking across school, college, university and sector level. The concern from staff is how time is taken away from the core activities of teaching and research, due to the administrative burden required to report and action plan performance.

Such approaches align with what Foucault (1982) suggests is the use of pastoral power to gain the productive services of a flexible, agile and autonomous workforce who can regulate their behaviour and practice autonomously, to help the institution meet their desired aims, conforming to the regulatory requirements of the state. The use and reliance of data therefore becomes a surveillance mechanism to monitor the performance and quality of staff. For example, the introduction of a centralised system to evaluate modules has taken away the individual autonomy to evaluate module effectiveness and replaced it with a rigid system that fails to be able to accommodate the nuances of specific modules. In addition, staff reported how these approaches have limited creativity of staff in the learning and teaching environment as staff feel the need to continually score well in comparison to the cross institutional ratings and are concerned of the consequences should the creative changes not be judged as satisfactory by students and therefore not performing well in the surveys.

The importance of league table position and the value placed on the use of data and satisfaction scores illustrate how the case institution is beholden to the marketised approaches developed by government. Pastoral power therefore works to get students to navigate the market and select the programme as a product. The financial transaction and payment of money in exchange for a service has led to consumerist approaches by students and the development of an entitlement culture, in addition students are displaying consumerist perspectives whilst on the programme. Students in the case institution highlighted how they saw fees were linked to an entitlement to receive “what they wanted”, to have good facilities and to receive a high standard of learning and teaching and were unhappy if they did not feel that the fees equated to what they received. In one group interview,

students identified how they had tried to work out how much each hour of teaching across their degree programme was equivalent to (Group Interview Four).

Students adopting a consumerist perspective could be seen as a concern as Bunce et al. (2017) identified that students who view themselves as consumers are less likely to get involved in their education and more likely to view themselves as entitled to receive positive outcomes. In addition, Tomlinson (2017) has also illustrated how students who have a higher-grade goal related to a higher consumer orientation and linked to instrumental approaches to learning characteristic of a consumer orientation.

Molesworth et al. (2009) has also argued that the massification of higher education is intended to support industry by providing a better workforce. It is therefore evident that students seek to use higher education as an investment in human capital in the anticipation that this will lead to better employment prospects and earning potential (Nixon et al., 2016). The positioning of the student as a consumer has become an ideological norm and has implications for the development of higher education institutions, especially in relation to the development of a more equal student-university relationship.

The danger and consequences of pastoral power and how institutions function is that it promotes the production of the consuming subject which is readily reproduced in society due to the marketisation that higher education institutions are beholden to (Nixon et al., 2016). Pastoral power therefore impacts on what it means to be a student, an academic or a manager in higher education. As a consequence and from the data gathered from the case institution, it demonstrates how the possibilities of partnership are severely limited in the formal governance processes under this construction of the modern day higher education institute and its role in society.

8.2 Relationships and Power Balance

8.2.1 The Role of Student Voice in Governance

How student voice fits within the hierarchy of the university structures is important in determining how and where students can input and work with the institution and has been described as messy (Carey, 2013b). Students in the research identify that the main formal mechanisms to instigate

change is through the representation system and module evaluations, similar to previous studies (Bergan, 2003; Little and Williams, 2010). Issues and items are referred to the course or school representative who will then take this aspect up. However, students refer to “hoping for the best!!” or that they are a “just a tiny atom in the system” (Student Survey) and therefore have limited influence in instigating change. What is apparent is that the student voice system is very much reliant on the key gatekeepers, for example, senior student representatives, programme leaders, student engagement champions and members of the management team, who have the opportunity or access to influence change. The way students are invited to influence change is through the formal mechanisms and is hierarchical in nature and shaped by the power-knowledge nexus and functions as defined previously by Foucault (1982) as capacity-communication-power, regulated communication and power processes, which serve to function and regulate the involvement of students and the agency ascribed to the individuals.

The course representation system in place in the case institution meets the requirements of the QAA and is embedded across the institution from school through to institutional level. Within the representation system issues are often escalated and there is evidence of a hierarchical structure from a programme / course level through to school and college senior student representatives or sabbatical officers. Senior student representatives identified how the formality and responsibility of the role increases and the requirement to sit on university level boards is often very daunting and intimidating

In terms of formality, I find it quite erm... when the VC's there, I'm like I don't want to bother
***** with my issues, and I think that limits us in what we say (Senior Student Representative).

As described by Bergan (2003) the student representation system should provide a democratic mode of working. However, a number of representatives identified how they feel that they are not provided with clear opportunities or forums for them to act on behalf of their peers to input and discuss educational aspects related to their programmes, highlighting how this limits theirs and other individuals' input and constrains what can be discussed and by whom. In addition, the student representative's outline how this role is not what they imagined, describing how they expected to have a lot more involvement with other students. In reality student representatives highlighted that it is mostly sitting on university committees due to the requirements of having student representatives on these, for example the Health and Safety Committee. Therefore, student

representatives feel that they provide ideas but do not represent the student body and the power dynamic is very much in favour of the staff, as described by the following student representative

there's only three reps there in that academic board compared to like 20/30 members of staff, and for me that's quite like scary, you're like, 'Okay well I don't want to say something...' Obviously, everything I say they might come back with an answer ... I personally feel like what I need to bring to the table isn't important enough to be in that committee (Senior Student Representative).

Providing students on committees therefore does not provide the effective conditions for students to contribute to the conversation and decision-making in the meetings. There is a reliance that the structures in place for representation by the Students' Union will enable effective student input as students are provided with a place on all relevant key committees, something Bergan (2003) cautioned against, advising that placing students on committees does not guarantee engagement or effective student voice. Such approaches are reinforced by the Students' Union who have a rigid and democratically elected representation system. It could be identified therefore that the Students Unions' strategy and structure reinforces the hierarchical system of reporting from and to the level of student and programme. Attached to this, is a high degree of accountability that the students must adhere to or risk sanctions and therefore there is a degree of enforcing and regulation of the individuals elected to try and fulfil the role.

The influence of the power relations tied to the obligatory roles, tasks and gestures imposed by tradition once again heavily influences the student-university relationship and what can and cannot be achieved by students within this structure. Whilst the case institution has provided students the opportunity to be present in the different hierarchical levels of the university it is evident that more needs to be done to work with students-as-partners or provide opportunities for students to input into the conversation more easily. The example provided in section 7.2.2 previously from School B demonstrated how changing the format of the committee from a rigid roundtable meeting to one utilising small group themed discussions enabled all members of the committee to actively engage in the meeting in a productive manner, reducing the formality and the hierarchical dynamics at play.

Furthermore, there are contradictions in the role the Students' Union is trying to fulfil, as there is an emphasis on a consumerist relationship that is built on consultation. The Students' Union and sabbatical officers use a particular form of language when they refer to the effectiveness of student

voice and is one of *success* and *wins* for the student body and therefore does not embody the staff-student partnership ethos. As the following quote highlights

schools reps will have sort of small group meetings or one to ones with course reps, and what that will do, is in each of those one to ones, um the relevant people can pull out the successes that reps have had, and then if there are any issues um can advise on how to kind of maybe change that, and then report back on the win, so from that we should be able to gather all of the stuff that schools and colleges and courses are doing, that is really good and really successful, and then promote that at the right level (Students' Union Staff Member).

Adopting a position such as this promotes the student working to highlight issues or problems with the programme to instigate change and get things altered. However, it wasn't clear that students or the student union saw that students and staff should work in partnership and therefore there were concerns that representation in this form is consumerist in its nature.

8.2.2 The Effectiveness of Student Voice and Representation

Placing student representatives on all committees that involve students from programme level through to university level is an attempt to represent the views of students. Through the hierarchical pyramid of student representation and committee structure it therefore relies on the effectiveness and engagement of the representatives and processes at a programme and school level. Issues with engagement and effectiveness of the representatives has the potential to dilute the representative nature of student voice, which is then amplified through the hierarchical representation pyramid. In the case institution there is a large diversity and degree of engagement of student representatives between the different levels of representation (programme, school, college and university) and the number of students included when working in a formal capacity, similar to the findings of Carey (2013b). It therefore, becomes increasingly more difficult to communicate and incorporate the collective student voice effectively.

Representatives have to become very skilled at identifying the actual problem from what information is provided to them and often this will require additional work and communication with a number of individuals to achieve this. The space to discuss programme issues between peers is very difficult and therefore student representatives identified how they communicate and speak with their peers in different ways, through social media, directly face to face, via email or via informal conversations, without the input of other voices or perspectives. Furthermore,

representatives talk about how they try and develop a consensus on a particular issue before taking this forward and suggests that both representatives, the student's union, staff and senior management view student voice as monolithic, further emphasising the problems of representing the individual experiences or minority views of the student population. Both the student representatives and Students' Union refer to the need for a groundswell of numbers or individuals that share in an issue or problem and how that will make it easier to take it forward and be resolved at the respective levels. The student representation system at the case institution therefore is in danger of amplifying certain voices and limiting the inclusion of voices who are not heard in the places where decisions are made which is in agreement with previous studies and the concerns of Carey (2013b) and Canning (2016).

The premise is that the student body must convince staff that something needs addressing with academics and the senior management team requiring supporting evidence from students to back-up the claims. A strength of representation and student voice is the *lived experience*, however, all students may have a slightly different reality of how the programme impacts on them. This raises an important consideration of what happens if your opinion is in the minority? Does this mean your version of reality and how you experience a particular aspect does not matter or is just silenced? As Bragg (2007) has previously asserted student voice should not be viewed as monolithic and there is no such entity as a single or collective student voice.

A fundamental problem with the representation structure and many democratic models of society is that only a small proportion of the student population engage with Students' Union activities and the representation function. As a member of the senior management team identifies, the university itself have direct contact with everyone and therefore have the potential to reach more students. However, the completion of module evaluations was 50%, which was seen as a good return.

For academic staff, they are aware that engaging the whole group to provide an informed student voice about the programme and learning experience is very complex and challenging, especially when trying to consider how to engage the disengaged. The following extract from a staff member details their experiences of student representatives and engagement with students

... These are the active students, these are the ones who – who are engaged and who do participate and who are willing to work with staff. And that's not representative of all students. And we find this across all our student engagement work. It's the minority of students and they tend to do everything. So the students that are really good at contributing

in class... who are posting things on Twitter in relation to modules, they're the students who are the reps, they're the students who do the volunteering projects, they're the students who sign up for these research projects that we have in the school, who... run the societies, who climb Kilimanjaro in the summer and, you know, all those kinds of things, it's like some of them don't seem to have time to do anything, and then others you just think how do you even fit all that into your day. So, I don't know. There's the engaged and then there's the disengaged, and I don't know how you create a – a system whereby you can actually have conversations with the disengaged because of the fact that they are disengaged. So that's tricky as well (Staff Member Two).

