

Using Action Research to tackle constraints to collaborative university work: a case of Widening Participation

A thesis presented by Tara Webster-Deakin for the award of Doctor of Education

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on my work as a professional member of staff in one academic School in a higher-status UK university (Midtown). Specifically, it explores the process of tackling the constraints to collaboration between professional university and academic staff through the medium of action research and using the case and location of my work, widening participation (WP). The research was motivated by my desire to understand why academics often appeared reluctant to engage with WP work, and by my interest in action research as a mutually supportive approach to delivering the WP agenda. The research, therefore, was informed by action research principles of collaboration, co-construction of knowledge and action for social change and involved me, and three academics.

There were two phases to the research encompassing two aspects of WP: access to higher education (HE) in the form of ‘taster’ sessions for secondary schools; and participation in HE, during which phase the three academics experimented with more inclusive forms of pedagogy when teaching undergraduates. Empirical data included: meeting notes, teaching observations, lesson plans, session feedback (academic co-researchers and pupils), research project evaluation, co-researcher interviews and my research diary notes. Data analysis was thematic and based on action research principles and the principles of inclusive pedagogy. Insights that were generated included finding how pedagogic considerations are common to thinking about how to improve both the access and participation elements of WP; and how four disparate individuals overcame considerable constraints to evolve towards a collaborative collective during the research. More broadly, the research contributes to knowledge by furthering understanding of how university-based professionals and academics might work more effectively in partnership in arenas such as WP.

The research involved a transformative process of surfacing professional and academic anxieties and accepting the differences that hindered collaborative cross-boundary working. Through affording the time and space that was needed to address the institutional and relational hierarchies, the action research approach provided opportunities to co-produce effective taught sessions and understand what was needed to engage students at both the access and the participation stages. I argue that for HE professionals whose work involves collaboration with academics, pursuing action research principles opens communicative spaces, enabling mutual learning and development across the academic/professional divide and developing more inclusive and richer working relationships which yield better outcomes for staff and for students.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Professional staff working in universities now comprise a sizeable proportion of the higher education (HE) workforce, bringing with them extensive experience, knowledge and skills gained in a range of professional contexts. While they are not primarily employed to contribute to the core business of universities - teaching students and research - these staff lead on areas such as university marketing, student support and digital learning solutions. In contemporary HE, the expertise of professional staff is crucial to university strategy and operations, yet there are often tensions when collaboration with academic staff is required, caused by the prioritisation of different agendas. This problematic institutional divide can impede worthwhile areas of university work, particularly when collaborative approaches with academic staff are needed to deliver successful outcomes for the university and its students.

One such area of work, and one in which I am a professional member of university staff, is widening participation (WP). WP is a government-led policy which aims to encourage and support students who face barriers in accessing HE. WP is concerned with three stages: access to university; successful participation at university; and equality of outcomes in terms of graduate prospects. It is generally assumed that prospective university students will benefit from engaging with academic staff during the access stage so that they can experience university approaches to teaching and learning. To this end, academic staff are invited to deliver content for WP activities, in the form of subject 'taster' sessions for school pupils. WP professional staff are reliant on the goodwill of academic staff to contribute to the university WP activity, while not having the authority to direct and shape academic contributions to elicit the best possible experiences for the school pupils.

This thesis describes and analyses the experience of employing action research to address the processes involved in working with academics in WP university work. Action research is a form of research which aims to enable collaborative, evolutionary research processes. Each participant in the research, whether they be an academic researcher or the research ‘subject’, becomes a co-researcher, sharing ownership of the research. In this thesis I illustrate how, by employing action research, the activity of working collaboratively to create taster sessions for local school pupils led to professional insights about WP work and a clearer understanding of the barriers faced by academic and professional WP staff in engaging with pedagogy for access and for participation. I explore the challenges of undertaking action research as a collaborative process with academic staff as co-researchers, and the enablements and constraints that helped to uncover knowledge about using action research for this type of cross-professional-boundary university working.

The first chapter clarifies how I formulated and understood the problem of academic engagement with WP for the purposes of the research. First, it gives a broad outline of the context of the research, university WP work. It then explains my own position in the research as a professional involved in this aspect of university work, and the challenges I have experienced of working with academic staff in the WP arena. Next, it moves to establishing the rationale for action research before providing an overview of the phases of the research as they unfolded. The penultimate section sets out the contributions to knowledge of my research and finally I outline the structure of the thesis revealing the substantive findings.

Widening Participation

Widening participation (WP) is a UK policy-driven government strategy¹ which aims to address social inequity for those groups currently under-represented in HE. In 2019/20 only 4.3% of the most disadvantaged pupils² progressed to one of the high tariff³ British universities, compared to 20.9% of the most advantaged pupils (Department for Education, 2021). Universities are required to provide a range of measures to address this inequity, including a programme of aspiration-raising and skills-building activities for pupils in the most disadvantaged schools in their local area. These activities are funded via the institutional budget for university WP work, which also includes means-tested student bursaries, and aims to target, engage, and support prospective students whose social, personal, cultural, or economic background could be a barrier to their participation in HE (Bowes, Thomas, Peck, Moreton, and Birkin, 2013).

The HE landscape in the UK is made up of more than 280 universities or higher education institutions (HEI) (HESA 2021)⁴, including 163 Further Education Colleges (FEC) and several approved providers (AP) which include specialist institutions training students in art, architecture, performing arts, business and music, and faith colleges. The access requirements for each course within each of these 280+ institutions vary greatly: from 72 UCAS⁵ points for a creative arts degree at an AP to 144 for an English degree at a research-intensive or selective HEI.

¹ <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/guidance/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/student-recruitment-retention-and-attainment/widening-participation-and-equality>

² <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/widening-participation-in-higher-education>

³ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/about/measures-of-our-success/participation-performance-measures/gap-in-participation-at-higher-tariff-providers-between-the-most-and-least-represented-groups/>

⁴ <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/providers/providers-submitting-data-hesa-collections>

⁵ <https://www.ucas.com/>

Universities are broadly divided into two types based on their entry requirements; high tariff or “selective” universities and low tariff or “recruiting” universities, although tariffs can vary across the sector. Low tariff universities tend to focus on WP as access by encouraging a wide range of students to apply for and study on their courses via accessible curricula and pathways (Rainford, 2019). High tariff universities tend to focus on diversifying their student population through outreach designed to enrich and support disadvantaged pupils to attain the grades needed to access their courses. In recent years initiatives such as pre-degree foundation years have been embedded in many high tariff universities, enabling students with lower grades to be supported into the degree programmes of their choice.

WP work in universities

To date, WP activity has focused on ‘outreach’, a term loosely used to describe activities on and off campus with pupils from targeted schools and colleges or neighbourhoods. Outreach can take many forms, including campus visits, subject taster days, in-school study skills or curriculum-specific sessions. Typically, outreach is designed, managed, and delivered by professional university staff, with academic staff contributing their subject specialism knowledge to sessions as appropriate. There is a growing bank of data and literature which documents and evaluates the types of outreach activities delivered in HE institutions (e.g. Gorard, Smith, May, Thomas, Adnett and Slack, 2006; Sutton Trust 2010⁶; Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2012⁷; Bajwa-Patel, Giroletti, Karlidag-Dennis, and Lismore, 2017) or offers guidance and commentary on how to undertake the evaluation of these activities (e.g. Passey, Morris and Waldman 2009; HEFCE 2010; Harrison, Waller and Last, 2015; Hayton and Bengry-Howell, 2016).

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⁷ <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/how-can-universities-support-disadvantaged-communities>

However, literature on how successful these activities are in tackling fundamental educational inequality or widening access to HE is sparse. Currently the findings indicate that early interventions that are then sustained throughout the school career have the most impact, as do initiatives that take place on campus, rather than in the school or college (Gorard et al, 2006; Moore, Sanders, and Higham, 2013; Harrison and Waller, 2017). There is also evidence that pre-application Summer Schools have considerable impact (Hoare and Mann, 2011; National Strategy Interim Report 2013⁸; Sharp, 2018). The inconsistent evidence base for WP means that there is no directive about the most useful type of contribution academic staff can make to initiatives, nor any specific guidance about the most effective ways in which professional WP staff can work to support academic uptake of this area of university work. As a result, university WP teams rely on the goodwill and commitment of academic staff who are invested in this type of university social justice project work.

It might be assumed by universities that academic staff will engage with outreach activity, yet, despite the introduction of Access and Participation plans (APP)⁹ in which universities qualify how they are increasing their numbers of students with barriers to accessing HE, there is no single WP framework that can inform or quality-assure academic staff input. This leads to complex interactions between professional WP and academic university staff. WP work is managed and delivered operationally by WP staff but is usually reliant on the disciplinary expertise of academic staff, a depth of knowledge the WP staff are unlikely to have. WP staff hail from a range of backgrounds including youth work and teaching, so typically have the skills and knowledge with which to manage and engage groups of school pupils, which university academics may not have. WP staff are enacting a sector-wide policy which is the bread and

⁸ <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/17401/1/National-strategy-interim-report-January-2013.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/access-and-participation-plans/>

butter of their role and remit. Academic staff are engaging in WP work voluntarily as an addendum to their teaching, research, and administrative roles.

The positioning of WP policy within an institution is key to academic engagement in this type of university work. Institutional responses to the WP agenda impact on the role of academic staff in WP, with some staff engaging with WP outreach activity as an act of social justice and others not perceiving that it is necessarily within their remit. While, on the one hand, institutional guidance for the coordination of WP work addresses professional WP staff, there is “seldom guidance on good practice for academics” as “outreach seldom forms the central focus” of an academic’s role (Johnson, Danvers, Hinton-Smith, Atkinson, Bowden, Foster, Garner, Garrud, Greaves, Harris and Hejmadi, 2019, p.3). As a result, professional WP staff are anxious about providing feedback to academics about the quality of the content or structure of their contributions to WP work as this may cause offence and potentially alienate the academic from future participation.

My position in the research

I work as a Widening Participation manager within an academic School in the Faculty of Arts at a high tariff UK university which is part of the Russell Group¹⁰ of universities. For the purposes of this thesis, I will be calling this university *Midtown University*. Previously I worked as a secondary school teacher and then as a manager of regional education projects for vulnerable young people and their families (young offenders, excluded pupils, school refusers etc.) in the voluntary sector. My interest in those young people who were challenged by their circumstances began in the classroom and was the subject of my Masters dissertation¹¹. The eventual move to working with school pupils and developing initiatives designed to inform them about university

¹⁰ <https://russellgroup.ac.uk/about/our-universities/>

¹¹ Webster, T.D., 1996. *How Can Drama Benefit Disaffected Pupils in Schools?* (Masters dissertation, University of Birmingham).

and the opportunities open to them was a comfortable progression in a career focusing on educational disadvantage.

My background as a secondary school teacher assists me in building positive relationships with local schools and colleges in my WP role, but it has not provided me with prior experience of engaging academics to work in this area. As a WP professional I am a university administrator and therefore am not viewed as having expert knowledge. My role is to enact university policy pertaining to fair access and, although I may perceive this to be a socially just endeavour, it is not the core work of a university. One of the key challenges I face is recruiting academic colleagues to deliver sessions to school pupils and I am reliant on the few colleagues who regularly commit to doing so. For example, in an academic School comprising 120+ academic staff, only 20 (16%) would participate in any one year, the majority of whom came from the teaching-focused, rather than the research and teaching career path; a small distinction but one which demonstrates the nested hierarchies within what is an immensely hierarchical sector.

To encourage academic staff to participate in WP work, I have employed a range of strategies: attending departmental meetings, appealing to individual heads of department, publicising WP events and praising contributors via internal bulletins, reporting on annual progress and outcomes, sharing national and institutional WP data, and offering to collaborate with colleagues where an outreach element might enhance their research project or constructively feed into it. This has had occasional effect but there remain only a few academics who commit to WP year on year. One of the biggest challenges has been making myself heard. Despite my previous career, spanning more than twenty years and including teaching, management, consulting and training, my lack of academic status can mean that my sphere of influence is limited and limiting.

My experience of entering the university sector as a “non-academic” was one I was ill-prepared for. The academic/administrative hierarchy was something I found challenging to navigate. I was conscious of wanting to engage with academic colleagues on an equitable basis but equally aware of my lesser academic qualifications and lack of expertise in any single field. I felt lacking in the face of academia and my confidence and conviction suffered due to my sense of inferiority. In addition, I struggled to understand why there was so little appetite for an area of work that provided the possibility of transformative experiences for those young people most in need of additional support to access HE. Before I started this research, I had no knowledge of the barriers to academic engagement in WP work but suspected a lack of interest or altruism. I had little awareness of how regulated and lacking in autonomy my academic colleagues felt, nor that there was such a resistance to what they experienced as top-down policy initiatives, such as WP work.