Frequently in meetings students are heavily outnumbered, sometimes due to recruitment issues with representatives and other times due to representatives not attending the meetings. Therefore, often the views of a small number of students will be canvassed to provide solutions or opinions to be taken forward. In addition, the meetings are often intimidating environments that do not always provide the space and opportunity for the student to input effectively, in agreement with the findings of Carey (2013b) and highlighted by the following comment

in my opinion, the further you...at the minute you get away from the...programme level and course rep and programme team dialogue, the further you get away toward college level and university level, the less robust and reliable that information becomes... I still sit in committees where I hear... full time students union officers talking about their experience on their course two or three years ago, rather than having had the agenda and papers, preparing for understanding student data and information and feeding that into the conversation on behalf of students. So, the further you get away, the less robust and reliable, in my opinion (Management Team Member One).

It is therefore important to recognise and acknowledge how hard it is to learn from voices we do not want to hear and to learn from voices we do not know how to hear (Bragg, 2007). In addition, it is important to consider how representative student voice can be incorporated effectively within the institutions processes that promotes active participation with tutors, facilitating learner experience and offering an alternative to consumerism (Carey, 2013b).

8.2.3 Regimes of Power

The previous sections on the university governance structure and the role of student representation have outlined how student voice and the role of the student is heavily influenced by regimes of power and therefore impacts on what can be felt, thought or experienced by students in these positions. When the governance of the institution is broken down what is unveiled is a highly ordered series of committees and chains of command illustrating a block of capacity-communication-power. Each committee has meticulous regulations, procedures and roles to fulfill, with information and actions escalated or fed down into the connecting committees. As a result, there are clear signs of what Foucault (1982) identifies as regulated communications that order behaviours, with appropriate coded ways in which to illustrate when individuals are allowed to speak and engage through the formal governance processes of module evaluations, surveys and in committee meetings. Student representative's form a key part of this governance structure and as defined previously are required to act as the representative voice for their student peers.

At a programme level, the manner and way students and staff work together through committees is different between the case study schools, college and university meetings and is representative of the contextual nature and culture it operates within (Carey, 2013b). One of the key regulatory capacities of such meetings is the hierarchy instilled through the leadership of the meetings and the mechanisms developed. Power therefore operates on individuals in the meetings through the assigning of role and value to the individuals present. What is witnessed in most of the meetings observed is a very ordered sequence of events, led by a chair which is often a more senior member of staff and has specific terms of reference and a rigid agenda primarily formulated by the chair that identifies appropriate points for staff and students to input and contribute.

At a programme level, there were a number of subject committee meetings that utilised staff and student co-chairs; this generally was a senior member of staff and the School Student Representative. In almost all situations the meeting was led predominantly by the staff chair, often with the student co-chair picking up the agenda items that involved students such as the issues or problems identified by students. Students' express how being the one to provide negative feedback, places the student in a vulnerable position and is very uncomfortable and challenging, as the following quotations from a representative and a member of the students union identify

I think there's, kind of, that risk of, sort of, putting your neck on the line, being the one going up to an academic and going. This module doesn't work (Geoff, Group Interview Two).

... I sort of think it is inevitable, because we are asking people to make changes, um and we are asking them to make changes on student feedback, and obviously as an academic, you have researched your field very, very carefully, you probably feel like you know the area better than the student, and if the student is asking you to change something, I guess it is a natural response to feel ... threatened about that, because it is ... yes it is kind of ... there is a clashing of heads, really (Students' Union Staff Member).

From the observations at a programme or school level students were primarily required to raise issues or problems that students have identified in their programme, either within the meeting or added to the agenda prior to the meeting. The way this is framed suggests that firstly there will be problems and provides the premise that the meeting is solely around addressing issues, this therefore has a very negative focus that creates tension in the meeting. As described above, student representatives identify similar emotions to those reported in other studies, that raising an issue has the potential to cause confrontation to staff who may be marking their work or writing their references (Carey, 2013b; Canning, 2016) and may receive defensive rebuttal type responses if the staff member feels threatened or challenged.

Power manifests itself whenever individuals, groups or societies act as influences on the agency of the subject without attempting to determine the particular actions the subject performs. The way meetings are constructed therefore illustrates how this influences the agency of the people involved in the meeting and the form that power takes in the meeting. In one of the case schools there was a lack of evidence to suggest that either the students had an input into the committee agenda or an opportunity to provide their own feedback or therefore the meeting was highly regulated and controlled by the staff chair. Students in this school saw that the agenda was formulated by staff on what they perceived to be issues that need addressing in the school and often aligned indirectly to institutional priorities such as improving the metrics of external survey data. For example, the first meeting observed in School A was centred on 'being ranked as the number one University for the subject area'. The following quote from a student representative in School A highlights the rigid nature of the meetings "I think subject committees are... far too rigid to be able to actually bring up specific issues with specific modules, and things like that" (Geoff, Group Interview Two).

In addition, at both college and university level, meetings were organised during university holiday periods which had a dramatic effect on student representative attendance and to, a lesser extent, staff attendance, as highlighted previously by Brooks et al. (2016) as a reoccurring issue. This again highlights the power that the administration holds in determining key aspects such as when and where meetings can be conducted. Similar to the findings of Carey (2013a) and the suggestions of Seale (2016) there is still a need to identify solutions to alleviate the power imbalances that are at play between staff and students. Working to find student friendly spaces and providing a more equal staff-student ratio in meetings that empowers staff and students to be able to work in partnership to provide solutions to programme-related issues. The relationship between staff and students under this conception is a hierarchical one that again fulfils Habermas' (1972) empirical / analytical form of knowing where the academic staff are the experts and hold the power in the relationship and the student is the novice and holds little to no power (Lovat et al., 2004; Lovat, 2013).

8.3 Development of a Partnership Culture

In addition to the aforementioned student representation structure, the case institution and the Students' Union have tried to embed students into multiple levels across the university, through students sitting on interview panels, reviewing teaching practice and shadowing senior management. Such initiatives and projects were quoted by staff in the institution as been examples of innovative practice by the sector. For those involved in the institution there is a sense that this is visionary and one that fits through the whole university and has therefore developed a reputation and culture of working with students. The visionary narrative is one of the "students building the University and the students producing the University" (Management Team Member One). In addition, the Students' Union Sabbatical Officer highlighted that the university is open to evolving and reported that other sabbatical officers in the sector are very envious of the practices that occur at the institution and suggest that the catalyst to this comes from the Senior Management Team.

The discussion and use of staff and student partnership tracks back to a previous institutional initiative that worked with students as producers of knowledge. The rhetoric is one of choice in an attempt to resist consumerist approaches, which suggests that in order for this to happen the University need to pull together and share in the common goal or aim. However, the senior management team identify how they are aware that this does not naturally happen and requires

development over time to embed partnership practices across the board to support the narratives. The role of the student under an institutional partnership model changes the relationship between students, staff and the institution.

For some staff and management in the institution, the goal is to adopt a partnership model as a mainstream approach. The senior management team identified how they believe that there is not a single part of the university where there is no attempt, or process to gather student feedback and explore with students what they are looking for and refer to students as the real experts. Therefore, there is a sense that working with students more collaboratively is one that is becoming embedded across the university and staff highlighted how it is not unusual for students to be part of conversations that they once were not, such as, on programme design and university strategy, as the following quote highlights

so, our interactions with students and how we get them engaging in this is often about enabling it. Not influencing what the students say but enabling them to say it in a confident and effective way. And often there's some work to do with staff to help them to be more open to what the students are saying and changing the conversation (Management Team Member One).

Whilst it is clear the institution has taken steps to include students in all manner of its practice and governance, the data does not suggest that students are always able to input into the conversation in an effective manner, especially to the level of partnership fulfilling the values of student voice adopted in this research. In addition, it was identified that there is still a need to try and get all staff to utilise effectively the students who want to be partners in their role as student representatives. It was outlined by a number of students that a partnership approach is not always welcomed by staff and students. Some students highlighted how the degree is seen as the most important aspect and to others the additional experience gained from partnership opportunities is seen as what might make you stand out in the graduate market. To move towards partnership approaches, as evidence suggests from Bunce et al. (2017), there is a need to encourage students to actively participate in their student experience from extracurricular opportunities through to becoming a volunteer or participating in the development of learning and teaching without receiving course credit as this has a correlation with a lower consumer orientation.

Mercer-Mapstone et al. (2017) highlighted that the majority of partnership approaches in higher education are isolated case-studies or small-scale practices external to the assessed curriculum and

there is a requirement to move towards institutional approaches that bring these aspects together in a manner that enables continual development to respond to the ever-changing demands of the environment and political context within which it is situated (Bishop, 2018). However, the senior management team identify that, in reality, this is a difficult prospect that requires time and challenging both staff and students' beliefs and understanding

Now, as a result, trying to engage students with...staff and students engaging in deeper and critical conversations about pedagogy, about teaching practice, about design of curriculum, is really challenging because staff just aren't...wanting it, ready for it...em, on the whole (Senior Management Team Member One).

Engagement and participation of not only students but also staff is, therefore, a real threat to the partnership model. It requires staff, new and old, to be a part of the culture to develop the partnership model, something that not all staff are willing to engage with. For example, schemes such as the students as consultants on teaching requires the buy-in of a staff member to volunteer and use the service. However, what tends to happen is that only the staff whom are confident and open to what could be a critical process will use the service.

As already identified there are also tensions or dichotomies of the use of data and how this feeds into partnership working under the neoliberal practices created by the state. The development or change to the culture of the institution does not occur as a consequence of a eureka moment and requires constant development to create a collaborative culture (Canning, 2016; Bishop, 2018). Staff identify that often the engagement of students in partnership work may happen as a result of an invitation by a member of staff and their subsequent involvement snowballing. However, there is still a danger that this promotes the favoured students and therefore promotes a particular type of student voice. For the engagement and development of staff this may occur from innovators who develop and share best practice for others to use as exemplars, developing their own models and therefore there is a need to support the innovators and help other staff develop confidence in practices (Crawford et al., in Press).

A key to the success of institutional approaches and a key feature of models such as Healey et al. (2014) is the necessity to have strong quality enhancement procedures that predominantly feature student representation. Crawford et al. (In press) build on the use of student representatives referring to them as boundary spanners who move between the boundaries of a higher education structure. The current research demonstrates similar findings of how student representatives

perform an important function from the curriculum through to work with other students, the Students' Union, the institution, academics and professional services. A member of the senior management team identifies the importance student representatives and student project workers can play but also how the current structures of the institution facilitate this

if we had a different vice-chancellor and the same representation structures, they might be less effective... They're in the best of class in terms of the number of places students sit. And where I think ***** is excellent is that students sit on... panels to... appoint new staff and have a very strong voice in that... It's very good for the students, but it's very good for the whole process because if an academic, for example, can't engage with the student on the panel, you would worry about whether they could engage in the classroom and if academics can speak, kind of, equally to everybody on the panel regardless of seniority, it's a really good sign for how well they'll fit (Senior Management Team Member One).

Such examples are both innovative and demonstrate the value the institution place on what the student body has to offer. However, as suggested to earlier a limitation or criticism of student partnership work is that, even with the widespread examples of how students are included as partners in the case institution, this actually incorporates a very small percentage of the total volume of students. Staff identify that approaches to increase engagement are often not taken by a large proportion of students, staff find this frustrating and often feel that the effort and reward are not equitable aligning with previous findings by Carey (2013b). A key challenge therefore is how to engage the *dis-engaged* or the individual who doesn't conform or feel able to fit to the model of partnership the university are defining. Furthermore, students themselves appreciate that not all students want to or are willing to adopt a partnership approach and align more to a consumerist model and are happy to receive information in a more passive manner.

Staff at the institution suggested that part of the problem is that mainstream education in schools is a closed curriculum and therefore the university is asking students to fit to a new mode of delivery. This issue is further amplified when it is known that the best predictor of degree outcome is A-level qualification points on entry. The university is therefore asking students to engage in their learning in a manner they may not be accustomed to

...I think we would like to say, and it's partially true, consumers of education can't learn at the depth or in the kind of ways that we value in higher education and so it's necessary to

define a more active relationship with our participants (Senior Management Team Member One).

However, traditional modes of delivery in higher education are often seen as very passive and therefore it could be identified that it is possible to consume a lecture. In the case institution the very first session of a university student's life is often to sit in a lecture theatre and be provided with a presentation by senior staff. Therefore, work needs to occur to not only try to engage students in the governance of the institution but also to develop and change the learning and teaching methods that clearly define the student as a partner and not something that is susceptible to consumption. A member of the senior management team highlights how there is a danger that this is already a fine balancing act and over time partnership initiatives could be corroded

But I think over the next few years what we'll see is a corrosion of that protected space around where students are not consuming, they're participating. And we will as a university have to be very clear about the defence of that in a way that doesn't look defensive, that is talking about the value of not being a consumer because if you're a consumer, you're passive and if you're engaged and co-producing... then the, the learning is a lot richer. But I think we'll increasingly actively have to tell students about that when they arrive. Whereas I think in the past, they just imbibed it from the, the environment over a period of time (Senior Management Team Member One).

This is echoed by another member of staff who highlights that the partnership model is in danger due to the ever-increasing threat and pressures of marketisation. The way the institution's processes work may just be reinforcing the consumerist agenda, echoing the thoughts of Nixon et al. (2016). For example, when students are asked to assess the quality of a programme and adjudge their satisfaction, it can result in a reinforcement of a consumerist model centred around consultation – the *you said we did* approach. Furthermore, the partnership model is often deemed as too slow and not efficient enough therefore approaches, which were utilised, to understand student feedback and develop working solutions with student partners have been switched to a more consultative approach. The senior management team have therefore vetoed the partnership model. Whilst the following member of the institution is an advocate of student engagement and partnership work, they highlight the issues and limits to such methods of working

We're suddenly starting to have bigger conversations about how we engage students and partners in effecting wide scale change on a systematic... in a systematic way. And that

seems to be sitting uncomfortably with the same senior managers who were pushing this agenda initially (Management Team Member One).

...I wouldn't say they (university management) don't want the partner... working with students to happen, it just conflicts with other pressures they are facing to turn things around quickly, em, and to meet targets in the context of an increasingly marketised higher education system, with new drivers like the Teaching Excellence Framework, that will impact on the fees that we can charge. So soon the student satisfaction is driving, em, tuition fees, and if that's not the final straw, a marketised system, err, what is? (Management Team Member One).

Key advocates would identify that the partnership model works when you have committed staff, a commitment to time, resources and energy, but this is not always apparent (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). In addition, to make this whole scale across an institution is very difficult, for example, putting students on all interviews, all validations, and having student representatives on all student related meetings is very demanding due to the sheer volume of student partners required. This also places a demand on the student, as the project work can be very time-consuming and often students engaged on a project are also engaging in other activities and are also course representatives. Therefore, the adoption of partnership approaches at an institutional level risks becoming elitist, creating a brand of *super engaged* students, prioritising the voices that are already privileged and engaged, echoing the findings and suggestions by Flint (2016) and Mercer-Mapstone et al. (2017).

This section has highlighted how complex a picture the incorporation and development of partnership work is across an institution. The section discusses how the isolated partnership work in the case institution engages a select number of students well, however this form of working is not implicit across the more formal mechanisms. The incorporation of a partnership model is therefore hugely problematic and messy, to extend to all parts of the institution with all its members included and involved at the same level. Further thought and consideration therefore needs to be made on how to scale up partnership initiatives to make opportunities accessible to the majority rather than a selected few and is integral to the endeavour of creating learning opportunities and communities which foster a sustainable culture of partnership.

8.4 Summary

If a neoliberal consumerist truth is adopted that seeks to utilise the student voice to improve aspects of learning and teaching, then the focus and structure of how this is achieved is developed around this aim. Under this model students are provided with an opportunity to provide feedback but this stops at a technical level of involvement, whereby the relationship is dictated by the staff and the institution and the student has limited input into the decision-making process. The danger is that the focus becomes to score more highly in module evaluations, institutional and national surveys and benchmarking indicators, seeking to work out the issues and problems students have in their programmes and modules to rectify these. In essence self-regulating staff and students across the institution. Mechanistic approaches of this nature limit the opportunity to work with students as partners, encouraging students and staff to engage in democratic relationships that distribute power more equally, described by Habermas (1972) as historical / hermeneutic or critical / self-reflective knowing.

Klemenčič (2014) identified that the backdrop and rise of consumerism in higher education has highlighted that market orientated approaches and emphasis on quality assurance and student satisfaction have opened up new opportunities and structures for engagement of students and student governments that could counter consumerism. However, the effects of pastoral power and the neoliberal approaches make it difficult to conceive or develop alternative models of truth that can resist the hegemonic approaches of neoliberalism. It could therefore be suggested that it is difficult to develop more democratic models of student voice in the formal governance models as a result of the neoliberal discourses and subsequent effects of external power that are in operation on both institutions and individuals.

The mode of working with students in the case institution in the formal governance models aligns with the previous models of student involvement and partnership highlighted in the literature by SPARQS (2005), Elassy (2013) and in part Healey et al. (2014) which focus on the formal aspects and mechanisms to meet the requirements of government organisations such as QAA and HEFCE. Such models of student engagement and involvement in higher education governance provide limited space and time to work with students-as-partners with shared visions and goals and therefore requires special consideration as to how this can be achieved and what we wish the overall outcome to be. Adopting Seale's (2016) amplitude framework suggests that there is a need for institutions to

consider the extent to which student voice is enabled within educational relationships and spaces, which align more to the partnership examples evident in the case institution.

It could be suggested that the regime of truth promoted by the state across the higher education sector, develops the social norms and culture limiting the function of students and staff to act as agents, critically interrogating the norms and identities created by the status quo and functions of governmentality. The acoustics of the existing spaces within the University's processes therefore does not lend itself to partnership approaches with students. Foucault, suggests that an individual exhibits agency through their behaviour and actions, however, this exists within regimes of power / knowledge and the confines of truth and no individual is free of power due to the social contexts and regimes of power they experience. From the observations conducted, students are willing to engage in more meaningful ways as long as the conditions encourage this, which requires different orders of regulated communications that are less hierarchical and more encompassing of member participation and development of outcomes.

Chapter 9. Conclusion

The aim of the current research project was to conceptualise the discursive reality of the student-university relationship within a UK-based institute that promotes the involvement of students in the institutions governance models and policies such as the Change Agents projects showcased by JISC (2015). Specifically, the research sought to examine how the historical, political, economic and institutional discourses affect the concepts of shared authority and independent responsibility in the development of learning and teaching drawing on the work of Foucault and Habermas to develop the theoretical underpinning. Adopting a post-structural ethnographic approach enabled the examination of a number of data collection tools to examine the ethos and practice of the institution and how the overarching discourses at play proliferate down to practice, examining the: nature and extent of student voice; impact of student voice on the decision-making across multiple levels of institutional governance; and the power relations between the institution, staff and students. The discourse analysis and discussion presented in chapters five through to eight provides a rich and detailed assessment of how students are positioned within the student-university relationship and illuminate the reasons for such positioning. The following section will summarise and address the initial research questions set out at the start of the project.

9.1 Research Question 1: What are the drivers behind how and where student voice fits within the hierarchy of a university?

Adopting a post-structural stance, the study has examined the influence that the wider historical, political, economic and institutional discourses surrounding higher education have on determining and influencing policy and practice in a post 92 UK University. It is proposed that higher education is a very complex yet relatively stable discursive structure that is subject to a number of regulatory behaviours, identities and relations of power (Toschitz, 2017). Therefore, identifying the discourses that function in the case institution helps to formulate an understanding of the drivers behind how and where the inclusion of students fit within a UK-based institution.

Chapter five of the thesis identified a number of critical discourses that influence the higher education environment and drive the input and inclusion of students in helping regulate and assure the quality of teaching and learning, these were: neoliberalism, marketisation, performativity,

consumerism and partnership. Adopting and utilising the theoretical underpinnings of Foucault's (2000) notion of governmentality the study proposes that the neoliberal approaches used by government have created an audit culture through the introduction of measures to assess the performance and quality of higher education institutions. The measures put in place in universities have forced institutions into direct competition with each other and created business models of operation. The metrics, league tables, benchmarking and the government's desire to try and empower the student with choice connects student numbers in an interwoven nature with the web of calculated policies to ensure the assurance and stability of institutions. As a consequence, the discourses that function as true within the institution by the staff and students serves to further develop the neoliberal practices and mechanisms of power on higher education institutions, limiting and constraining institutional approaches to student voice and partnership work. The case institution is reliant on hitting its internal recruitment targets for students due to the relationship this has with the financial health of the institution. Senior management in the case institution identify how it is essential that the level of teaching and learning quality is high but that this must be mirrored by the performance in league tables due to its relationship with attracting prospective students. Such comments were echoed by some of the students who took part in the group interviews who discussed National Student Survey results and identified how they'd viewed league tables prior to coming to university.