Rationale for action research

Engaging with research that is based around collaborative action and focused on achieving co-operative change, made sense for me as a practitioner-researcher. The research I wished to undertake was rooted in my practice and the challenges I faced daily. I was keen to be “addressing issues of immediate concern” in my work (Townsend, 2013, p.50). More than this, the notion of making a link between research and practice would marry my WP work with an enquiry into how this work was enacted and could be improved. I was eager for the research to result in action and change in the ways in which I worked with academic colleagues. Rather than gathering qualitative data through interviews or surveys to gain a broad perspective on academic mindset towards WP, I wanted to work with academic colleagues to explore and understand their process of preparing for WP taster sessions. Significantly, I hoped that linking the practical with

the knowing or theorising, would help to promote a deeper understanding of WP work and therefore enable me to harness better academic engagement.

Action research is designed to examine a problem in everyday practice and, through collective action and reflection on that action, resolve the problem or achieve a common understanding on how this might be achieved. Action research is a wide disciplinary field which also includes educational action research, practical action research, participatory research, all of which cut across disciplines and are employed in a range of community, education, organisation, and health settings. Action researchers come from many different backgrounds and conduct their research in a range of contexts, from teacher-researchers who self-reflect on their classroom practice to community members working with researchers to explore and remedy a social problem. Working collaboratively, the aim is that they “collectively investigate their own reality” (Rahman, 2008, p.49).

At first the research was focused on my desire to explore and understand a more collaborative way of working with academic staff to design and deliver taster sessions for events with local schools. I was motivated to develop a successful and mutually supportive approach to delivering the WP agenda, driven by the fact that I have no authority with which to recruit academic staff. I invited three academic colleagues from different arts disciplines to participate as co-researchers in the research project, to share the experience of planning, designing, and delivering a WP session through the action of doing so and to engage in collective feedback, reflection and discussion about the action, which was underpinned by principles of collaboration, co-construction of knowledge and action for social change.

These three principles provided a template for the way in which I wanted to conduct the research and adhered to the professional ethos of transparency, respect, and integrity I have always tried

to apply in my work and career. The notion of collaboration and of co-construction of knowledge provided the potential to explore and even lessen some of the differences and tensions between academic and professional staff. Explicitly, action research demands that you research *with* others; researcher becomes subject, and subject becomes researcher: “Research is done by people with each other, not by researchers on other people or about them” (Heron and Reason, 1997, p.8).

My role in the research was that of an insider researcher as well as lead researcher. Although in the first instance my focus was on how my co-researchers approached taster sessions, in the spirit of action research I also needed to examine my own motivations, behaviours and reactions to the research as it unfolded. The learning of and about my co-researchers was needed to enlighten my understanding of my professional conduct and whether my approach to engaging academic colleagues in WP work was as enabling as it could be. The flexibility of action research as a process provided the opportunity for me to reflect on my multi-faceted researcher role throughout the research, as well as provide an alternative lens through which to interrogate my professional role and the knowledge I both brought to the research and took away from it.

Overview of the research design

The research had two phases. The first focused on the original research problem, WP work or university access and comprised two university taster half days for two groups of school pupils. In this first phase we worked as a team of researchers. The second phase focused on the emergent concern of my co-researchers, teaching undergraduate students, or university participation. In this second phase I worked with each co-researcher individually to explore their classroom issue.

Phase One (Access)

In phase one, I recruited three academics (whom I shall call *Howard*, *Paul*, and *Sarah*) as my co-researchers. The focus of the research was on the process of designing, delivering, and evaluating taster sessions for two groups of school pupils and the challenges arising from engaging in this process. These taster sessions were part of a regular ‘university taster’ event targeted at Year 9 pupils.

I wanted to include the voice of the school pupils and was eager to provide an opportunity for dialogue between the academics and the pupils with a view to promoting mutual understanding. Traditionally, written feedback from WP sessions was provided in summary or a filtered form, for fear of alienating colleagues from participating in the future. Engaging the school pupils in interactions during the taster sessions, I hoped, would provide an immediate form of pupil feedback for us as a research team. By prioritising pupil voice in this way, we would be making the time to listen to what was being said, even if critical (Hadfield and Haw, 2001).

The fieldwork in this first research phase comprised one reconnaissance or introductory session, two planning sessions, one review session, two taster half days and an evaluation session. The delivery of the taster half days took place in the same week, with the review session scheduled in between. The co-researchers observed each other's delivery and we all made observation notes which, along with written feedback and verbal questions from the pupils, served to influence any changes each co-researcher would make before the second delivery half day.

This phase concluded with an evaluation meeting at which we shared our experience of the research to that point, reflected on learning and discussed the impact the experience had had on our thinking about developing taster sessions for school pupils. My co-researchers raised questions about a second phase in which all three were keen to implement some of the learning they had taken away from this first phase.

Phase Two (Participation)

The second phase of the research evolved from the experience of the first, with all three co-researchers keen to continue with the action research process to explore issues they were encountering in their own undergraduate teaching contexts. During this phase I worked with Sarah, Howard, and Paul individually, to support them in adapting their classroom practice or introducing collaborative initiatives with students, informed by the learning, and reflecting we had collectively shared in phase one. Each co-researcher had a different problem they wished to address to improve their own teaching experience and the experience of the students they taught.

In this phase I worked collaboratively with each co-researcher, following their agenda for change, and providing ideas, feedback, and challenge on their plan of action. I observed each co-researcher once and provided observation notes which we discussed together. I also offered each co-researcher the opportunity to observe me teaching. Once the individual delivery and review was completed, we met together as a team of researchers to evaluate the two research phases. Finally, I interviewed each individual co-researcher on their experience of the process.

Contribution to knowledge

Sector-wide knowledge

This research adds to the field of WP literature by increasing our understanding of the constraints academics face in committing to and participating in WP work. It contributes to the field of HE by exploring the ways in which the structures of HE can constrain knowledge sharing across the academic/administrative/professional divides in university projects such as WP. It also contributes to a greater understanding of the challenges of using action research as an approach to research in HE and how action research principles can help to positively reframe cross-boundary-professional relationships in universities.

Local, institutional knowledge

One of the constraints to working collaboratively with academic staff has been the lack of a robust evidence base on which to draw. As a result of engaging in this research, there have been multiple internal platforms on which to share the evidence arising from our enquiry, including a practice-based workshop for academic staff, and a Faculty of Arts WP symposium showcasing ideas and research from professional staff as well as academics. Within my School and Faculty roles, I have drawn on the theoretical knowledge of inclusive pedagogies to enhance our equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) work with particular focus on pedagogy for participation. This has led to highly successful student-led initiatives which are positively influencing a culture shift in the perception of student voice in curriculum evaluation.

Personal, professional knowledge

A key personal gain has been my evolution as a scholar and the developing self-belief that I have something to contribute to the knowledge about action research processes, collaborative working in universities and pedagogies for access and for participation. A historical tension has existed

between WP professionals whose knowledge is based on undocumented practice-based experience and academic lecturers whose knowledge is developed and rewarded through documented research. Engaging with theory has enabled me to have the language with which to talk to academic colleagues knowledgeably and has emboldened me to confidently challenge colleagues on issues of pedagogy and student support.

Structure of the thesis

Chapter two examines the field of literature pertaining to professional roles in HE with specific reference to WP professional university staff and WP work. It explores the constraints and enablements to cross-boundary collaborative work in universities, employing literature from the UK and the US to explore the issues for collaborative WP and outreach work. Finally, the chapter reflects on the gap in the literature: WP professional and academic staff working collaboratively to develop WP work.

Chapter three positions the research methodology, action research, as the most appropriate choice for a social justice issue such as WP. The chapter outlines the broader field of Action Research. It then reflects on the ethical challenges of action research, before providing a detailed research design and summary of the research process. The chapter concludes with an articulation of the principles of collaboration, co-construction of knowledge and action for social change, and how these will be employed as a conceptual lens for the subsequent empirical chapters.

Chapter four reflects on the principle of collaboration in our research. It explores how successfully we were able to enact this in the context of our roles, relationships, and preconceptions about each other. The chapter describes and analyses the enablements and constraints to collaborative research, in particular, professional, and political hierarchies, voice, ownership of the research, and agency. It draws on the professional roles in HE literature to

exemplify the challenges of collaborative working in universities. Finally, the chapter introduces the second principle: Co-construction of knowledge.

Chapter five reflects on the principle of co-construction of knowledge in our research. It explains how co-construction of knowledge is interpreted in this research project and the six principles of pedagogical practice which I have devised and used as analytical frames. The chapter then describes and analyses the enablements and constraints to co-construction of knowledge, using a case study approach, with each of the four researchers positioned as an individual case. The six principles of pedagogical practice and the inclusive pedagogies literature are employed to reflect on each case or researcher's experience. The chapter concludes with an introduction to the sixth chapter: Action for social change.

Chapter six discusses the challenges of achieving change through action research and explores how our research was able to take action for social change. First, using reflections from all three co-researchers, the chapter examines the points in the research at which change occurred, how sustainable that change is and, where change did not occur, what impeded it. Drawing on the action research and professional staff literature, the chapter reflects on the enablements and constraints to taking action to change our relationships, biases, and practices in HE. Finally, the chapter introduces the final concluding chapter.

The seventh and concluding chapter provides a final discussion of the research findings and process and outlines the contribution to knowledge made by the thesis. First, the chapter re-visits the issue of academic engagement in university work, reflecting on the insights the action research process provided. Next, the chapter considers the issues that constrain and enable collaborative university work, such as regulatory processes, vertical and horizontal hierarchies and the marketisation of HE, and how these can be challenged by engaging with approaches such

as action research. The chapter concludes by raising further questions about how creative and autonomous spaces such as WP university work may become increasingly regulated due to the APP, and how action research might provide an alternative perspective on developing university partnership working.

Chapter 2 - Professionals and Academics in University Professional Work

Introduction

In the previous chapter I introduced the challenge of working as a WP professional member of staff with a remit for fair access to university, and the difficulties I faced in engaging academic colleagues' interest in and commitment to this area of university work. I have outlined how, during the process of working closely with academic co-researchers, we encountered a range of enablements and constraints to collaborative working across our professional boundaries.

Employing an action research approach, we were able to surface these to bring complementary knowledges to the development of taster sessions for school pupils and seminars for undergraduate students and invest time in reflection and evaluation of the skills needed to teach inclusively for access and for participation.

This chapter comprises a literature review focusing on cross-boundary-professional working in universities. The chapter is in two main parts. The first part reviews the field of literature pertaining to professional staff in HE, their evolving role and status in universities, and the issues of nomenclature, morale, and value. In the second part, I reflect on examples of successful academic/professional staff collaboration in university work. As part of this, I review the literature about WP professional university staff with a particular focus on their role and function. I explore the constraints and enablements to collaborative working in the WP arena, both in the UK and the US literatures, followed by a summary of the examples of successful cross-boundary WP work. Finally, the chapter identifies the gap in the literature: WP professional staff working collaboratively with academic staff to enable fair access to and participation at university.

The role of professional staff in universities

Professional staff in HE is a small but growing field of literature, in line with the emergence and evolution of professional staff remit and roles in universities. Since the mid-80s and in response to the managerial direction required of universities due to the marketisation of the HE sector, there has been a significant shift in the professional support staff role and a marked increase in the numbers of professional staff employed by universities in the UK and elsewhere (Ryttberg, 2020). Universities have grown their professional staff roles in response to the growth in student numbers and the needs of this increasingly diverse student body (Frye and Fulton, 2020). There is evidence in the literature that there has been a move away from the binary university staff model of academics (who were responsible for research and teaching) and administrators (who were responsible for providing a service), to a more complex, highly skilled workforce of professional support staff, fulfilling a broader range of functions and requiring greater specialisms of skills, scope, and remit (McInnis, 1998). In the UK, Whitchurch (2008, 2009, 2010, 2015) has had significant influence on our understanding of the range of boundaried ways in which professional university staff interact with each other and with academic staff, giving rise to the idea of a “third space” professional. In Australia, Szkeres (2004, 2006, 2011) has explored the place of professional or administrative staff in university policy and academic literature and coined the term “invisible workers” to describe their lack of profile and voice therein.