The raft of accountable measures introduced by the state for example, the National Student Survey, tariff points on entry, performance of students during their programme and employability data on graduation combined with the Teaching Excellence Framework and the new regulatory body the Office for Students demonstrates an overarching power exerted by government. The approaches by government influence the form and structure of governance mechanisms in the case institution, altering the discursive position of students, staff and senior management. The framing and function of the student-university relationship and the position of students in the governance mechanisms is therefore constructed as a consequence of governmental policy and regulatory bodies altering how the institution operates and the requirement to include students within its practices and processes. Within the case institution the senior management are those who have the status to be charged with saying what counts as true and determine the opportunities for action available to students and staff.

Utilising the work of Foucault helps illuminate how the aforementioned fiscal and benchmarking measures created by the government have power over the higher education sector, institutions and

the subjects within and controls the power in the social contexts. The interconnection with the use of Habermas serves to identify how staff and students combine together to create knowledge and make decisions. The broader macro influences of neoliberalism drive and alter what can be said or done and what opportunities can be opened up or closed down as a consequence, impacting on the strategic direction of the institution and how students and staff work together in individual settings. For example, the increase in use of data, dashboards and the requirement of staff to action plan clearly outlines a trajectory of travel to ensure the institution is performing well in the visible metrics.

However, whilst the formal arrangements suggest that the broader influences of pastoral power regulate the arrangements of the institution it is a very complex picture. The case institution demonstrates a commitment to its work with students-as-partners through a number of key activities such as student as recruiters, on validation panels, as consultants on teaching. Such approaches illustrate how the institution is seeking to develop ways, which enable students to work more closely with staff functioning as a mechanism to counter consumerism. Adopting approaches that seek to work with students-as-partners is suggestive of the development of spaces that encourage student voice as an emancipatory interest aligning with Habermas' development of knowledge through co-construction and Monbiot's (2017) call to restoring the democratic community, built on altruism, empathy and deeper connections

Within the governance mechanisms of the case institution students can contribute to the development of their learning and teaching through evaluations / surveys, student representation and staff student liaison committees, however, these mechanisms are primarily consultative with limited opportunities and spaces for students and staff to adopt a partnership approach. As Mercer-Mapstone et al. (2017) identified, the work on student-as-partners in higher education tends to be isolated case-studies or small-scale practices external to the assessed curriculum and there is a requirement to move towards institutional approaches that bring these aspects together in a manner that enables continual development.

The interwoven nature of student numbers and metrics of quality designed to force institutions to regulate themselves, places pressure on the institutions to perform well and becomes a significant driver behind the structures and practices in the institution. It could therefore, be asserted that the nature of how the case institution includes students in its formal governance mechanisms demonstrates how the neoliberal discourse of marketisation, performativity and consumerism

function as true. The function of the governance mechanisms, the use of data, dashboards, RAG ratings and internal measurement work to self-regulate practice and assist the institution in scoring well in the prescribed metrics. As a result, key performance indicators are created through a myriad of action planning to assist the accountability, reflection and improvements in performance or output through self-regulation, which in turn works towards improvement in league table positions. Ultimately, this is driven by performative and marketised approaches that create a competitive market environment where institutions need to continue to attract the required student numbers and assure quality to maintain financial stability and growth of the institution.

As a result the effect on the student-university relationship is that the state has the influence to control and the capacity to produce power, sustain it and even induce and extend it (Foucault, 1982). Therefore to counter the neoliberal approaches at play by the state it is fundamentally important that the use of partnership with students in higher education stays divided from accountability measures and does not become a key performance indicator or an institutional marketing strategy. Failure to do so may result in partnership approaches that present an alternative to marketisation been used by the state and institutions to reproduce the power dynamics and regulatory effects of neoliberalism.

9.2 Research Question 2: Who wants to be involved in improving the collective teaching and learning experience and why?

Developing institutional partnership approaches works on the premise that both staff and students are willing to be involved in the collective development of learning and teaching, which is reinforced by the increasing acceptance in the literature that student voice has become part of the day to day running of a university (Freeman, 2016). The current research and literature has established that the assigned roles and functions in an institution are designed to ensure the effective operation of the university by providing students with a voice through surveys, evaluations and representative democratic structures, echoing that of Klemenčič (2014). However, the inclusion of students in governance practices works on the assumption that the processes are effective at including the student voice and that students will adopt the positions afforded to them. This research project has identified how students are involved in the formal and informal operations of a UK-based higher education institute and the ways that students wish to be incorporated.

One of the key drivers identified in the previous section was the requirement for UK-based higher education institutions to implement effective methods to gain feedback from students on their learning required by the UK regulatory bodies. In addition, the link between marketised processes designed to increase consumer choice has influenced the form and function of how students are involved. The overarching discourses therefore influence how and why students are engaged in providing feedback and the level of involvement students wish to have on improving teaching and learning, at this particular point in time.

Students involved in the data sample identified how they saw the main mechanisms to influence change was through representation and feedback forms / module evaluations. However, students and staff did not identify that they believed these systems were necessarily effective and often could not identify the resulting changes and therefore closing the feedback loop was an issue. Student representatives demonstrated a desire to try and make a difference and exercise agency, which may lead to influencing changes, however, it was acknowledged in Chapter 7.2 that representatives were happy not to be involved in developing the solutions and therefore illustrates a limit to which some representatives wish to be involved.

Students themselves identified that they often did not have faith in the student representation system and were critical of the representative nature of student voice that emphasised a monolithic voice that amplified the already privileged voices. In addition, it was identified that the Students' Union only engage with a small number of students through the representation systems and therefore there is a danger that alternative views and voices are not included. The main formal mechanism that students use to provide feedback is through the completion of surveys and module evaluations which is seen as the lowest level of engagement by Elassy (2013) with only 50 percent or less of students engaging in this process during the data collection period. This once again highlights that a large percentage of the student population do not engage in the formal processes.

Furthermore, staff and students expressed a preference to use informal channels / chance conversations outside of the formal mechanisms. A critical factor in this is the willingness on both the staff and students to engage in such approaches, enabling relationships and a rapport to develop, reducing the formality and power relations and therefore developing the potential to increase the feedback received, which may be seen as high risk as it is difficult to monitor and track. A number of students suggested that providing feedback via these channels may be more authentic and valid as opposed to the formal mechanisms, however, working through from this point to the

involvement of students in decision making requires a high level of commitment and desire to create change for this to be effective.

The emphasis, commitment and promotion student satisfaction measures by the case institution is widely adopted and creates consumerist approaches to the inclusion of students in the governance processes. A high number of the mechanisms in the institution work to gather information and provide a response. The processes within the case institution are therefore often very consumer focussed working with students in a consultative capacity, aligned to the business models of operation to meet the expectations of the increased scrutiny and competition. For example, both students and staff comment on how aspects identified by a previous cohort are often very different for previous or subsequent cohorts and therefore the reactive changes do not necessarily reflect the needs of students moving forwards.

Research by Bunce et al. (2017) suggests that there may be a relationship between students who actively participate in their student experience and a lower consumer orientation. Therefore, the use of student voice as a consultative mechanism may further promote students to adopt a consumer orientation, potentially leading to lower engagement with their studies and the development of the student experience. Equally, a high number of the student representatives identify that they are happy to provide the information and do not always want to play an active role in this, as they believe they have done their job and it is the responsibility of the academic or institutional staff to develop, which once again illustrates a consumerist stance. From the students surveyed from the case schools this showed a rather more mixed response, with 62% of students identifying that improving teaching and learning is the joint responsibility of staff and students, whilst 32% suggested this should be the mostly the responsibility of staff. In addition, 44% of students believed that students should have an active role in the development of teaching and learning, with a further 28% suggesting it should be more of a partnership approach with the remaining 26% advocating a consultative approach.

The level of input or willingness of students to be involved is therefore mixed. A pragmatic approach may therefore be to try and offer multiple ways and mechanisms for students to participate, similar to those identified by Bovill (2017) in her participation matrix applied to curriculum development. Offering multiple possibilities of participation may assist in moving beyond the limit to the extent some students want to be included in student voice mechanisms. In addition, this may assist staff to increase engagement across a spectrum as opposed to projects that require a high

level of input from all parties, which staff identified as challenging and frustrating and that the effort and reward to create engagement and partnership opportunities are not justified. A key challenge however, remains on how to engage students in the mechanisms and processes who are *dis-engaged* or the individual who doesn't conform or feel able to participate in the ways that the university are defining. Furthermore, students themselves appreciate that not all students want too or are willing to adopt a partnership approach and align more to a consumerist model and are happy to receive information in a more passive manner.

It is very difficult to present a clear picture or representation of how students should be included in the student-university relationship due to the multiplicity of factors at play and it also possible to be dismissive of how this is represented across the whole institution. A strength of this study is how it captured data from many different perspectives and at different levels of the institution and was therefore able to see in to spaces not always visible. As a result of the approaches taken by the study it is possible to see how there is different practices and ways of working with students and that there are effective partnership opportunities between staff and students that meet the definition of student voice adopted by this study, illustrating the potential to influence learning and teaching in the institution. Such projects and opportunities in the case institution have a number of engaged staff and students who advocate this form of work and try to innovate practice and find new modes of working with students to develop approaches to learning and teaching. The partnership examples provided in Chapter 6.3 and 7 illustrate how the mechanisms involved across the institution align closely to Healey et al's. (2014) model (Figure 2.3) fulfilling aspects of engagement in learning, teaching and assessment, curriculum design, pedagogic consultancy, research enquiry and scholarship in learning and teaching. However, similar to previous concerns highlighted by Flint (2016) and Mercer-Mapstone et al. (2017) the individuals involved constitute a core number of Student Engagement Champions across schools and professional services and a number of *super-engaged* students who are involved in lots of activities, representation and initiatives to actively promote partnership models of working. This demonstrates how as the level of participation increases less individuals will often be involved, again displaying similarities to Bovill's (2017) participation matrix.

If we accept the stance that the overarching discourses affect the form and function of how students and student voice is included in higher education. Then the function of pastoral power will have a normalising effect on not only institutions and staff but also students themselves, limiting their ability to exercise agency. The danger is that agendas and mandates of the institution and the

Students' Union become ever closer, sharing a responsibility to improve the student satisfaction scores through key performance indicators in strategic plans and partnership agreements. This is further compounded by the belief that students themselves hold, regarding the positive and negative relationship that external surveys such as the National Student Survey can have on the impact or value of their degree and therefore the need to positively score question.

A cynical view of staff engagement to develop learning and teaching could also be attributed to the normalising effect of power created by the surveillance mechanisms introduced by institutions, which produce large amounts of data across the sector and internally in the institution to try and assess performance and gain the productive services of staff and students. The overall effect is a culture in the institution that is open and willing to improve the metrics and league table position and require the productive services of staff and to some extent students to facilitate this. External mechanisms created by the state have therefore created administrative practices and procedures to work out the issues early in an attempt to improve the prospective metrics valued in surveys.

The regimes of truth and the social norms and culture created have the potential to limit the function of students and staff to act as agents, critically interrogating the norms and identities created by the status quo and functions of governmentality. To counter such dominant arrangements requires the consideration of the acoustics of the existing spaces within the universities processes, assessing how these limit and constrain the involvement of students and if it is possible to offer multiple ways for students to engage that cover a range of participation levels and demands. Foucault, suggests that an individual exhibits agency through their behaviour and actions, however, this exists within regimes of power / knowledge and the confines of truth and no individual is free of power due to the social contexts and regimes of power they experience (Foucault, 1982). If we wish students to participate beyond consultation in the more formal mechanisms then we need to be clear as to how this can be achieved and it is imperative that opportunities that reinforce consumerist tendencies are rethought and reimagined.

9.3 Research Question 3: Who ultimately makes the decisions and alters policy?

The research in the case institution illustrates the opportunities that are available for students to

contribute towards the development of learning and teaching in the case institution, through the formal mechanisms of surveys / evaluations, and student representation that spans from programme through to university level and the more informal or less structured opportunities such as staff / student research projects, innovation funds and student partnership initiatives. The previous section demonstrates how these opportunities are taken up by a small number of students, with staff identifying that the formal opportunities often struggle to engage the students. From the opportunities provided to students, the role of student voice work should be to assist learners in actively contributing to their learning, enabling partnership approaches that provide shared responsibility and negotiated decision making within the learning community. In the last ten years it has been asserted that students have been given a greater scope to work in partnership with institutions, in projects such as students as partners, change agents, producers and co-creators of their own learning (Bovill et al., 2011), similar to those witnessed at the case institution. However, in agreement with Klemenčič (2014) and Bovill et al. (2015) the data suggests that the extent to which students are given decision-making powers in teaching and learning can be limited, with students afforded more of a consultative role as to one of partnership, lacking agency and voice as illustrated by the involvement of staff and students in the institutions committee structure.

The QAA UK Quality Code for higher education providers recommends and encourages institutions to provide an environment that proactively encourages students to engage fully and fosters effective partnership working in the representation systems (QAA, 2012). The literature discussed through the research suggests that quality assurance provides the conditions for market competition, which becomes a shared responsibility between institutions, individuals, the state and the market as the previous two research questions have affirmed. The conditions created by market competition therefore develop and embed the discourses and coupling of power and knowledge through the institutions rules, procedures, regulations and the speech and actions of the individuals involved. This construction of the discursive reality and how the historical, political, economic and institutional influences fit together to form the student-university relationship facilitates the examination of the constraints and influences on working collectively with students in decision making. The nature of how the case institution places such an emphasis on the use data, benchmarking and action planning from both external and internal metrics suggests how the institution has become beholden to a truth that is governed by the regimes of external power exerted by the state to control and normalise individuals. The use and effects of pastoral power over time has articulated and embedded institutional practices and procedures that have been developed to identify what counts

and serves as true through the demands of market competition and consumerism.

McCulloch (2009), Klemenčič (2014), and Dunne and Zandstra (2011) have previously asserted that working with students-as-partners can provide alternative models and approaches to student voice in an attempt to counter a marketised sector. Student involvement at the case institution was evident in the following: development of co-curricular and course design; researchers or co-producers through undergraduate research schemes; partners on interview panels and validations; student-as-partners on research and teaching innovation projects; governance processes and students as consultants on teaching. Such methods whilst formal in their nature with the exception of student involvement in governance processes primarily sit outside of the main mechanisms of the universities. However, it is evident that the creation of knowledge is through a more reciprocal arrangement between staff and students and there is a level of shared responsibility and decision making that occurs through these schemes that is less evident in the formal governance mechanisms. It is not clear what the relationship is between schemes and how they facilitate the long-term development of teaching and learning across the institution.

The primary involvement of students, however, is through the formal processes and governance procedures of surveys and module evaluations and the student representation structure, which places students on committee meetings across the University's governance structure. The functioning of student involvement in surveys and module evaluations is through their completion and seldom works with students beyond this point in a problem-solving capacity to find solutions and mechanisms to develop the issues identified. Approaches of this nature model customer satisfaction surveys and business models of operation, providing a very consumerist approach to assessing quality. Furthermore, the observations of meetings illustrate how the main mode of working with students in this setting was also in a consultative capacity. One of the major limiting factors to the effective working with students was the structure and function of meetings, which frequently served to operate as a mechanism to report information. As established in the discussion this represents what Habermas refers to as a technical level of control and illustrative of an empirical / analytical level of knowing which seeks to establish all of the facts, figures and information and therefore provides students with limited agency to help develop solutions and work in partnership. On the rare instances such as the example shared in School B in Section 7.2.2 where the conditions and space for students to engage actively with staff were created, students were forthcoming dynamic and energised as opposed to silent, unengaged and lethargic.

Despite the level of involvement and consultation with students and the places they are represented in committee meetings, the structure and function of meetings therefore has the potential to limit both the involvement students have in decision making powers and what is considered legitimate territory for students to discuss. A large proportion of the agenda items observed in the meetings either frequently failed to gain a decision or were made outside of meetings and without student presence.

The key aspects that constrain student voice in the governance processes are a consequence of the power / knowledge nexus and is a product of the normalising effect of pastoral power evident through capacity-communication-power, regulated communications and the power processes that fundamentally affects the ability of students to act as agents (Foucault, 1982). Capacity-communication-power acts over individuals through the meticulous regulations and organisation of activities that have strict steps and procedures individuals must adopt, processes that must be carried out and specific orders or functions by which they must be executed. The regulation of individuals through the formal governance mechanisms, results in the functioning of the processes in a manner that does not facilitate effective working with students that can exercise agency and contribute effectively to decision-making. A major limiting factor is the time devoted to partnership work in the formal processes due to the required regulations and procedures that must be followed and thus limits what is achievable or possible. The regulated communications are instilled through the rigid agendas or processes that are imposed on the committees or dictated by the chair, identifying or regulating the behaviour of individuals through signs of obedience. Students and student representatives highlighted how these environments can often be intimidating and formal in nature and control the types of areas considered as legitimate with limited opportunities to allow the discussion of specific staff or modules. In addition, all of this is set within a pyramidal hierarchy of academic staff through to senior management and students through to student, course, senior representatives and sabbatical officers which once again reinforces the formal nature of the processes and practices.

The data and examples illustrated in the discussion of the case institution highlights that there is a need to consider the practices and processes in the formal mechanisms to enable all members to engage more effectively as member of a community. Consideration therefore needs to be made as to disrupt the capacity-communication mechanisms and the regulated communications to facilitate effective working between staff and students that is more reciprocal.

9.4 Research Question 4: What are the challenges, barriers and tensions to a more democratic student-university relationship?

The previous three research questions have exposed a number of critical factors that link to the challenges, barriers and tensions to a democratic student-university relationship. The conditions created through the neoliberal approaches since the 1980's have developed a regime of truth that is suggestive of the use of pastoral power by the state to exercise control over institutions and individuals (Foucault, 1982). Specific to the role and function of higher education the power / knowledge nexus, exposes the conflicting tension between the regulatory demands of what institutions are required to do, influenced through the neoliberal, performative and marketised discourses. The effect of such approaches normalises practice and reproduces the hierarchical structures that are evident within the case institution in an attempt to meet the requirements outlined by the government in the metricised approaches such as the Teaching and Research Excellence Frameworks, which ultimately force institutions to model and regulate practice.

As previously highlighted, Foucault referred to three elements in 1982 in his application of relations of power to educational institutions, which were capacity-communication-power, regulated communication and power processes. Through analysis of the data in the research project it has exposed how these concepts are illuminated and function in a modern UK university. The structures and processes developed by the case institution are a response to the neoliberal approaches and create a complex arrangement of regulations, structures and processes with defined roles and functions of the individuals in the institution, developing the regimes of truth. The ordered effect of the values and status provided to individuals and the coded signs of obedience are constrained through the regulated communications and are evident at the different structural levels of the institution. The value and input from students has a clearly defined role and position within the institution and how, when and where it is possible for students and their representatives to input. The power processes are created through hierarchical structures and the production of data to inform the practice and performance of modules and programmes and become methods of surveillance which both reward and punish individuals, developing autonomous individuals who can self-regulate to develop practice.

The research adds to the work of Fielding (2004a), Rudduck and Fielding (2006) and Bragg (2007) who examined student voice in compulsory education and highlighted similar trends of consultation with learners about their experience in order to raise standards and increase attainment, as

opposed to reasons of personal and social development or active membership of their learning community. The concern is that student voice is still used with explicit intentions of improvements in learning and teaching to improve league table scores and rankings using cynical or manipulative mechanisms that mask the real interests of those in power (Bragg, 2007).

The effects of pastoral power in a UK higher education institution, therefore, produces the subjects *we are* and the roles *we play*, creating a normalising effect which constrains and limits the agency individuals can have, to exercise thought, encourage resistance and a promotion of difference. Bevir (1999) suggests that for subjects to become agents it must be conceivable to resist the pressures of normalisation by challenging a morality through our personal and ethical conduct. To alter the position that staff and students occupy in the student-university relationship it is imperative that the norms inherited are not only questioned but the structures and procedures are altered.

The blocks of resources of capacity-communication and power relations constitute the regulated and concerted systems of an institution (Foucault, 1982). The case institution provides a very interesting case to investigate due to its intentions to engage with students and develop models of student engagement, voice and partnership. The tensions exposed are very visible due to how the institution is innovative in how it places students in positions by where they can influence practice in the institution such as on interview and validation panels and in teaching and learning research projects. But at the same time in other areas of the formal governance mechanisms, especially the student representation system and the use of data it does not appear that the institution can move beyond the accountable approaches provided by the state. A consequence of the tension is that there are many examples of where students can exercise agency and be active partners in the development of the teaching and learning, especially the group of students interviewed who work as project partners. However, on the opposite perspective there are instances where both staff and students struggle to position themselves as agents who can produce themselves by critically interrogating the social norms and the given identities.