There is a broad focus in the literature, examining professional staff and policy initiatives (Baltaru, 2019), tensions between academic staff and professional staff (McInnis, 1998; Frye and Fulton, 2020), issues of identity and nomenclature (Szkeres, 2004; Whitchurch, 2008; Burke, 2013; Schneijderberg & Merkator, 2013; Bossu, Brown and Warren, 2018), morale and sense of value, (Clegg and McAuley, 2005; Szkeres, 2011; Kehm, 2015; Ryttberg, 2020), gender issues

(Strachan, Bailey, Wallace and Troup, 2013; Simpson and Fitzgerald, 2014) and collaborative work with academic staff (Chanock, 2007; Whitchurch, 2010; Pourshafie and Brady, 2013; Roberts 2018). Discussions about professional staff in universities also feature in literature about the changing role of academic staff in universities (e.g. Rhoades, 1998; Rhoades, 2012). In the main, the literature is written by academics; exceptions to this include a study by Chanock (2007) who draws on her experience of working with academic staff as an academic developer. For the purposes of this research, the focus of this review will be on two key issues for professional staff which have contributed to the rationale for the research project: nomenclature, morale and value, and collaborative or cross-boundary working with academic staff.

Nomenclature, morale, and value

Alongside the evolution of the traditional administrative role has been a development in language used to refer to professional university support staff. Reviewing the range of labels used to describe university administrative colleagues, Bossu, Brown and Warren (2018) found the nomenclature to be varied and complicated. In Australia, staff are divided into academic and professional staff, with professional staff including managers, specialist staff such as library and technical staff and colleagues fulfilling student support or administrative “back office” functions with no distinction between these groups (Szekeres, 2011). In the UK and the US the generic term employed for all categories of support staff is “administrative and support staff”¹² which offers little clarity as to where and how staff are deployed. Bossu et al summarised that the “distinction may well be one that is primarily through the award under which one has been employed” i.e. whether you are academic or professional (2018, p.4).

¹² National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (Great Britain), 1997. *Higher education in the learning society: Report of the National Committee*. The Committee.

The definitions are often established from a deficit perspective, for example, academic and non-academic, thus deriving status from what the staff are not, rather than what they are. Pickersgill, van Barnevald and Bearfield found that if staff were “not one of the three types specified for the academic classification, they are classed as having a non-academic classification” (1998, p.1). Other terminology employed for professional support or administrative staff includes general staff, university administrator, manager, or administrative staff (Sebalj, Holbrook and Bourke, 2012). Sebalj et al found, in their survey of over 190 Australian university staff, that the term the highest percentage of staff chose was “university administrator”, with “non-academic staff”, unsurprisingly, the least preferred descriptor. However, there were also complex gendered and stratified decision-making processes in play, with male staff preferring the term “manager” over “administrator” and staff with higher degrees opting not to refer to themselves as “administrators”.

This confusion and proliferation of terminology has ramifications for how professional staff perceive themselves to be valued within the university. In her literature and policy document search to ascertain the identity of university administrative staff, Szkeres (2004) writes about how the staff described themselves as “the invisible workers” and, on re-visiting the field seven years later, found that this self-perception had not changed (2011). This perception is partly due to the historic positioning of professional support staff which Collinson, in her doctoral study examining the experience of university administrators, found led to a struggle to “contest and resist their categorisation as non-academic” (2006, p.1) and a demonstration of the perceived power wielded by academic staff whose academic credibility “enabled them to define as ‘other’ and ‘non-academic’ the research administrators” (2006, p.7).

The role of professional support staff and the inherent tensions have been examined from the perspective of role overlap (Schneijderberg and Merkator, 2013) or what Collinson refers to as

“role-ambiguous” professional identities (2006). Boundaries between academic and administrative functions become blurred as workstreams converge and this has given rise to what Whitchurch refers to as the third space professional (2008). Dividing professional support staff into three categories, Whitchurch describes staff as “bounded”: located within a specific function or area of the university; “cross-boundaried”: aware of their location but having the negotiating skills to work beyond that to develop strategic advantage; and “unbounded”: that is, having a disregard for the professional boundaries in place and focusing on broad, university-wide projects, drawing on external experience and contacts (2008, p.383).

The change in staff “from a workforce of low-level clerical workers to higher-level professionals” has occurred to respond to the increased accountability, market positioning and an evolving body of students (Szekeres, 2011, p.6). Despite this growth of responsibility and profile in HE, Clegg and McAuley (2005) report that professional support staff are not always invited to contribute to decision making. Examining the positionality of middle managers in HE, they found that when universities did not include professional staff managers in decision making and problem solving, the managers felt “alienated and marginal” (p21). Szekeres (2004), in her literature review of professional staff, found a widespread sense of feeling taken for granted by their academic counterparts, expressed as the sense that they “are the ones left supporting the student experience when academics have left the scene” (p683). She suggests the omission of professional support staff voice in the literature needs to be remedied, especially as their skill set is more developed and their role in HE is now far more visible.

Conversely, McInnis (1998), in his national survey of professional administrators in 18 universities in Australia reports that, overall, professional support staff morale was higher than that of academic staff. The exception to this was feeling appreciated by their academic colleagues, with only 28% of administrative staff reporting that relationships with academic staff

were “generally positive” (p167). This is corroborated by Kehm (2015) in her research into what she calls ‘HEPROS’ (the new Higher Education professionals), in which the professional support staff she interviewed complained about a lack of appreciation for their work. The literature highlights the complexities of professional staff roles and the lack of clarity regarding their status within universities. These factors inevitably contribute towards an environment which is not conducive to collaborative working. Where staff, both professional and academic, feel undervalued or low in morale, there is likely to be mistrust and suspicion that the ‘other’ is part of the problem. It is evident why equitable university working relationships in pursuit of genuine collaboration are fraught with difficulties from the outset.

Collaborative working with academic staff

Due to the increased student numbers and the increased burden of work this brings, many areas of university work have seen an overlap between administrative and academic fields of responsibility, and this can cause tensions (Kehm, 2015). This tension can be seen to be connected to confusion about staff roles and responsibilities. Gordon and Whitchurch (2007), in their literature review of the evolving nature of academic and professional staff roles in HE, describe professional support staff as undertaking “what might be described as ‘quasi-academic’ work” in which professional support staff inhabit “interpretive roles at the boundaries between academic work, internal constituencies and external partners” (p12). Where there is a role or remit overlap, the hierarchy originating in the traditional binary divide can emerge, which is counter to harmonious working relationships. For example, in the field of teaching, multiple stakeholders (e.g. academics, learning technologists, academic skills developers, librarians) play a role (Schneiderjberg and Merkator, 2013). Pourshafie and Brady (2013) recount a failed attempt to bring together academic skills developers and academic staff to co-develop a module which resulted in the “non-academic” teaching (i.e. skills-based), not viewed by the academic

staff to be at the same level as their “academic” teaching (i.e. content-based), a subsequent breakdown of communication, and the collaboration being abandoned.

Professional and academic staff barriers to collaborative working are created by hierarchies and assumptions on both sides (Chanock, 2007). Writing from the perspective of an academic skills developer, Chanock identifies the notion of “hierarchically valued pairs” such as research: teaching and theory: practice. She reports that a collaborative approach is hard to achieve when working with academic staff as “The first member of each pair may *inform* the second but does not expect to *be informed* by it” (p273). McInnis (1998) found that this becomes particularly contentious when academic staff and professional support staff are required to work together in what have traditionally been perceived to be academic domains. He reports that the increasing influence and remit of professional support staff had a disabling and negative effect on academic staff and reports a new level of “underlying tension” between the two groups of staff, with “...the old perhaps losing ground in authority and status, and the new making strong claims for recognition as legitimate partners” (p171).

The displacement felt by academic staff is hardly surprising. Frye and Fulton (2020) report that the growth of professional staff outweighs that of academic staff which contributes to a view that there is a professional staff “bloat” (Rhoades, 1998). Baltaru (2019) reports that the increase in numbers of professional staff can be linked to policy initiative targets in HE. The growth of these professional university roles is designed to relieve academic staff of additional duties regarding, for example, student support or staff development; however, this strategy is not always successful, with conflicts arising when academic staff “feel that they have additional work to do due to HEPRO activities” (Kehm, 2015, p.105). Collini (2012) argues against the political demand for universities to spend less time on “useless” endeavour (research, particularly in the arts and humanities) and undertake more “useful” activity (economic return). In such a context,

professional colleagues employed to embody and enact these political goals are likely to alienate academic staff. In the case of WP work, WP professional staff are employed to manage and deliver a programme aligned to the national policy and the institutional strategy. Requests for academic staff to contribute to this programme can send confusing messages about with whom this work resides and are likely to alienate academic staff rather than entice them to participate.

This poses a challenge for cross-boundary staff collaboration. Whitchurch (2015) in her study of administrative staff in the UK, the USA and Australia, explored the tensions between the political HE backdrop and the demands of academic research. Academic resistance to the increasingly political climate manifested in a lack of collaboration with their professional staff counterparts, who report finding the HE ethos impenetrable and experience feelings of isolation and frustration, and finding they had to “force their way” into meetings to ensure their voice was heard (p13). In the more than 60 interviews constituting Whitchurch’s study, professional staff talked about the different rhythms in professional and academic work and the need to be sensitive to this. The professional staff discovered that they were more likely to gain respect from their academic colleagues if they stood their ground, even on contentious issues (2015). Drawing on Bhabha (1994), Whitchurch describes the stages of identity construction in cross-boundary working as contestation, reconciliation, and reconstruction, stating that “struggle, conflict and difference” are a crucial part of the process. The result is a blurring of professional boundaries between the roles of academic staff and professional staff, which requires professional support staff to work in an “exploratory way with tension” and “to enter messy or even dangerous space” (Whitchurch, 2008, p.381).

Summary of literature on professional university staff and collaborative working with academic staff

The challenge to professional staff/academic staff collaboration is rooted in issues of power and reinforced by policy; long-held traditions of a binary staff divide, the suspicion of professional support staff impinging on academic domains and institutionally driven and conflicting academic/professional staff priorities. Chanock notes that “what is lacking is regular institutional means of bringing us into the same conversations” (2007, p.274). For “unbounded” professional support staff, such as WP professional staff, beginning and maintaining these conversations would require them to be able to “use language that resonated with academic colleagues....and being able to hold their own in such an arena” (Whitchurch, 2008, p.386). This infiltration into the academic arena demands a significant amount of professional staff courage and “requires a huge investment of time and energy, and you have to really present yourself well” (Interviewee, Whitchurch, 2015, p.5). For WP professional staff, working within a domain which calls for collaboration and innovation, there is a necessity that “difference is negotiated” with academic staff, as WP professional staff need to stay attuned to the fact they are working “at interfaces or shaping new fields of professional activities” (Whitchurch, 2010, p.632; Kehm, 2015, p.105).

WP professional staff in universities

Having discussed the challenges of professional/academic collaboration and the difficulties created by role overlap, low morale, and conflicting priorities, I will now examine the field of literature pertaining specifically to WP staff in universities. Research exploring the identity and role of WP professional staff in universities is absent within the wider literature on professional staff in HE. Exceptions to this include Rainford (2017, 2019) who has explored how the personal experiences, backgrounds and motivations of WP professional staff influence how they interpret WP policy, and Burke (2013) who engages the voice and experiences of professional WP staff to highlight the personal and professional challenges of delivering an agenda of fair access in a marketised, economically and target driven HE context. Hudson and Pooley (2006) and Hudson (2019) explore the role of WP professional staff in terms of their development, training, and potential contribution to informing WP practice. While the voice of WP professional staff is promoted by Rainford, Burke, and Hudson, there is otherwise a scarcity of literature written by WP professionals about WP policy and practice. Hudson summarises the field as showing “the absence of any attention to widening participation practitioners in particular” (2019, p.129). One example is a practitioner-researcher account of delivering a WP agenda, co-written by three WP professional staff and an academic colleague (Gazeley, Lofty, Longman and Squire, 2018). In addition, the field includes the work of Hayton, a university Director of WP, who writes about the processes of enacting WP policy (2015) and draws on Bourdieu (1986) to develop a framework with which to evaluate WP practice (Hayton and Bengry-Howell, 2016). As a result of this dearth of literature focusing on WP professional staff in the UK, I will be drawing on the US literature about ‘outreach’, a term which includes university work with schools, and with local communities more broadly. To position this research, I will be focusing on literature about

WP professional staff role, constraints and enablements to collaboration, and examples of cross-boundary collaborative work.

Role of professional WP staff

There is little in the literature about the role of WP professional staff. What little there is highlights the challenge of WP staff to gain a level of visibility to their academic and professional colleagues. This is described by Burke (2013) as “gendered power relations and politics of mis-recognition” (p108). Burke reports that WP staff struggled with issues of hierarchy, identity, and credibility, describing the challenge of this as “dealing with the micropolitics of the institution” (p118). Some of the “battle” (p119) recounted is due to the staff member’s own working-class background which influences how they experience working relationships at the high tariff institution workplace, describing themselves as feeling like an “outsider” (p117). This reinforces the conviction of the WP staff that their role is to change how the university perceives and responds to WP as much as to provide opportunities for prospective students. In some cases, they can be seen to have been successful, for instance when a university panel is reported to have been “surprised about...the depth of understanding” of school pupils or when WP staff are able to influence admissions practices, despite the anxiety of academic staff about the impact the flexible admissions policy may have on the quality of incoming UG students (p120).

Gazeley et al (2018), writing as an academic and practitioner team, focus on the WP professional’s role, arguing that practice-based research from professionals in the WP field is “contextually relevant” and “afforded a level of visibility and voice” to the practitioner-researcher authors. The utility of this type of contribution is emphasised by the WP authors, who recognise the value of their “professional insight” and find the process of reflecting,

documenting, and reporting on their professional experiences personally empowering and resulting in changes in professional WP approaches, practices, and programmes (p5). Burke provides a narrative counter to this and identifies the issue of WP staff working at a distance from core university work and the impact of this on WP work “visibility,” noting that “WP professionals tend to work on the periphery of universities, in separate centres” (p115). This separation means that WP professional staff have “little or no impact on institutional culture” (Jones and Thomas, 2005, p.167). Burke echoes this, drawing on her work with WP manager and staff to state that “The level of power and authority of this professional body is often tenuous” (2013, p.108).

Constraints to collaborative working

Constraints to collaborative WP work are institutional rather than personal and largely fall into the two categories of clarity and transparency, and value and incentive. In the UK literature reported barriers include the institutional positioning of WP (Shaw, Brain, Bridger, Foreman, and Reid, 2007; McLellan, Pettigrew and Sperlinger, 2016; Johnson et al, 2019) and in the US literature include a confusion over terminology (Fear, Rosaen, Foster-Fishman and Bawden, 2001; Holland, 2016), and lack of guidance, reward or support for academic staff (O’Meara, 2003; Ward, 2003; Demb and Wade, 2012; Pfeifer, 2016; Johnson et al, 2019). Both the UK and the US literatures decry the lack of a consistent evaluative framework for UK WP and US outreach work (Glassick, Huber and Maeroff, 1997; Sandmann, Foster-Fishman, Lloyd, Rarren and Rosaen, 2000; O’Meara, 2003; Holland, 2016; Hayton and Bengry-Howell, 2016).

The positioning of WP work as within the administrative staff realm rather than as a central academic concern is a significant institutional barrier to academic engagement and therefore cross-boundary collaboration. In the case study of a UK Foundation year course catering to a

diverse intake of students, McLellan, an academic member of staff, reflects on the benefits gained from engaging consistently and intensively with pupils through a sustained intervention, as widening participation is traditionally “treated largely as an administrative issue” (McLellan et al, 2016). This imposes a divide between academic and administrative or professional staff and the perceived hierarchies in play make for collaborative constraints, which can create historical institutional barriers (Johnson et al, 2019). Shaw et al (2007) echo this, reporting that the way in which WP is situated strategically by university senior management can construct or challenge structural barriers to embedding WP and therefore developing collaborative working relationships to deliver the institutional WP strategy. There are echoes of similar perspectives in the US where the establishment of a specialist support unit for outreach can create a “that’s what they do over there” mentality (Demb and Wade, 2012).

The inconsistency relating to WP work can add to the deficit positioning of professional staff, causing frustration for WP staff and confusion for academic colleagues. Similarly, the word “outreach” in the US literature is misrepresentative as it implies reaching out in a unidirectional way, implying knowledge from us (the academy) to them (the community) (Fear et al, 2001). The proliferation of terms including “common public service, professional service, outreach, public engagement, community service, service learning” causes academic confusion about what constitutes outreach, and this adds to the “fuzzy” and “messy” haze around this area of academic work in the US (Holland, 2016; Fear et al, 2001, p.25). In the UK, the inconsistent locating of WP in professional services, administration, recruitment, and marketing teams is reported to hinder interest in academic engagement and collaboration (Johnson et al, 2019).

The UK and US literatures highlight the challenges facing academic staff when trying to engage with WP or outreach work alongside teaching, research, pastoral, and administrative duties. Even when, as in the case of the University of East Anglia, an academic role is constructed with a

deliberate focus on outreach, there is still a recognition that balancing the outreach portion of the role with the academic portion of the role can be challenging and comes at a “high opportunity cost” (Harris and Ridealgh, 2016; Johnson et al, 2019, p.11). Blackwell and Preece (2001) note that an academic’s first loyalty is to their discipline, and this may take precedence over institution-wide remits, such as WP. This is echoed by Johnson et al (2019) who state that “outreach seldom forms the central focus” of an academic’s role and articulate their sense of frustration at the paucity of guidance for WP work for academic staff, stating there is “seldom guidance on good practice for academics” (p3).

In the US outreach context, a junior academic’s struggle to manage conflicting work priorities is described as an “uphill battle” (Ward, 2003, p.65). Although 85% of US academics interviewed agreed that outreach was part of their university’s mission, individually they felt unsupported in pursuing this line of scholarship (Demb and Wade, 2012). Solutions proposed included working across discipline areas, sharing practice via online networks to avoid duplication, targeted outreach to specific groups for ethical or pragmatic reasons and calling on formal and informal institutional support such as student internships or central outreach teams (Johnson et al, 2019).

Compounding academic workload issues, academic reward, promotional or incentive structures rarely explicitly recognise or reward WP or outreach work, thus making this area of work far less appealing. Pfeifer (2016) reports on the sector-wide avoidance of academic outreach where junior US academic staff are actively warned against taking on too many outreach commitments as “no-one ever gets tenure for doing service” (p238). Examples in the US literature, where reward systems formally recognise and reward a “broader definition of scholarship”, were equated to a greater academic involvement in and higher levels of academic satisfaction with outreach (O’Meara 2003, 201). In O’Meara’s study of 1000 US academics, higher levels of engagement were also reported when university tenure and promotion policies gave more weight

to outreach, and Demb and Wade (2012) found this also to be the case where there was access to grants or funding to develop academic outreach.

In UK and US literatures, a further significant barrier is the lack of consistency in approach to or evaluation of academic contribution to WP or outreach (Holland, 2016). This deficit highlights the need for a robust evaluative framework as Glassick, Huber and Maeroff (1997) report that academics attribute value only to “the work they can confidently judge” (p5). It is argued that such a framework would ensure a documented evidence base for outreach and WP work and enable informed approaches to WP work (Sandmann et al, 2000; O’Meara, 2003). Johnson et al (2019) in the UK agree, arguing for the need for wider dissemination of the principles behind academic approaches to outreach. They highlight that these approaches are “necessarily innovative and organic” (p4) and relate to academic pressures, career stage and relationships. Individual approaches to creating such frameworks have produced a four-dimensional framework “that defines quality in outreach” in the US and a network evaluation framework for evaluating UK WP activity (Sandmann et al, 2000, p.47; Hayton and Bengry-Howell, 2016). The US model constitutes significance (goals), attention to context, internal and external impact, and scholarship (Sandmann et al, 2000) while the UK Network for Evaluating and Researching University Participation Interventions (NERUPI) framework links academic research into WP, external WP monitoring mechanisms, and proven effective practice in WP, employing the Bourdieuan lens of habitus (Hayton and Bengry-Howell, 2016). These are useful starting points for linking academic and WP agendas, however, it is uncertain whether the existence of a universal framework would enable more academic staff to engage with WP and outreach work. Establishing new ways in which WP and academic staff can work collaboratively might be better served through exploring shared beliefs and finding mutually agreeable starting points for exchanging knowledge and skills.

Burke (2013) summarises that an “embedded approach” which “works together with all staff” (p123) is required for WP to transform practice and achieve its social justice aim. Yet the university sector has expressed concern that embedding WP poses a threat to academic standards and takes academic resource away from the main university business of teaching and learning (Shaw et al, 2007). There is little to counter this position, with scant reference to collaboration with WP professionals in the academic WP narrative, which reports that WP professional relationships with academic staff are unsupportive, or need significant investment (Johnson et al, 2019; McLellan et al, 2016). Office for Fair Access (OFFA) states that a collaborative approach is “integral to a whole provider approach” (Montacute, 2018, p.24) but this is the limit of the guidance. Similarly, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) advises “appropriate training and support” (Montacute, 2018, p.4) yet no expansion on this advice is offered.

Institutional barriers rather than personal barriers influence an academic’s decision to collaborate in their university’s WP (UK) or outreach (US) agenda. These include confusing terminology and a lack of visibility of the colleagues with whom this agenda is perceived to sit. The lack of a robust, universal framework within which to plan, deliver, evaluate, and reward academic contributions to WP and outreach impacts on the ability or will of individual academics to commit their time to an activity which carries with it neither tangible incentives nor career advancement. Yet there continue to be pockets of activity in this area of university life, particularly among more established academic staff and those staff who choose to engage, and who report the gains to be significant and perspective-changing (Sandmann et al, 2000).

Enablers to collaborative working

Despite the less than positive perspective on professional/academic working relationships presented in the literature, there are several examples of enabling factors promoting collaborative

WP or outreach work. In the US literature, these include the notion of an academic's civic duty (Boyer, 1996; Barker, 2004) and the benefits to academic scholarship (Rice, 1996; Ward, 2003). Barker describes academic engagement with their civic role as the "third scholarship" while acknowledging that this is likely to be perceived as a "challenge to mainstream academic scholarship" (Barker, 2004, p.125). Outreach viewed as civic engagement is said to fulfil traditional academic functions such as fostering "critical examination and debate" relating to social problems (Fear et al 2001, p.27). More than this, Rice (1996) and Ward (2003) report that outreach as civic engagement enhances academic scholarship with benefits to both the community and the university, resulting in learning which is multi- rather than uni-directional. Sandmann et al (2000) argue that there is a correlation between academic scholarship and outreach, both of which comprise "intellectual curiosity, clear goals and appropriate methodology" (p51). The US model of civic duty positioned as enhancing scholarly practice, provides a strong motivation for academics to engage with WP or outreach, and presents this type of university work as a social justice concern for which a collaborative academic-professional staff approach is needed.

In the UK literature, enablements to working collaboratively in the WP domain include establishing a stake in this area of work for academic staff (Harris and Ridealgh, 2016), positive experiences of teaching more diverse student groups (Greenhalgh, Russell, Boynton, Lefford, Chopra, and Dunkley, 2006; McLellan et al, 2016) and reducing anxiety about the potential of lesser-known student groups (McLellan et al, 2016). Institutions actively involving academic staff in widening participation at a deeply engaged level have provided more focused WP programmes and increased awareness of the importance of collaborating in this area of work. At the University of East Anglia, recruiting academic staff with university WP work as a core part of their role has increased the visibility of WP in academic departments and built stronger links

with professional WP staff (Harris and Ridealgh, 2016). The academic post holders have increased the number of colleagues engaging in WP, thanks to the targeted support and guidance they offer and their credibility as academic peers. In addition to this, these Faculty academic outreach posts are reported to have forged strong links between central WP services and the faculty staff, thus ensuring that expectations on both sides are realistic and collaboration is more likely to be successful (Harris and Ridealgh, 2016).

Existing HE structures in the UK, designed to enable university fair access, include the Foundation programme offered by many UK universities, which is formulated to target the most disadvantaged members of society. One such Foundation programme has rejected the usual format of offering places at one grade lower than UG entry (e.g., BCC instead of ABB). Based on challenging the notion of WP as an intractable problem, the University of Bristol Arts and Humanities Foundation year programme offers places to students without conventional educational qualifications. This purposefully widens the group to include mature students, carers, English as an additional language (EAL) students and refugees (McLellan et al, 2016). As well as building partnerships with local groups and charities such as those for single parents, refugees, and young people, participating academic staff reported feeling “invigorated” by their experience of teaching the Foundation cohort. In addition to this, the initial fear that admission of these students to degree courses would diminish the quality of undergraduate work has been disproved by the outcomes of the Foundation year students and challenged many of the preconceptions held by academic staff (McLellan et al, 2016). As a result, teaching on this Foundation programme has helped to counter some of the wider disenfranchisement felt by academic staff in their increasingly regulated workplace.