In order to oppose the neoliberal regimes all parties, students, student representatives, sabbatical officers, academic and support staff must function to resist the status quo developing their own personal style to provide new impetus to the undefined work of freedom. To move from normalised practice to agency requires an institutional model that in practice is not defined by fixed blocks of communication-power and works more as a flexible framework to be explored and challenged. Furthermore, institutions should encourage forms of resistance and the promotion of difference.

Models of student voice and partnership need to encourage and provide recognition and tolerance of the differences between individuals and groups, enabling opportunities for speech even when the content is uncomfortable or difficult to hear.

As discussed, students are able to work in partnership with staff demonstrating some of the requirements outlined in Seale's (2016) amplitude framework and demonstrates how the changes in the structures, arrangements and physical and metaphorical space enable individuals to demonstrate increased reach and fitness (Seale, 2016). In addition, this exposes how it is possible to work outside of a system confined by a neoliberal truth that does not constrain the power relations between individuals and is not bound by the capacity-communication power and the regulated signs of obedience that constrain the relationship and regulate what can be performed or spoken. The challenge therefore, is how this is transitioned and developed across to institutional approaches and governance processes in a higher education institute that is scrutinised by the state through a metricised system used, to try and drive up standards and increase competition.

The theoretical framework draws on the work of Habermas, whilst Foucault and Habermas agree that the rationalisation and misuse of power are important, they provide different perspectives on how power is understood and how it influences actions of individuals in relation to these problems. Utilising the work of Foucault has helped expose the problematic practices and resulting tensions at play in higher education and how this functions as a consequence of external power that influences and shapes the conduct of practice. The work of Habermas has helped reflect on the individual's understanding and meaning that is shaped in situations within the institution. Utilising the two theorists together has enabled an understanding of how power functions in the development of knowledge and the strategies and tactics used by the state, influencing the student-university relationship and the democratic processes involved in institutional governance mechanisms.

Habermas (1972) sees that work and interaction should include the process of learning and arriving at mutual understanding. The notion of staff-student meetings that formulate part of institutional governance mechanisms in higher education is exactly one where staff and students should work together to create and arrive at a mutual understanding. However, the involvement of staff and students in such situations has the potential to produce very different outcomes dependent on how the meetings are organised and structured and the role they play within the structure of the university and requires thought and consideration to provide effective mechanisms for student voice.

The use of Habermas's theories of knowing should be used to comprehend authentic ways of knowing through critical reflection and engagement, or praxis, challenging dominant notions of the how students are involved in practice within the student-university relationship. To develop a level of historical / hermeneutic (communicative) knowing or a critical (self-reflective) knowing requires a change to the power relations, the study has outlined how in order for this to be conceivable requires a change to the structures and processes that constrain practice and are defined by neoliberal approaches and pastoral power.

9.5 Limitations

Many of the decisions and limitations of the different design choices made in researching and writing this study have previously been explored in Chapter 4. However, there were a number of elements of the study, which having finished the research and analysis, suggest areas for further study and require reflection. These are set out in this section.

The use of a single case design provided a rich and detailed picture of the student-university relationship and how this is interconnected with the institutions governance quality processes and the students' unions to develop learning and teaching. It is not possible, however, to identify that this is representative of other institutions in the UK or elsewhere, as each institution has its own social contexts and structures and what each it accepts as true, which influences the practices and procedures in operation at every institution. In addition, if the research had focussed on different committees, colleges or schools as sources of data collection in the case institution, then different evidence would have been established which might have had an implication on the data and the conclusions drawn.

The data represents the researcher's individual interpretation of the data and whilst care and attention was made to triangulate the results through the different sources of data it is possible that the individual experiences and knowledge of a different researcher may interpret the data in alternative ways and therefore gain slightly different results or perspectives. It should also be acknowledged that due to the philosophical position and stance adopted by using a post-structural ethnographic research project the research did not attempt to represent a culture, event, and people, as this is embedded and absorbed in the historical discourse, reality is therefore transient and relative. The research and the findings, therefore, represent the fast pace at which higher

education has developed in the last two decades and the subsequent changes made to government policy that provides an ever-moving landscape that is constantly evolving and morphing to the new parameters and requirements provided by the state.

9.6 Future Directions

Lastly, there are a number of different elements to this research that will be of interest to different audiences in higher education. The notion of student voice and partnership has gained momentum and traction over the last ten years as an alternative to the consumerist perspectives and consequences of neoliberal discourses. Senior management teams, academics, students' unions and students spend considerable time implementing the mechanisms designed by the institution to try and develop learning and teaching. The tensions and contradictions, which have been presented here, suggest that many in the higher education sector could benefit from some consideration of how these experiences and subjectivities translate to their own context.

Whilst it has been indicated previously by Little and Williams (2010) that some institutions are seeking to move beyond a student as a consumer and encourage a greater sense of partnership, this study has highlighted how it is important to challenge the hierarchical nature of power in higher education institutions to provide the conditions for effective partnership working. Future studies should seek to examine how to reduce the capacity-communication-power, regulated communications and power processes in a higher education environment and their subsequent effect on emancipatory models of student voice and partnership.

There is also a need for future studies to try and examine and find alternative models that develop institutional approaches to partnership that fully incorporate institutional governance and representation practices and processes. Such models should seek to resist the temptation to be used as mechanisms to conform to the neoliberal ideals of education that utilise student voice and partnership as a means to improve the metrics and a proliferation in the use of data in higher education that has reduced all manner of aspects to a number or metric from which performance and individuals are assessed and expected to improve.

9.7 Claim to Knowledge

To summarise, the claim to new knowledge is through the conceptualisation of the drivers that work to promote, inhibit and constrain student voice in a UK-based higher education institution. Whilst these systems and structures have been institutionalised over time, they are susceptible to change as the different discourses come into tension with one another morphing and struggling to gain traction, providing new relations, practices and systems to organise higher education.

The use of critical discourse analysis demonstrates how knowledge is connected to power and is used as an instrument to operationalise individuals and groups. The discourses established in a UK-based university have therefore developed and legitimised the values, roles, functions, views, ideas and ways members of the institute see the world. Therefore, to change the power relations requires the identification, analysis and redefinition of these discourses. If the desire is to develop genuine approaches to student voice and partnership as defined in this study that values shared authority and independent responsibility in the development of learning and teaching; then there is a need to differentiate and separate such practice from the performative and marketised discourses. Adopting such approaches would redefine the role both staff and students have in higher education rejecting consumerist approaches and developing transformative learning experiences underpinned through partnership and shared responsibility.

In addition, to move beyond consultative and consumerist approaches with students requires the rejection of a neoliberal truth, to one that is free from the effects of pastoral power and normalisation of institutions and individuals which constrain the partnership approaches with students. It is not enough to provide students with positions in formal governance processes and procedures if the practices and procedures within these still limit and prohibit student involvement in decision-making. Provision and opportunity for students to express their opinion replicates business models of practice and operation, via consumerist interactions with students that treats their learning and programmes as a product. The emphasis and placement of students across the institution in meetings that affect student involvement does not automatically create power dynamics that enable effective student involvement in decision-making. Therefore, there is a need to consider how the procedural processes and practices can enable effective student voice and increased democratic involvement in decision-making processes. Furthermore, it is not apparent that the majority of students want to be involved at a level of increased involvement that replicates partnership models of working and are happy working with staff and the institute in a consultative

capacity and therefore would require radical shifts in culture for this to be achieved. The alternative is to try and provide multiple levels of engagement opportunities for students similar to Bovill's (2015) participation matrix that enables students to participate in the governance processes at a level they are comfortable and willing to do so.

Furthermore, the study has highlighted how it is possible to work with students-as-partners in the case institution, however these approaches rarely crossover to governance approaches. There is therefore a need to create processes and procedures that do not inhibit and instead encourage student involvement. A key consideration that is required is that of space and time to develop meaningful professional conversations between students and staff, where higher education providers work with the student body to develop solutions that address issues arising from feedback and surveys.

The data in the study was reported in a narrative format and was analysed using a Foucauldian discourse analysis. The study indicates that using a case study approach with a variety of research tools is effective for identifying dominant socio-cultural discourses. It is anticipated that in turn the findings of this research can lead to changes in how people accept, resist and challenge social norms in higher education institutions re-positioning the discourses, practices and procedures and the macro influences of power that constrain and inhibit student voice and partnership models of working.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Sample Interview Schedule

Interview Protocol	
Date:	Location:
Time:	Position of the interviewee:
Interviewer:	Interviewee:

Description of the project: *Over the last decade there has been an increased emphasis placed upon the involvement of students within the processes designed to develop and assure the quality of teaching and learning and the wider student experience and is of a direct concern to all within the University. This research aims to evaluate how students, staff and senior management are involved and will help provide a better understanding of the interactions of students and staff to form the student-university relationship.*

Go through Participant Information Sheet and obtain Informed Consent and outline confidentiality statement

Questions

1. Tell me about your role or position in the University, including how long you have been at the institution?
2. As a Programme Leader what do the terms teaching and learning and student experience / satisfaction mean to you?
3. Could you tell me how you interact with students to help shape their learning experience? Or can you tell me how as a student how you're involved in shaping your learning experience?
 - a. This could be at multiple levels from a classroom level through to module, programme, school or university level?
4. As a Programme Leader can you tell me how you go about trying to obtain information to facilitate or develop teaching and learning

- a. How is this information feed to staff, your school/college or senior management?
 - b. Do you use informal or formal mechanisms?
 - c. What do you consider is the role of obtaining this information?
 - d. How do you use or believe this information is used?
5. Can you provide any examples of how students and staff work together to assess and/or enhance teaching and learning within the University?
 - a. At what level does this occur School, College or University?
6. Can you tell me about your experiences on how decisions are made as a consequence of formal or informal student feedback on teaching and learning and the student experience?
7. Are there any mechanisms or processes that you believe could be performed better and do you have any suggestions as to how this could be achieved?

Close of interview, provision of feedback, member checking / opportunity to check

Appendix B - Observation Record

Date/Time:

Meeting:

Topics / agenda Items

Room Layout / Seating Plan

Initiation of topics > flow of conversation / who inputted into the discussion > Any decision made and by who > Resulting actions and how this information will be fed back.