Examples of successful collaborative WP work

There are very few examples of successful collaborative work in WP in the literature in which academic and professional staff work together and share their knowledge and expertise. One such case is that of the Diversity in Creative Arts (DCA) project at Goldsmiths College (Hayton, Haste, and Jones, 2015). At Goldsmiths, the department of fine art was challenged to re-consider its admissions practices and engage in a fifteen-month programme. This programme introduced Goldsmiths staff and students to Art students at local further education (FE) colleges, to work in a range of ways to support the FE students in their applications to the fine art degree course. Through their participation in this initiative, the university staff became more aware of the “exclusionary languages of contemporary art” (p1273). Hayton et al highlight the necessity of a collaborative approach, in which the fine art expertise and admissions knowledge of the academic staff, and the project management skills and the in-depth understanding of social justice issues of the WP staff, are combined to ensure successful outcomes for all.

Collaborative working across the academic/professional divide is promoted in the literature as the way in which all staff increase their understanding and awareness of what is involved in WP work. Academic staff report being pleasantly surprised by the quality of their interactions with local school pupils and their high levels of engagement (Greenhalgh et al, 2006). Tutors on the Foundation year programme found the teaching of a more diverse group of students rewarding, gaining satisfaction from the “value-added” sense that they were making a difference in the classroom (McLellan et al, 2016, p.65). On the DCA project, through the process of working with a local college, staff were forced to confront the inaccessibility of their admissions processes and the (unconscious) bias with which they selected students for the degree course (Hayton et al, 2015).

These types of initiative provide the opportunity for innovation and creativity in shared approaches to WP work. McLellan et al (2016) and Hayton et al (2015) engaged with the

opportunity to challenge the WP status quo at their institutions and develop initiatives to change academic admissions and pedagogical practices as well as promote more student diversity. This enabled staff to “explore processes in depth” and to influence through “bringing new forms of knowledge” (Hayton et al, 2015, p.1261; McLellan et al, 2016, p.59). The act of deeply engaging in focused WP activity provided insight and understanding of a diverse group of prospective students and the opportunity to reflect together on individual and institutional practices that enable or disable fair access.

Summary of literature on WP professional staff and collaboration with academic staff

The evidence base for collaborative working relationships to embed WP practice into HE institutions from access through to outcomes is limited. The examples in the section above highlight the role professional staff can play in facilitating opportunities for developing mutual understanding through working collaboratively with academic staff and enabling shared learning to take place. These are useful but unusual examples of collaborative practice, which demonstrate a keen academic commitment to WP and a desire to support the social responsibility of the university. They also show how, given the time and space, the structural constraints make way for positive and mutually beneficial working partnerships.

Working across the professional divides is challenging, complex and requires courage and trust as well as a commitment to invest time in developing a mutual respect and a shared understanding. For the DCA project, the success was embedded in the increased awareness of exclusionary language and pedagogical practices (Hayton et al, 2015). This required the WP professional staff to have expertise and the language with which to express themselves, to be credible collaborators with and influencers of academic staff attitudes and practices.

Conclusion

The literature accentuates the difficulties between professional and academic staff and the chasms of understanding this can create when collaborative working is required, or shared approaches would make for more successful outcomes for students and staff. Professional staff can feel side-lined if they perceive their role or their work is not valued by their academic colleagues: conversely, academic staff can feel burdened by additional work relating to university policy rather than to their research or teaching role. Furthermore, where professional staff have been recruited to roles with responsibility for specific areas of university work, academic staff may feel confused when they are then expected also to contribute their time and energy. In a context where both academic and professional staff report low morale and a decreasing sense of value of their work and their role, it is challenging to see how collaboration can be successfully achieved.

For WP staff, theirs is a complex university professional staff role, falling into Whitchurch's "unbounded" category. Working as an unbounded professional in a university means the potential to develop bespoke projects and pieces of work in response to local need and in collaboration with stakeholders: in the case of WP work, schools. It enables cross-boundary working so, for instance, developing relationships with library staff or academic staff from a particular discipline to deliver targeted sessions for post-16 pupils. This innovative and mobile way of working is at odds with the hierarchical structures and traditions of HE and challenges the market-driven language of university "quality," creating tension through "concerns about equality, inclusion and social justice in higher education" (Burke, 2013, p.124). It also provides the opportunity to try to create cross-boundary collaborations and professional/academic relationships which manage to cut through these limitations.

As professional staff responsible for a policy-driven agenda outside of the traditional academic remit of teaching and research, WP staff tread a delicate line in a space between determinedly

enacting that agenda and carefully cultivating working relationships with academic colleagues, to ensure academics can collaborate on WP activity. According to Whitchurch, this space is both “safe and risky” (2015, p.5) because while it encourages creativity by transcending organisational limitations, it also threatens traditional university boundaries. Academic staff, working in an increasingly regulated environment, may struggle to engage with those professional staff who are working towards a politically driven agenda of access and inclusion. It is a necessity, therefore, that WP staff can make informed and evidence-based connections with academic staff and their core work of teaching and research. Finding common ground that connects to the priorities of academic staff is not an easy task, however, this would enable a dialogue designed to encourage more equitable relationships towards a shared agenda.

The few examples of successful collaborative working in the literature are rooted in approaches that challenge the status quo of oppositional professional/academic roles, remits, and agendas. Exploring the issues of fair access in partnership through undertaking a project together, academic, and professional staff were able to identify how each could bring complementary skills and expertise to WP work (Hayton et al, 2015). In addition, the experience of interacting with and teaching school pupils was reported to be a positive experience and therefore more likely to encourage staff to seek out further opportunities for collaborative working in the WP realm (Greenhalgh et al, 2006). Finally, making the connection between work with learners outside the university and future students at the university provided a shared focus for WP and academic staff (McLellan et al, 2016).

Chapter Three – Action Research

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have described the issues professional staff encounter in their university roles and explored the enablements and constraints to professional/academic staff collaborative work. I have shown that the university WP project which reports successful outcomes with long-term, systemic change in access practices, positions staff collaboration and action for social change firmly at the fore in its approach (Hayton et al, 2015). A methodological approach which had the ambition for shared ownership of the problem with the goal of sustainable change, such as action research, was an appropriate choice for research aiming to explore collaborative constraints.

This chapter positions action research as the methodological framework for my doctoral research project. First, I explain the origins and principles of action research. Following this, I build on the argument that action research is the most appropriate approach with which to tackle a social justice problem such as WP work. Next, I reflect on the challenges of an action research approach, and how these can constrain or enable a research project. The chapter offers an articulation of the action research principles of collaboration, co-construction, and action for social change and how these relate to the focus of the research: collaborative professional/academic WP work. I then explain the data generation methods for the research, including the composition of the research team and range of data sources. Finally, I describe how I employed the three principles as the conceptual framework to analyse the subsequent empirical chapters, addressing issues of ethics and researcher positionality.

In chapter one, the introduction, I have stated that WP is a social justice problem, which requires close examination of HE practices and policies to tackle it in a sustainable way. I have outlined in

chapter one that my choice of methodology was also personally driven. Based on the professional roles I have inhabited, the young people with whom I have worked and my personal set of values, I was politically motivated to try to influence positive change in academic engagement in WP work. While there were alternative qualitative options for the research data collection (for example, case study, ethnography) that I might have used, taking a collaborative, shared approach to our enquiry into WP work such as action research provided a unique opportunity for us to work as co-researchers. Drawing on a wide range of data (e.g., diary, research notes, interviews, planning, review and evaluation sessions, pupil feedback, researcher reflections), I aimed to capture both the mechanics of the process and the perspectives of all participants throughout that process.

Action Research

The term “action research” is attributed to Lewin, a German American psychologist working in the 1930s and 40s in the US. Lewin was a behavioural psychologist who developed the theory that a human’s behaviour is dependent on and affected by their environment (1946). He then developed an interest in group behaviours and group dynamics which became the focus of his subsequent research (1948). Driven by the desire to find a way to challenge social problems such as inter-racial group relations through documented action, Lewin was revolutionary in advocating for an approach that married elements of psychology, sociology, and cultural anthropology as the solution. He became interested in the need for an alternative and effective social science research approach that was both practicable and theoretical and saw mathematical science as working in tandem with social science towards what he termed “basic social research” (1946, p.36).

Lewin’s work on group dynamics, research into social action and his spiral of steps linking planning and reflection to action has shaped and informed the field of action research. His ideas

about how group dynamics impact on individuals and his shift away from individualist psychology to group psychology has influenced the field of education as well as organisational development. To develop his research into group dynamics, he engaged groups of participants in discussions, creating a dialogic approach to research which now forms the bedrock of action research approaches. Lewin's spiral of steps (plan, act, observe, reflect) provides a robust framework for undertaking action research, with many scholars developing variations on the original format (e.g., Carr and Kemmis, 2003; Hattie and Timperley, 2007, Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon, 2014). The self-reflective process leading to informed action has been used widely in practitioner classroom research in teaching (Elliott, 1991).

As well as the spiral of steps and ideas about socialised research provided by Lewin, action research has a rich range of histories and descriptors, and a diverse body of literature. The field is often described as “a family that sometimes argues and falls out” (Reason and Bradbury, 2008, p.7) and “a large family, one in which beliefs and relationships vary greatly” (Noffke, 1997, p.306). In India, South America and the US, participatory action research (PAR) with oppressed communities works towards their education and empowerment (Borda and Rahman, 1991; Hall, 1993; Brydon-Miller, 1997; Fine and Torre, 2004, 2006; Swantz, 2008). Internationally, collaborative action research (CAR) has enabled teachers and university researchers to develop conversations, examine practices and learn from one another’s differential experiences (Ainscow, Booth & Dyson, 2004; Jaipal and Figg, 2011; Riel, 2019). In Europe, critical action research has evolved from the Frankfurt school of critical theory, set up during the Weimar Republic and rooted in the work of Habermas in the 1960s (Kemmis, McTaggart and Retallick, 2004; Carr and Kemmis, 2005).

In the UK, participatory research has been developed to support the field of human geography research, while in the classroom, educational action research provides teachers with the tools to

reflect systematically on and adapt their practice (Stenhouse, 1975; Elliot, 1991; Pain, 2004). Action research also appears in HE in a range of guises: for example, pedagogical research (Norton, 2009; Weber, 2011; Greenwood, 2012), teacher training (Orland-Barak, 2004; Katsarou and Tsafos, 2013), staff development (Johnson, 2000; Herbert and Rainford, 2014) and E-learning (Fletcher and Zuber-Skeritt, 2008). Action research is consistently used in educational settings, drawing on the core principles of Lewin's work and research into group approaches to solve social problems, informing education policy and classroom practice through a shared, rather than an individualised worldview.

The various branches of the action research family share common goals of democracy, empowerment, and the drive for positive change. There are also differences; for instance, the inhabitants and workers of a small rural village in India whose forced labour is controlled by those with wealth and power may be emancipated through engaging in PAR (Rahman, 1983). The primary teacher in Milton Keynes, UK, however, is focused on solving the problem of poor literacy skills in her year 4 class through undertaking a systematic process of education action research into her own practice. Empowerment occurs in both examples; however, it can vary in size and scale of transformational change. My research began with a focus on how to engage academics better in WP work, positioning my research within the HE action research literature. It was fuelled by a desire to work collaboratively across the university binary divide of academic/professional staff, so the research also draws on the collaborative action research field. Through the process of uncovering research constraints, issues of pedagogy came to the fore, so the research also straddles pedagogical action research/staff development. What the research eventually explored and tackled were multiple challenges of empowerment through collaborative working in HE. See figure 1 below:

Action research branch	Defining elements	Literature	Resonance with my research
Participatory action research (PAR).	Work with impoverished communities dating back to the work of Paulo Freire (1970) in South America. Freire's work is characterised by themes of liberation, dialogue, and cooperation.	Paulo Freire (1970) Borda & Rahman (1991), Brydon-Miller (1997; 2001), Hall (2005), Fine and Torre (2006) Swantz (2008), Brydon-Miller, Kral, Maguire, Noffke and Sabhlok, (2011),	PAR is politically driven, led by activists or by researchers embedded in the life and culture of those they are crusading for (Tandon, 1988). The ideas of emancipation and empowerment linked to our initial research focus of WP, a political drive for equality in access to higher education. I was drawn to the idea of a crusade for social justice as the motivation for my research.
Collaborative action research (CAR).	Predominantly rooted in school teacher professional development (PD) or professional learning (PL), often facilitated and supported by university researchers.	Oja & Pine (1987) Ainscow, Booth & Dyson (2004) Jaipal & Figg (2011) Locke, Alcorn & O'Neill (2013) Bleicher (2014), Castro Garces & Martinez Granada (2016), Riel (2019)	CAR positions teachers as agents of change in their individual teaching contexts and reports personal and professional growth through the process of undertaking research with others (Oja & Pine, 1987). The challenges of developing collaboration between practitioners (teachers) and researchers through dialogue and "learning how to learn from differences" resonated with our co-researcher interactions, roles, and relationships (Ainscow, Booth & Dyson, 2004, p131).
Pedagogical action	PedAR focuses on the professional development of teaching staff in universities through	Norton (2009, 2013, 2014) Ahmad (2012)	PedAR enables the professional development of university teachers through reflection on

research (PedAR)	systematic investigation of their teaching practice. Less commonly (e.g., Ahmad 2012), PedAR provides the framework for developing student teachers.	Cormack, Bourne, Deuker, Norton, O'Siochru & Watling (2014) Arnold and Norton (2021) Huxtable and Whitehead (2021) O'Siochru, Norton, Pilkington, Parr, Anderson & Maslen (2021)	practice leading to pedagogical improvements in the teaching and learning experience for teachers and students as the two experiences are difficult to separate (Norton, 2020). Pedagogy played an unexpectedly important role in our research and required me to draw on my pedagogical knowledge to support my co-researchers. The PedAR elements of dialogue about, reflection on, and change within teaching contexts and experiences link to the pedagogical knowledge we generated as a research team.
Personal action research	Personal action research (sometimes referred to as self-study action research) concentrates on the action researcher's role and positionality, enabling deep reflection on their actions.	Zeichner (1993) Feldman, Paugh & Mills (2004) Zeni (2009) Casey (2012)	As lead researcher and facilitator of the research I had to account for my biases, motivations, beliefs, and actions throughout the research process. The personal learning I derived through the action research process was a complex element of the research and one which I had not foreseen would be as significant.

Figure 1: How my research connects to a different branches of action research

As the research drew on multiple branches of action research, albeit with strong participatory intent, the term 'action research' is employed to indicate and encompass the range of influences from the action research field.

Action research in HE

The role of action research within HE is seen as part of undergraduate and post-graduate programmes, as a reflective practice or case study approach in teacher training, or as a form of curriculum or course development (Kember and Gow, 1992; Greenwood, 2012; Gibbs, Cartney, Wilkinson, Parkinson, Cunningham, James-Reynolds, Zoubir, Brown, Barter, Sumner, and MacDonald, 2017). Action research as a tool in teacher training helps students to develop an awareness of how to use research as a form of self-study in the classroom (Katsarou and Tsafos, 2013; Herbert and Rainford, 2014; Morales, 2016). Action research is also employed as a tool for self-reflection or evaluation of teaching in HE (Schratz, 1992; Burchell and Dyson, 2005; Walser, 2009). The dual potential of action research within the curriculum as a form of enquiry for students while simultaneously engaging lecturers in evaluation and adaptation of their teaching is also explored (Orland-Barak, 2004; Serpa, Ferreira, Santos, and Teixeira, 2018).

Action research focusing on pedagogical development in universities has evolved as part of activity within the curriculum or as a form of course assessment. Pedagogical action research (PedAR) aims to “systematically investigate one’s own teaching/facilitation practice” with the aim of “improving that practice” while also contributing to knowledge “to benefit student learning” (Norton, 2009, p.59). PedAR therefore encompasses multiple elements of action research in HE, including reflective practice resulting in action for change, induction of new academics into HE teaching and learning practices and continuing professional development (CPD) for established academics (Norton, 2009; Arnold & Norton, 2021). My research was initially interested in engaging academics in the process of planning and delivering taster sessions, hence leaned somewhat towards pedagogical action research. However, the emergent and more substantive issue became how to straddle and seek to dissolve the multiple professional/academic boundaries, which

prevented us from working collaboratively to deliver these sessions, thus the collaborative and participatory elements played an equally substantive role.

Action research therefore looks different in universities in the global north, from the ideas of liberation and emancipation which spoke to my experience, beliefs, and values. Rather than the call-to-action present in PAR with deprived communities outside the university, action research in HE has the potential to challenge boundaries through inter-disciplinary work or research, designed to question the limitations of academic departmental silos (Greenwood, 2012). Empowerment occurs when students can make connections in their learning which help them to grow educationally and personally, or when lecturers are able to make positive change to their classroom approaches which re-ignite their enjoyment of teaching and engaging with students (Schratz, 1992; Orland-Barak, 2004). In the next section I explain why I chose to employ action research to enable the empowerment of all the research participants.

Rationale for action research

In my experience, at conferences, the action research community is a welcoming, nurturing one, with novice researchers encouraged and informally mentored by experienced researchers. As a community, we share a common purpose yet may describe our affinity as with one strand of action research rather than another. Action research and Lewin's spiral of steps provided the framework within which, as a research team, we were enquiring into the processes of preparing taster sessions for school pupils. I instinctively align myself with PAR. I have a commitment to social justice which drives me in my choice of work and in my political affinities. I see those choices as fundamental to who I am; they do not exist as separate to me. In this sense I aim to live my values (McNiff and Whitehead, 2009). Therefore, the idea of participation as part of the approach to the research was important to me. I drew particularly on the origins of PAR to

ensure all voices, both the privileged (academics) and the less privileged (school pupils) are heard.

Action research is “about creating forms of inquiry that people can use in the everyday conduct of their lives” and, as a practitioner first and foremost, I was interested, as part of this process of inquiry, in examining how I worked and might improve the way I work with academic staff (Reason and Bradbury, 2008, p.698). Self-awareness and self-reflection are important qualities for an action researcher, and I wanted to learn more about approaches to working with academic colleagues and use this opportunity to become more attuned to their work “rhythms” (Whitchurch, 2015, p.5). To do this, I needed to be positioned within the research to create equity in researcher relationships, rather than looking in, as an objective observer, from the outside. I hoped this would pave the way for a cooperative research process in which we would be negotiating our professional differences (Kehm, 2015).

Secondly, I was keen to research with academic colleagues collaboratively. My experience of working in HE had been of “them (the academics) and us (professional staff)” and I struggled with navigating the HE hierarchies I encountered. I was charged with a vital role in enacting a social justice HE policy yet, as reflected in the literature in the previous chapter, felt lacking in either visibility or impact, and this experience fuelled my interest in an equitable approach (Jones and Thomas, 2005; Burke, 2013). I suspected that many academic colleagues were reluctant to engage with outreach initiatives, but I did not know the reason, nor was I conversant with their views on WP as a form of educational social justice. It was important, as a starting point, for us all to gain and share insights into what motivated or hindered academic staff to engage in WP work (Burke, 2013). In action research it is important to “ask new questions, question old assumptions” (Cahill, 2007, p.330). Co-researching with academic colleagues was intended to offer an opportunity for developing a mutual understanding of individual perspectives and embedded practices, shining a

light on the wider problem faced by university professional staff. In this way, our research strived for a collaborative action research approach.

Knowledge generation or co-creation through action research offers researchers the chance to listen to and value the ideas, experiences, and knowledges of all participants. Participatory action research rejects the “domination of the masses” which ensured that certain voices were muted, undocumented and therefore, powerless (Rahman, 1985, p.91). The knowledge I had been seeking to elicit at the start of the research was knowledge about my academic co-researchers' motivations and approaches to participating in WP work. Contrary to traditional PAR, my co-researchers were not the usual research participants, lacking neither in education, nor in status. Nonetheless, the few successful collaborative professional/academic university WP projects had reported the need for listening to and learning from each other, and action research would provide me with the principles to enable this (Hayton et al, 2015).

At the start of the research, I was keen to include pupil voice. Swantz writes about engaging the voices of those who are habitually excluded or marginalised as bringing “the wisdom and the knowledge of the grassroots to the academy” (2008, p.33). Aligning with ideas of PAR and emancipation, I believed it was important that the pupils informed the research process. Without the active and engaged participation of the school pupils, I would not know whether the approaches to WP work were pitched and delivered accessibly. I was keen that the knowledge generated through the research process by the school pupils was given equal credibility to that of the academic co-researchers as informed by the work of Fine and Torre (2006). Positioning pupils as the experts of their learning experiences supported my drive for social justice and pupil empowerment through improving the ways in which universities developed and delivered subject taster sessions, aligning with research on the inclusion of pupil voice such as Hadfield and Haw (2001).

Finally, WP as a social justice problem required more than collaboration and co-construction of knowledge; it demanded action for change. There was a need for change at local, institutional, and national policy levels if WP was to enable fair access to and participation in HE. My sphere of direct influence was my WP work and that of my academic colleagues. If, by engaging in a collaborative and participatory process involving school pupils, we were able to make positive changes to our practice, then this might inform wider institutional policies and practices relating to WP, and to collaborative professional/academic work in universities.

Challenges of action research

Savin-Baden and Wimpenny (2007) list four key challenges to successful action research, all of which relate to balances of power: sharing processes, ensuring all voices are heard, issues of power and control, shared ownership of findings (p340). Working transparently with my co-researchers to share and agree processes was crucial to enabling full participation of all research participants. A lack of understanding of the sustained participation required by action research can lead, in some cases, to participant withdrawal or inconsistent engagement (Colfer et al, 2011). When a research project is conceived, planned, and led by a single researcher, as was the case in this doctoral research project, there is a need for consistent communication and clarity of purpose.

Imbalances of researcher power are common within action research, usually due to research projects being led by university researchers with experience and credentials which imply their higher status, and lead to reticence on the part of the co-researchers (Mason and Boutilier, 1996). In this research context, positions were reversed in terms of institutional hierarchy, with the status power in the hands of my academic co-researchers. Rather than failing to allow co-researchers' voices to be heard, I had anxieties about my status and voice in relation to the expertise and standing of my co-researchers. As I outlined in the previous chapter, professional staff reported experiences of working with academic staff as combative and confrontational, requiring

professional staff to make a concerted effort to be heard (Whitchurch, 2015). This was also my experience.

Issues of power also affect the concept of ownership of the research findings. One community co-researcher was unimpressed at this lack of shared ownership when, after working in the field with the academic researchers for eighteen months, the university researchers conducted the data analysis in isolation at the university (Sandwick, Fine, Greene, Stoudt, Torre, and Patel, 2018). This was a tension of which I was increasingly aware. However participatory the research process, the writing up and therefore the interpretation of the findings would be a solo undertaking for my doctoral thesis. Ensuring the research was fully participatory from the outset to the point of writing up raised several challenges in this instance. There are instances throughout the thesis where I refer to knowledge or experiences gained through the research in the plural “we” or “our.” This is to try to reflect when participation was interactive and democratic, rather than when it was merely instrumental (for example my co-researchers as sources of data for my doctoral research) (Jacobs, 2010). Despite the progress we made as co-researchers and collaborators during the research, at the writing up stage I found myself still largely constrained by my impostor syndrome and therefore uncomfortable about sharing drafts of my thesis with my co-researchers.

There are also more universal criticisms of action research which are highlighted in the literature. One widely reported view is the public perception that it is too unscientific to produce research that is valid and reliable (Greenwood, 2002). Arguments include the struggle to validate its findings due to the unreliability of context-rich outcomes (Rapoport, 1970; Gustavsen, 2003; Huang, 2010). This means that generalising any findings can be an additional hurdle for action researchers to navigate, particularly when each set of data is highly context-specific and cannot be analysed within a static framework. As such, I needed to be conscious of how my research into WP work might have resonance for professional and academic staff in universities more broadly.

Nonetheless, as this research was a high stakes activity for me, since it would be generating knowledge and data for my doctoral thesis, I needed to ensure that I was aiming for collaboration and not retaining too tight a hold on the proceedings. Similarly, I would need to be comfortable that my research plan might be subject to substantial revisions as it progressed if I planned to implement the principle of co-construction of knowledge. To help provide a structure to my understanding of what had occurred during our research, I drew on the ethos of action research to formulate three principles with which to analyse the research data. These principles arise from action research literature and are articulated or explained in varying ways. My articulation of the principles synthesises my interpretation of the key moments in our research.