Any aspects that are allowed to be spoke freely or closed down

Any Additional comments

Room Layout / Seating Plan

Initiation of topics staff / students	Flow of meeting	Input into discussion	Decisions made – by whom - process	Actions –time bound – how is this fed-back

Appendix C Student Survey

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Over the last decade there has been an increased emphasis placed upon the involvement of students within the processes designed to develop and assure the quality of teaching and learning and the wider student experience and is of a direct concern to all within the University. This research aims to evaluate such practices of how students, staff and senior management are involved and will help provide a better understanding of the interactions of students and staff to form the student-university relationship.

The research aims to conceptualise the student-university relationship, examining how and where students and University staff are involved; and any barriers, tensions or challenges to approaches that endeavour to assure or enhance teaching and learning and the wider student experience. The research is specifically interested in working with students to obtain their perceptions and thoughts particularly from the Schools of Engineering, Social and Political Science and Fine and Performing Arts as these Schools form case studies for the research (however if you are from an alternative School, please feel free to complete the questionnaire). The research has received ethical approval and by completing the questionnaire you are providing consent for the data to be used for the purposes of this research project. All responses are confidential and your responses will be anonymised. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the research please contact Dan Bishop by email dbishop@lincoln.ac.uk or by telephone on 01522 837096. Thank you for taking the time to complete the questionnaire, your support is appreciated!!

Please complete the questions identified and provide as detailed an answer as possible

Please indicate which School you are from:

☐ School A (1)

☐ School B (2)

☐ School C (3)

☐ Other (4) _____

Please indicate which programme you are studying:

Please indicate which level of study you are currently in:

- ☐ Year 1 (1)
- ☐ Year 2 (2)
- ☐ Year 3 (3)
- ☐ Year 4 (4)
- ☐ Postgraduate (5)
-

Are you currently a student representative?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)
-

Page Break

Can you identify / list what you believe contributes to the student experience?

Do you feel you can influence your teaching and learning and the student experience?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)
-

Display This Question:

If Do you feel you can influence your teaching and learning and the student experience? = Yes

Please describe how you feel you can influence teaching and learning and your student experience?

Display This Question:

If Do you feel you can influence your teaching and learning and the student experience? = No

Please identify why you feel you can't influence teaching and learning and your student experience?

How important is it to you, to have a voice regarding teaching and learning and your student experience?

- ☐ Extremely important (1)
- ☐ Very important (2)
- ☐ Moderately important (3)
- ☐ Slightly important (4)
- ☐ Not at all important (5)

Please explain your answer?

Page Break

What does the term student satisfaction mean to you?

Can you identify what ways student satisfaction is measured within your School and the University?

How much emphasis do you place on student satisfaction?

- ☐ A great deal (1)
- ☐ A lot (2)
- ☐ A moderate amount (3)
- ☐ A little (4)
- ☐ None at all (5)

How much emphasis do you believe your School place on student satisfaction?

- ☐ A great deal (1)
- ☐ A lot (2)
- ☐ A moderate amount (3)
- ☐ A little (4)
- ☐ None at all (5)
-

How much emphasis do you believe the University place on student satisfaction?

- ☐ A great deal (1)
 - ☐ A lot (2)
 - ☐ A moderate amount (3)
 - ☐ A little (4)
 - ☐ None at all (5)
-

What do you believe are the reasons behind the increasing interests in assessing student satisfaction?

Page Break

Who's responsibility do you believe it is to improve teaching and Learning?

- ☐ The complete responsibility of students (1)
 - ☐ Mostly the students responsibility (2)
 - ☐ Both students and staff responsibility (3)
 - ☐ Mostly the responsibility of staff (4)
 - ☐ The complete responsibility of staff (5)
-

Who's responsibility do you believe it is to improve the student experience?

- ☐ The complete responsibility of students (1)
 - ☐ Mostly the students responsibility (2)
 - ☐ Both students and staff responsibility (3)
 - ☐ Mostly the responsibility of staff (4)
 - ☐ The complete responsibility of staff (5)
-

What role do you believe students should have in improving teaching and learning and the curriculum?

- ☐ None (1)
- ☐ Consultants (i.e. students opinion is sought to identify relevant areas for staff to develop) (2)
- ☐ Active Role (i.e. you contribute to the change or resulting action, but is led by staff) (3)
- ☐ Partners (i.e. students and staff work collectively to develop a specific area) (4)

What role do you believe students should have in improving the student experience?

- ☐ None (1)
 - ☐ Consultants (i.e. students opinion is sought to identify relevant areas for staff to develop) (2)
 - ☐ Active Role (i.e. you contribute to the change or resulting action, but is led by staff) (3)
 - ☐ Partners (i.e. students and staff work collectively to develop a specific area) (4)
-

Page Break

What role do you believe the student union plays in improving teaching and learning and the student experience?

Are you aware of the student representation system?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Do you know who your course rep is?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Have you ever spoken to your course rep regarding a positive or negative course experience?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Describe what you believe happened to this information?

Did anything change as a consequence of the information provided? Please provide details

Do you know who your School or College rep is?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Do you feel the student representation system is effective?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Can you offer any suggestions as to how your ideas and suggestions can be better incorporated?

Are there any mechanisms or processes that you believe could be performed better in your School or across the University? Please provide details

Page Break

Thank you for completing the questionnaire your time is very much appreciated.

If you would like to be involved in any future research opportunities as part of this research please provide your email address/contact details.

End of Block: Default Question Block

Appendix D - Participant Information Sheet and Informed Consent

Conceptualising the Student-University relationship within a UK higher education university: A case study into the involvement of students in assuring and enhancing teaching and learning and the wider student experience.

My name is Dan Bishop and I am a Doctoral Student within the School of Education. You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide 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. Ask if anything is unclear or if you would like more information.

What is the project *about*?

Over the last decade there has been an increased emphasis placed upon the involvement of students within the processes designed to develop and assure the quality of teaching and learning and the wider student experience and is of a direct concern to all within the University. This research aims to evaluate such practices of how students, staff and senior management are involved and will help provide a better understanding of the interactions of students and staff to form the student-university relationship.

What are the aims of the research?

The research aims to conceptualise the student-university relationship, examining how and where students and University staff are involved; and any barriers, tensions or challenges to approaches that endeavour to assure or enhance teaching and learning and the wider student experience.

Who else is and can be involved?

The research is seeking to include and invite people from the following demographics School Students, Student Representatives, Programme Leaders, Student Engagement Champions and Senior Management within the research, as people from these groups will help the research gain an understanding of the how students are involved and interact within the formal and informal mechanisms and processes to ensure the quality of teaching and learning in the University.

What sorts of methods are being used?

The study will use a combination of different methods, student group and individual semi-structured interviews, observations of meetings and informal get-togethers and examination of the institutions policies and procedures.

What are you being asked to do?

Based upon your first hand experiences as a College Student Representative you will be invited to an interview and asked to provide your opinion of how students are involved in providing feedback and enhancing teaching and learning and the student experience; and the role this may play within the overall running or assessment of quality within the University. The interview will last approximately 1 hour, but no more than 1 hour 30 minutes and will be recorded on a Dictaphone. Following the meeting you will be provided with the opportunity to view the transcript of the interview and asked to verify and accept that it is a true and accurate representation of what was said.

Do you have to take part?

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any point in time. However, if you decide you no longer want your data to be included this request will have to be made prior to the analysis of the data.

Can you be more involved in the project if you like?

As the project includes a number of different data collection methods there may be the possibility to assist further and the researcher would be happy to discuss such opportunities. Following the interviews, you may be asked if you would like to attend an additional meeting to seek further information or clarify certain points made. If you do not wish to do so then please identify this to the researcher.

Who will benefit from this research, and how?

The project has the potential to provide recommendations that will enhance mechanisms and procedures at multiple levels within the university, benefiting all parties involved: students, staff, management and the researcher.

Are there any risks of taking part in the research?

The potential risks to the participants and the institution taking part in this research have been assessed. These are considered low in relation to both the researcher and the organisation as all participants will be aged over 18 years old and have the mental capacity to provide consent.

There are a number of potential concerns or risks that participants should be aware of;

- There is the potential for vulnerability caused by the unequal relationship between the researcher and the students and also between the researcher and fellow colleagues or peers. As a participant you may be reluctant to provide whole accounts of previous experiences or may feel under pressure to take part in the study or provide answers. However, taking part and contributing to the research is completely voluntary and any information shared will be treated with the strictest confidence. In addition I will be available after all interviews and observations should any of the participants wish to discuss any issues that has made them feel uncomfortable as a result of the material discussed.*
- There is also a risk that the research may highlight unsatisfactory or negative findings in the eyes of the institution studied, whilst the institution and participants will not be*

outlined in the thesis or subsequent publications it may be possible to identify who these individuals are. All participants interviewed will be asked to verify the transcript as a true and accurate record of the interview. In addition participants will be offered the opportunity to identify any aspects of the interview that they would not like to be included within the publication of the data.

Who can I contact for more information or to get involved?

If you would like to take part in the study then you will be required to complete the attached consent form and return to the researcher on the details below. If you would like to discuss any aspect of the research then please contact the researcher Dan Bishop via email or dbishop@lincoln.ac.uk or via telephone in office hours on 01522 837096.

Agreement to Participate

Please check your responses below.

1. I understand the nature and purpose of this research.
Yes ☐ No ☐
2. I have received enough information to make an informed decision about participating.
Yes ☐ No ☐
3. I understand that I can raise questions, offer criticisms and make suggestions about the project.
Yes ☐ No ☐
4. I understand that I can decide *not* to participate in this project at any time after agreeing to.
Yes ☐ No ☐

5. Do you agree to contribute to this research? Yes ☐ No ☐
6. Can I record and transcribe our conversation? Yes ☐ No ☐

- 6a. *If yes, would you like a copy of the recording/transcript?* Yes ☐ No ☐

Please check below to indicate your preferences

7. I would like to be involved in/informed about this project:
☐ just for this interview, and prefer not to be contacted again
☐ for this interview, but would be happy to be in touch for follow-up discussion
☐ beyond this interview, such as for workshops or collaborative work
☐ in other ways (please explain if relevant)

Your signature/verbal consent indicates that you have decided to take part in this project after considering the information provided, and that you know you can raise questions and decide not to participate at any time.

Signature/verbal consent _____ **Date** _____

Name _____

Email/contact _____

For more information, contact Dan Bishop via email or dbishop@lincoln.ac.uk or via telephone in office hours on 01522 837096.