Principles of Action Research

The three principles of collaboration, co-construction of knowledge and action for social change provided the conceptual framework within which I analysed our actions, comments, and behaviours. These principles served to illuminate and challenge our enactment of the research and the analysis of that enactment. In this section I will summarise what I understand each principle to mean and how I draw on the principles for the subsequent empirical chapters.

Collaboration

Collaboration as an action research principle governs the way in which the research team work together to conduct their research. It aims for the converging of disparate and individual agendas into a mutual and reciprocal understanding and is described as “bringing people and groups together for a common purpose” (Goulet, Krentz and Christiansen, 2003, p.325), “mutual growth and respect occur among all participants” (Tikunoff and Ward, 1983, p.466) and “understanding the work of one another” (Clark, Moss, Goering, Herter, Lamar, Leonard, Robbins, Russell, Templin and Wascha, 1996, p.196). This allows for the inclusion of multiple perspectives, types

of knowledge and lived experiences and encourages the dismantling of structural, professional, or individual barriers which may historically have limited this type of collaborative approach. Collaboration as a way of working is of fundamental importance to action research as it enables the researchers to navigate a change process and to be transformed by this process (Goulet et al, 2003).

I had deliberately chosen action research for its focus on collaboration as it was the lack of cooperative WP work which had given rise to the research project, and I believed it was only through a shared process of WP session delivery that I might understand the barriers to engaging in WP activities felt by the academic staff in my School. Purposefully removing the hierarchical barriers which divided us through working collaboratively was a way to circumvent the difficulties created by top-down policy directives such as WP, which were in direct tension with individual academic priorities. I hoped that this experience of working closely with one another would enable us all to understand, learn and change and I harboured this ambition despite the many difficulties to achieving true collaboration such as those reported by Torre (2010).

Co-construction of knowledge

Co-construction of knowledge, also known as co-production of knowledge, is the collaborative process of learning which shapes and informs the actions emanating from the multiple iterations of action research, characterised as the “reciprocal exchange of ideas and practices” (Tillema and Orland-Barak, 2006, p.6). For co-construction to be successful there needs to be “a respect for people and for the knowledge and experience they bring to the research process” (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, and Maguire, 2003, p.15). This builds on the principle of collaboration, since the research conditions need to be negotiated, agreed, and established before researchers can construct knowledge which is developed through a dialogic process. Researchers learn about how action research works in practice through listening to and working with, for example,

members of the public, a local community group, young people, or a minority culture. Thus, knowledge is co-constructed about the action research process as well as about the focus of the enquiry.

I believed co-construction to be a democratic process which aimed to equalize and value the knowledge of all participants with the aim of developing a shared knowledge base and a deeper understanding of each other's perspectives and actions. We constructed or created knowledge when we discussed, explored, and reflected on our personal and lived experiences, valuing all co-researchers "as experts of their own culture" (Stoudt, 2007, p.284). Through the engagement with participants and enquiry as a shared experience, action research aims to equalize the value of mode 1 and mode 2 knowledge: knowledge generated through theory and knowledge generated through practice or experience. I did not anticipate how integral the concept of knowledge would become in our research. My initial concerns about hierarchies of knowledge in our interactions gave way to understanding which knowledges were necessary to developing taster sessions or UG teaching and how both pedagogical and disciplinary knowledge were equally necessary. Agyris (1993) refers to the knowledge that is pertinent to the organisation or community in which the research is taking place as "actionable knowledge", meaning knowledge that is created and shared during the research becomes the catalyst for action.

Action for social change

Action is a distinct aim of action research; it is, simultaneously, the focus of the enquiry, and the process through which we enquire. The action of the research is desirous of making a positive change to one's own practice or taking action with others in an organisational context or in a community for whom change leads to empowerment. The change can take the form of problem-solving as part of a process of self-development or action that has a far-reaching impact for a

community or a political context (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1981; McNiff, 2002). Larger-scale change through activism and protest and action taken locally can lead to global change, while exploring a single issue in an individualised context leads to personal change which can be transformational as well as rewarding (Maguire 1987; Kemmis 2008; Fine, 2016).

Action for positive social change is part of both the methodology and the ideology of action research. It ensures that research is purposive, and change is a clearly identified ambition, one which helps to direct research team and activity focus. In our research I was ambitious for large-scale change while cognisant of the fact that the changes might be small-scale and personal.

Katsarou argues that transformative personal change can be as emancipatory as large-scale or global change when it impacts on our interactions with work, school or community and the relationships therein, leading to social change. She sees personal change and social change as “two complementary concepts that should unite and be united” (2017, p.683). As I will show, even small or individual changes transformed the ways in which we thought, acted, or behaved within our institution and with students or school pupils.

Summary of Action Research

In this first section I have argued for action research as the most appropriate methodological approach to explore the constraints to professional/academic staff collaboration in university work. Issues of power in professional/academic relationships are articulated in the literature in chapter two and the chance to co-develop knowledge about approaches to WP work presented an opportunity, through action research, to explore these issues. Therefore, as a set of principles, action research offers the opportunity to confront and negotiate differences as part of the research process.

Action research in HE tends to focus on formal academic staff development (i.e. as part of a HE teaching qualification), a form of curriculum assessment with or without students, or reflective practice for students on teacher training courses (Kember and Gow, 1992; Johnson, 2000; Greenwood, 2012; Gibbs et al, 2017). While partnerships between academic researchers and external groups to undertake action research are common, in-house action research across professional/academic university boundaries is less so. Employing such an approach is a distinctly unsafe approach to this research, and one which, positioning professional staff as lead and academic staff as co-researchers, has the potential to exacerbate rather than alleviate the constraints to collaborative university work. My experience of feeling frustrated when my co-researchers did not wholeheartedly embrace or agree with my plan for the research had the potential to create a chasm of understanding between us: the opposite outcome to successful action research.

Whitchurch (2008) maintains that university work on the fringes of academic/professional boundaries requires staff to work in an “exploratory way with tension” (p381). Hayton et al (2015) report that employing a participatory approach to review and re-position fair admissions processes allowed all staff to “explore processes in depth” (p1261). While acknowledging that the research was unlikely to be a linear process, nor trouble-free, engaging in dangerous or messy explorations with academic co-researchers allowed us to interrogate our roles, our relationships, and our practices. The ambition was that collaborative research relationships resulted in collaborative WP work and practices that were embedded and sustainable (Burke, 2013).

Research Design

The second part of this chapter provides the details of the research design. The research comprised two phases: an initial phase exploring how we worked together developing taster sessions, which then evolved into a second research phase, in which I supported my co-researchers to address

issues in their UG classrooms. I outline how the co-researchers (academic staff) and research consultants (school pupils) were recruited and the ways in which I worked to create conditions amenable to participatory research. I introduce the range of sources which constitute the empirical data and explain the data analysis processes I employed, the analytical lenses I drew on, including those related to issues of pedagogy in HE. I also explain who was involved in the analysis and the minimal role of my co-researchers therein. Following this, I reflect on the ethical issues of working with school pupils and with colleagues and of employing a participatory approach for my doctoral thesis. Finally, I consider my role as an insider/outsider researcher and the enablements and constraints my dual role created.

Recruitment of co-researchers

Central to my research design was the need to work equitably with academic staff to exchange perspectives, seek insights and develop shared understanding and approaches to WP work. As I work in an Arts & Humanities School comprising three departments, I wanted to recruit a colleague from each department as a co-researcher, to ensure that our learning would have resonance throughout the School. I deliberately decided that I wanted to work with colleagues who were familiar with WP work and had some experience thereof. I wanted us to spend time understanding how academic staff approached their WP work and focusing on the constraints and enablements to that process, whether they were emotional, practical, or professional. There was not the time in the doctoral research timeframe to allow for an earlier stage of inducting colleagues into an understanding of WP policy and practice. While I was open to the research taking its own direction, I had to impose a certain amount of structure to make it manageable and meaningful for us all.

After a universal staff email call-out proved unsuccessful, I targeted specific colleagues who had shown a sustained interest in or commitment to WP work, by posting a message in their pigeonholes. Four staff responded with interest, and I followed up with each in person. One colleague had a large-scale research project underway so had limited availability, so we agreed her involvement was probably not feasible. Happily, the remaining three colleagues each represented a department of the School, so Howard, Sarah, and Paul¹³ agreed to participate in the research as my three co-researchers. As co-researchers, they would work with me to develop the research project, influencing its direction and participating throughout the process.

Of utmost importance to me and to the essence of my socially motivated research was the inclusion of school pupils, as their perspective would provide the input which would influence our approaches to WP work. Once I had gained ethical approval from my university ethics board, and using my usual distribution list, I sent an email to local state schools inviting Year 9 pupils to a half-day event at the university, positioned as an Introduction to Arts subjects (Appendix 1). Three schools expressed an initial interest and of these, two committed to bringing 20 pupils each to a half-day university ‘taster’ event.

I asked the schools to select pupils to attend the half-day tasters as those who were not necessarily thinking about university study at this moment in their school careers and who were positioned as middle attainers with potential, rather than high-flyers with ambition. I deliberately selected Year 9 pupils as the age group for the research, as this is a transition year ahead of GCSE courses and a transition year in terms of puberty and development, both physical and mental. The school pupils were of an age and stage whereby they were articulate enough to provide feedback and unsophisticated enough to be honest in doing so. The role of the pupils was

¹³ These are pseudonyms for the purposes of this research.

to be research consultants rather than co-researchers due to curriculum constraints and therefore pupil availability. Pupil research consultants would provide feedback on their experience but would not contribute to shaping the research process or evaluating the research overall.

Incentives

I was conscious that my co-researchers were invited and encouraged to participate for the sole purpose of generating data and, ideally, co-creating new knowledge about collaborative WP work for my doctoral thesis. While ethics for the project had been approved and all constituents were happy to participate, this did not change the fact that I was likely to be the main beneficiary of our research. To make some amends for this and to communicate the value my co-researchers were bringing to the research, I ensured I provided drinks and homemade cake at all our meetings and, once the fieldwork was fully completed, hosted a dinner for the research team and their partners at my house by way of a thank you. Similarly, I provided a catered lunch for the school pupils and my co-researchers on both taster half days. This would not normally be funded as part of a WP event, but again I wanted to convey my gratitude to the pupils and my co-researchers for their time, effort, and engagement. These were simple ways in which I tried to minimise the tensions in our researcher and collegiate relationships.

Timeframe

In the first research phase (WP work), I planned my research to follow the action research process or spiral of Plan, Act, Observe, Reflect (Lewin, 1946). The spiral of steps offered me an anchor for the research and a framework within which I could develop research relationships and review progress. In addition, I “planned” for unplanned or unscheduled possibilities to ensure that the research did not have a pre-determined direction or solution; this would be developed by the research team throughout the research. Lewin’s idea was that the spiral should work as a

guide to the process but that there would always be a lack of certainty regarding the route the research would take: “exactly how to circumscribe this objective and how to reach it is frequently not too clear” (p37). The iterative nature of the spiral allowed for changes of direction and adjustments of ambition in response to what the research process was revealing.

The purpose of running two taster half-day events was designed to accommodate time for review, reflection and adaptation of taster content or mode of delivery. The feedback from the pupil research consultants at the first half-day taster event would be key in the re-shaping of the taster sessions before the second half-day taster event. Taster sessions are a WP university staple, designed to introduce school pupils to new disciplines, modes of study and university academic staff. Historically, the event would be planned, coordinated, and evaluated by professional WP staff, while academic staff would contribute a discipline-focused session. The purpose is a) to ignite an interest in a discipline through short, focused sessions and b) to introduce academic staff in a low-key and accessible way, therefore enabling the pupils to visualise themselves at university.

Ahead of the sessions in which we would co-plan for the taster events, time was built into the research plan for an introductory or reconnaissance session. Reconnaissance is described as opening a communicative space (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1982). It is the first stage of action research projects, enabling researchers to meet, discuss and share their understanding about how the research may unfold and how they might work together as a research team. Where researchers are drawn from a variety of backgrounds and are unknown to each other, this early stage is crucial for forming as a research team. Issues of professional language and terminology, timing and format of research meetings and the roles and inter-relationships of the researchers are discussed, debated, and ideally, democratically agreed. These form the terms of engagement for the researchers and provide a mandate to which individuals can refer should they need to.