Appendix E - Establishing Discourses (Example Data Samples)

Discourse	Example Data
Neoliberalism	<p>I guess... th- the fundamental level is to do with league tables and, you know, the university as an institution has ambition to be a top 40 university, and I suppose it feeds into that. Erm how are we going to get there erm, well, there are lots of ways other than this, but I think that's an important thing because in particular the NSS is such a, you know, whatever we think about the NSS or, you know, however we feel about it, it is... it's there, and we can't get rid of it, and we have to work with it (Staff Member Three).</p> <p>We've now moved beyond that to a point of it is necessary to look to simply moving these numbers. Um, and I think that stretches, um, how academics feel about the way they teach and stretches the way they feel about the trustfulness of the institution because are we really saying we want excellent teaching, or are we saying we saying we want excellent NSS results? (Senior Management Team Member One).</p> <p>I'm not sure we ever talk about engaging students in those kinds of conversations to increase their student satisfaction with teaching and learning, however implicitly that is an objective. We want to see scores in the National Student Survey go up in the...the post-graduate equivalents go up (Management Team Member One).</p> <p>academics, everybody wants their ... everyone wants to be able to give the best experience for students really don't they? So I think ... I think everyone knows that that is what the overall aim is, we want to make our students into the best they can possibly be, we want to make them into leaders who understand their field and want to go out and do great things with their experience (Students' Union Sabbatical Officer).</p> <p>To help students develop into highly engaged, employable and creative-thinking graduates who contribute to the development of society and the economy (University Strategic Plan).</p>
Marketisation	<p>by doing all this imp- this work to improve modules and such, the likelihood is that our scores are improving the NSS so the students will leave happier. Erm and I just feel like obviously especially with TEF framework coming in there's going to be a lot more focus on what the teaching is within the university. Erm so I feel if there wasn't as much pressure to move up the league tables for the university or become like a recognised university, I don't feel there's be a much pressure on the university to do module evaluations erm or focus on the NSS results when they come out and such (Senior Student Representative).</p> <p>Being able to ensure and improve the quality of provision to enable the university to progress, rise in league tables etc (Student x Student Survey).</p> <p>unfortunately, I think there's also quite a lot of the very bureaucratic perspective around user voice, student voice, around NSS data and module surveys and erm you start a survey, level 2 surveys, and that kind of erm much more er mechanical way of – of getting students involved, which</p>

is less – a less enjoyable aspect of the work for me (Staff Member One).

So this year, I'm really hoping, given that we implemented all of the action points from the previous NSS, that our score will be more positive and that's at the back of my mind. Now I'm not going to spend from now until August worrying about it, because otherwise I'll have wasted half a year of my life. Erm but it is there in the back of my mind. And so... yeah, I think it probably feeds into that. I think it's to do with competition, university competition (Staff Member Two).

I think as a more sort of engaged student, you realise how much more the NSS matters. Not just when you're at university but post-university, as well, like with league tables, stuff like that. But when you're a student, I think it's if you're an engaged student, you exist on your terms(?) at university and towards your degree. And it's more just a survey you fill out in the third year about your experience across the whole three years, rather than, whereas the more engaged you are you see, the more right this is how it's used to improve your course year on year, league tables, how the university develops and publicise and market itself, sort of thing. That's the difference between, you know, if you're an engaged student versus a non-engaged student (Student Project Worker x Group Interview Three).

Ensuring excellent outcomes through TEF processes (University Strategic Plan).

Performativity

the only way you're going to benchmark yourself against something is by having some kind of quantitative outcome to be able to benchmark yourself against. Otherwise it's very difficult to then put in place any performance indicators of success and change. So, I think they are essential and I think if you look at any industry they will be benchmarked against seem kind of qualitative, quantitative erm, outcome (Management Team Member Two).

to decrease the amount of university dropouts and increase the students coming to university to study (Student x Student Survey).

Particularly over the last couple of years, I think there's been a shift – it's felt like there's been a shift. I think students are surveyed more and more and more, so we get the new starter survey, we get the level – we had the level one and two survey that feeds into the NSS (Staff Member Two).

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So where I'm getting to I think is that we collect a lot of data at different levels in the hierarchy, different points in the student journey and varying from, sort of, local classroom experience to something that's part of a national picture. And the challenges tend to be in using the data rather than collecting it (Management Team Member One).

So the most established systematic approach is through student surveys, em, and they come in a range of forms, from very long institutional surveys of, say, the whole of the postgrad body...student body. One extreme modular valuation questionnaire, on a small scale, em, at the other extreme, a number of different thematic surveys in between...the National Student Survey being the most prominent. They are all...bar a couple

of questions in a couple of internal surveys, focused on satisfaction, not on a student's own engagement or any other factors...satisfaction with learning, teaching and the services that surround those (Management Team Member One).

module evaluation of the surveys are the biggest thing, um ... we are going to be working with planning in the future to deliver all of the surveys, so um ... I think that will give students, because it will be sort of anonymous and ... students can say what they want, it will give the university a lot more um information about how the student body feels, so I think that is the ... that is probably the mechanism we are looking to grow the most (Student Union Staff Member).

Ensuring high levels of completion benchmarked against the sector (University Strategic Plan).

Consumerism

The fees are very high (compared to mainland Europe). For this reason, I feel a lot should be delivered and when something is not working for students the programmes should be flexible enough to adapt within the confines of the course (Student x Student Survey).

for £9000 the teaching should provide the student with exactly what they want (Student x Student Survey).

it depends if you want value for money, you know, you pay so much for it, you know, you don't want to miss any of it and you expect it to be good (General Student x Group Interview Four).

Well, it's like being a customer, isn't it, almost, you know, we're making orders from the university, we expect to get something. I mean, I suppose if there was really very little satisfaction from a student, could they demand their money back? (General Student x Group Interview Four).

And that's just the way, you know, if the course is ran, runs very smoothly and stuff like it's good timetabling or room allocations, room allocations, stuff like that. Those kinds of things will obviously have a negative on satisfaction, I suppose it's more, sort of, feeling that your £9,000 a year is, is worthwhile for the facilities and the teaching and the, sort of, core university things. So I'd say that's the, the sort of correlation there (Student Representative x Group Interview Two).

students as consumers, you do, you will always get the people who are going, "Oh, I pay nine grand a year, I should get free printing". Or, "Oh, I pay nine grand a year, they should make lectures smaller, or they should give me the answers to stuff". It's very much sort of, they want, they expect everything (Student Project Worker x Group Interview Three).

Students are consumers now in the sense that they live in our accommodation and they eat in our refectories and they use some baseline facilities like libraries and I think, to that extent, they are unquestionably consumers and actually it's quite good for us to see them in that way. I think if you look back a decade or so and think how students were treated then and how they're treated now, it's been a very useful concept. It's, it's made us wake up to, to what we might be offering these young people whose lives are changing while they're on that journey with us. I think for applicants and particularly for the parents of applicants, they see this as a consumer process (Senior Management Staff Member One).

it's the shiny lecture theatres, it's the buildings that sell in this marketised, consumerist, HE sector we're in (Management Team Member One).

Partnership

But it is that sort of idea of, now you're paying for something so yeah it's right that you should be able to influence the way that it's delivered to you. The way that you're getting that product, effectively (Student Project Worker x Group Interview Three).

work that health and social care are doing it around students as trainers. So gaging students and staff in training programmes and then developing the students' expertise as trainers so they, those third-year students and mature students can then go back into first year students and deliver training. And then as they come, as those, those newer students come through they will become trainers. So, there's a kind of like a reciprocal process, the students feel empowered about becoming trainers themselves and informing other trainers (Management Team Member Two).

We've been working on a new youth justice module and we've had a collaborative approach to designing a module, so we've had students involved in helping us design the module, and working with the youth offending service, and so what – what I think we've got is something that's really creative, it's really valuable, it enhances student experience because we've got guest speakers coming in, so when we do the session on the youth court we've got the youth court officer coming in. When we're doing the police, we've got the PC coming in (Staff Member One).

'Well... okay, so that's the problem, what would you do about it?' ... And if they can come up with a solution then we'll say, 'Well do you want to lead on that?' So we're happy for them to lead on things. So, for example, erm ***** who's our current school rep wanted to run a erm small project called Directors Challenge where we encourage students who were interested in becoming directors to get a group of people together, do a small performance, put in on erm and then it's judged. So it's – it's a bit of work, it's not – it was quite a lot of work for *****, she was like, 'Oh I want to run this Directors Challenge,' so **** who is the theatre manager said, 'Yes you can have studio one, we'll give you this, this, this and this, you do it.' And she did and it was very, very successful and we're go- we're going to do it again next year. So a lot of it, again, comes back to what I was saying before about them taking ownership of things (Staff Member Two).

Erm, but yeah we tend to like work really closely with our staff. Sometimes the staff email us if they've got like a project or anything they want help on, like ***** going to down to Edinburgh and he emailed me asking me if I wanted to go and be part of the production team for one of his shows down there, erm so it's just ... I think we've got really good working relationships with our staff members (School Representative Three).

But the student recruiter, it's great because you sit with a load of staff and it's kind of like, when I first heard about it I was like, "Oh, is that just a student sat on the table outside, just observing it with a sheet of paper, ticking boxes?" But no, when I actually found out that you sit on the panel and you have questions, and that you are very much a part of the process, I said, "Now, I've never heard anything like that at any university before". And it is, it's great that students get a chance to have an input on what kind of staff come into the university (Student Project Worker x Group Interview Three).

The chance for a lot, because, er, some of the roles are sort of with heads of departments who aren't necessarily student facing, so I'm shadowing staff in the Estates at the moment, whose student contact is quite minimal really. So that's a good chance for me as a student to see what they do. Because a lot of these departments can be a bit closed off almost. But also for that department then to have that idea of what

students are doing (Student Project Worker x Group Interview Three).

I think there are some places in the university that have explored the idea of students sitting on curriculum design bodies, um, and I think that's a really interesting way forward, um, because again, it's quite passive to say, "I rate this course," and it's quite active to say, "I create this course." (Senior Management Team Member One).

The students are at different disciplines, so they're not invested, they don't have any baggage, they're taking an objective view to contrast that to a student rep, who is very much invested in that subject and may already have a relationship...a particular relationship with a member of staff that might taint how they view their teaching. So we are creating specific opportunities for students like that, where we recruit and train students to then be able to go and engage in those ways (Management Team Member One).

Strong student engagement in all the University's curriculum development and review and student-related activities (University Strategic Plan)