This stage was crucial to start to develop a common understanding of each other and the professional or academic barriers to working together.

Following the reconnaissance session, I scheduled plan, review and evaluation sessions positioned around the half-day taster events. All research introductory, planning and review sessions took place at the university in a building away from our academic school so we could ensure there were no work interruptions or distractions. The timeframe for these was March-June. The two half-day tasters took place in the same week in May, in a typical university seminar room such as I would usually book for a WP event. It was crucial that the timeframe suited all research participants; the taster half-days needed to occur during school term-time but not during an exam period to enable the pupils to be released from school to attend. At the same time, these half-days needed to occur post-university teaching but pre-university marking sessions. Finally, the fieldwork needed to be manageable within a part-time doctoral timeline.

PROJECT ACTIVITY	TIMING	PARTICIPANTS
Reconnaissance session	2 hours	Lead researcher and x 3 co-researchers
Preparatory session	90 minutes	Lead researcher and x 3 co-researchers
Taster one (including pupil feedback)	Half-day	Pupil x 20, teacher x2, x 3 co-researchers, lead researcher
Review	2 hours	Lead researcher and x 3 co-researchers.

Taster two (including pupil feedback)	Half-day	Pupil x 20, teacher x 2, x 3 co-researchers, lead researcher
Evaluation	2 hours	Lead researcher and x 3 co-researchers

Figure 2: Research Plan (phase 1 - school pupils)

The second phase of research, which had not been planned or foreseen at the outset, arose from the first phase. My three co-researchers instigated this during our evaluation session, asking to continue to collaborate with me to enquire into their practice in their undergraduate teaching context. Thus, we agreed this further phase seen below in figure 2 which took place between June and December.

PROJECT ACTIVITY	TIMING	PARTICIPANTS
Preparation/plan	1 hour x 3	Lead researcher and co-researchers (individual sessions)
Delivery with UG students	2 hours x 3	Lead researcher and co-researchers (individual sessions)
Review interview	90 minutes x 3	Lead researcher and co-researchers (individual sessions)
Evaluation	2 hours	Lead researcher and x 3 co-researchers (team)

Figure 3: Research Plan (phase 2 - UG students)

Data generation

Data generation in action research draws specifically on observation and behavioural data (Herr and Anderson, 2014). Throughout the research project, co-researchers share, discuss, evaluate, challenge and act on data. Findings are acted on relatively quickly and generate further data for discussion and review. Forms of data can be anticipated but not necessarily prescribed. For example, in phase 2 the feedback from the UG students was captured and shared using wordles, a format I had not foreseen we would use.

Several forms of data were generated as detailed in the figures below. I maintained a research diary throughout the process which enabled me to note my initial thoughts and reflections, which I later verified through thematic and systematic analysis. See figure 3a for the range of data generated in the first research phase with the school pupils. Examples of this data can be found in the appendices numbered 2-11.

DATA TYPE	CONTRIBUTOR	LOCATION OF DATA	QUANTITY	APPENDIX NUMBER
Research diary	Lead researcher	Diary	1 volume	n/a
Recon session discussion outcomes (flipcharts)	Co-researchers	Research data folder	2 flipcharts	2
Recon session sorting exercise outcome (image)	Co-researchers	Research data folder	1 image	3
Recon reflections	Lead researcher	Research notes	2 documents	4
Recon/Plan meeting audio recordings	Lead researcher/co-researchers	Research sound files	2 recordings	n/a
Taster session lesson plan	Co-researchers	Research data folder	1 lesson plan (2 documents)	5

Taster session peer observation notes	Lead researcher/co-researchers	Research data files	5 (taster 1) 5(taster 2)	6
Taster session evaluations	Pupils	Research data folder	5 (Taster 1) 5 (Taster 2)	7
Taster session pupil notes/work	Pupils	Research data folder	5 (across both tasters)	8
Taster session questions	Pupils	Research data folder	3 (across both tasters)	9
Reflective diagrams	Lead researcher/Co-researchers	Research data folder	8 images	10
Evaluation reflections	Lead researcher	Research notes	1 document	11
Evaluation audio recording	Lead researcher/co-researchers	Research sound files	1 recording	n/a

Figure 3a: Data generation (phase one – school pupils)

See figure 3b below for the range of data generated in the second research phase with the undergraduate students. Examples of this data can be found in the appendices numbered 12-20.

DATA TYPE	CONTRIBUTOR	LOCATION OF DATA	QUANTITY	APPENDIX NUMBER
Planning notes	Lead researcher/co-researchers	Research data folder/diary	6 documents	12
UG seminar lesson plan	Sarah	Research data folder	1 lesson plan	13
Seminar observation notes	Lead researcher	Research data folder	3 sets of observation notes	14
Seminar reflection notes	Sarah	Research data	1 set of reflection notes	15
Observation of Tara notes	Sarah	Research data	1 set of observation notes	16
Wordles	Co-researchers/UG students	Research data folder	4 wordles	17

Interview audio recordings	Co-researchers	Research sound files	3 recordings	n/a
Interview transcripts	Co-researchers	Research data	3 transcripts	18
Reflections on PAR experience	Co-researchers	Research data	2 documents	19
Written reflections on participating in PAR	Co-researchers	Research data	3 documents	20

Figure 3b Data generation (Phase Two – Participation)

Forms of secondary data include papers submitted at conferences¹⁴ and academic articles¹⁵ written during this period. Both these latter forms of data provide reflection additional to my research diary and research notes.

Data analysis

I undertook the data analysis without the input of my co-researchers, despite this being contra to the principles of action research. Initially, I had not considered that we would analyse the data for my doctoral research project together as I did not anticipate my co-researchers had the interest or the time to dedicate to such a task. In the literature this issue is one with which researchers frequently wrangle (e.g. Pain & Francis, 2003; Savin-Baden & Wimpenny, 2007; Smith, Bratini, Chambers, Jensen & Romero, 2010; Hawkins, 2015). I was uncomfortable with the analysis not

¹⁴ Action Research Ireland, 2017; CARN, 2017, 2018, 2019, OU Access and Participation, 2018

¹⁵ Webster-Deakin, T., 2020. Exploring the fluidity of relationships and methodology as an 'insider' action researcher. *Educational Action Research*, pp.1-16.

being a shared or transparent process: however, I felt that our collaboration had been successful in practice, and I was anxious about this being threatened by dissension about how the research was to be interpreted and presented. In addition, I was fearful that, once in the realm of written research, my impostor syndrome would re-surface and my voice would get lost amidst those of my more experienced co-researchers. I was also keen to be honest about how I had navigated the research challenges and relational tensions and had concerns about upsetting my co-researchers with any less insightful early drafts.

Overall, writing up the research on my own was a pragmatic choice due to time constraints and the dissipation of our research group once the fieldwork had been completed. In retrospect I was also retaining control of the narrative, feeling the need to tell the story in the way I had experienced it. I can see how non-collaborative this was and how much richer the writing up might have been if I had invited my co-researchers to participate in this by contributing their thoughts throughout. To counter the lack of co-researcher perspective in the analysis, I asked each for a written reflection on their experience of participating in the research sometime after the research had finished, so that I could ensure their voices were present, nonetheless.

Data analysis in action research is a process which is neither pre-determined nor obvious. I was in possession of multiple forms of data from several sources, all of which provided rich and multi-layered perspectives on the research but lacking in clarity as to how I should analyse it. As Winter (1982) says, action research is highly effective in the creation or production of data, but less helpful in the interpretation of data. To begin with, I read all data sources multiple times, using thematic induction which is loosely based on thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic induction allows themes to emerge from the reading and re-reading of the data so that incidents, events, comments, actions, or behaviours during the research can be grouped under thematic headings. This provided a first stage analysis of how I interpreted the data.

The initial themes which emerged inductively were identity, hierarchy, expertise, and knowledge. The way in which these initial themes interacted produced a great deal of overlap, for instance hierarchies of knowledge, or expertise as part of a professional or academic identity (see appendices 21-24). From these themes, through re-reading the documents and categorising the themes several times as an iterative process, surfaced two overarching concepts of power (relational, structural, and knowledge) and pedagogy (knowledge). Power was the primary or main theme (e.g., knowledge as power, status as power, structural power, resistance as power) with pedagogy as a secondary main theme (e.g., pedagogical knowledge and expertise, pedagogy for access, pedagogy for participation). This gave me a steer as to which fields of literature might provide lenses for the empirical chapters.

The first round of thematic induction analysis provided me with an interpretive understanding of what had occurred in the research, but not a deeper awareness of the relevance or generalisability of what I was inducting. I was conscious of the possibility I might be manipulating the data to fulfil my initial preconceptions about collaborative WP work, confirming a “set of prior concerns and values” (Winter, 1982, p.165). In addition, as much of the data had been written or summarised by me, I was inferring or ascribing co-researcher behaviours or responses based on my reading of a situation or narrative.

The second round of data analysis was informed but not prejudiced by the first. To ensure I was including every layer of each source, I re-visited the data using a sequential process to guide me, organising the data following the spiral sequence of steps (plan/act/observe/reflect). Using the spiral helped me to challenge the original themes and to situate the data in the field of the two concepts of power and pedagogy more clearly. This process also clarified sub-themes within the themes: for example, hierarchy included professional and political hierarchies, and expertise included the concept of voice within the research including ownership, agency, and feedback.

Following discussions with my research supervisors, I used the following questions to guide my analysis:

- How do power and pedagogy play out in each element of the research?
- How does the action research process enable/constrain the power/pedagogy tensions to play out?
- What does the intersection of e.g., co-construction and power tell us about collaborative cross-boundary working and the role of WP professionals?
- What am I using as evidence to show this? E.g., Diary notes, research notes, observation notes, evaluation notes/diagrams, lesson plans, pupil feedback, wordles, co-researcher feedback, interviews
- How am I interrogating the data?

These questions helped to determine how I re-examined the data. They also raised further questions and observations about the integrity and challenges of the action research process which added an additional dimension to my understanding of what had occurred for me and for my co-researchers. I reviewed my initial notes, for example, what I had written in my diary after the meeting, incident or event and added a distanced commentary on the position I had taken at the time (see below in figure 4 under “Act (1)/ Diary”). I then added to the table in the final column by drawing out what the incident/event/response told me about the issues of pedagogy or of power.

I was then able to reflect on the issues which emerged from the first two rounds of data analysis (power, identity, hierarchy, knowledge as power, pedagogical knowledge) in relation to action research and the ways in which I had aspired for the research to unfold. The issues of hierarchy, identity and power were challenges to professional/academic collaboration in university work.

Issues of knowledge power and knowledge deficits gave rise to questions about co-constructing knowledge and the types of knowledge we needed to develop WP work. This then led to questions about the purpose of this research and what claims it might make about having effected change of any kind. Using the three principles (collaboration, co-construction of knowledge and action for social change) as barometers for how closely we had adhered to the ethos of action research enabled me to critique assumptions I had made during earlier iterations of the analysis based on whether they were made from a collaborative perspective, or if knowledge was being genuinely co-constructed and by whom.

Spiral stage	Data source	Evidence/quotation	Distanced analysis	Initial analysis
Plan	Meeting notes	<i>"I don't know how useful this is but I really think our society fetishises social mobility" - my heart sinks in response to P's comment</i>	<i>surely this would have been worth pursuing as a discussion? Was the anxiety provoked by P's comment about my knowledge insecurity/intimidation (perceived academic power) or about pressures of time and agenda (my power as lead researcher)?</i>	<i>This is another example of the tensions caused by hierarchy in our role relationships; this is an excellent question yet my response is fear and intimidation rather than a will to draw it out into a discussion. To combat the feeling of powerlessness (lack of knowledge) I am resistant to fully embracing the opportunity for collaboration</i>
	Diary	<i>S looked anxious, describing Y9 as her "nightmare class" from her PGCE experience. H also said, after his similar experience he "vowed never to work in a school"</i>	<i>co-researchers expressing their fear and uncertainty in this realm - is this a lack of pedagogical knowledge?</i>	<i>Pedagogic knowledge becomes highly valued as it is needed to prepare for the taster sessions and I am recognized as the possessor of that knowledge/expert. There is a distinct shift of expertise at this juncture in the first phase.</i>

Act (1)	Diary	What I did was offer reassurance. What I felt was a degree of irritation that this (my research) had not been prioritised.	<i>Really what was I expecting? How arrogant that I thought my research should be a central concern of theirs. Was this not simply the old wound of second-class citizen opening again? How does this speak to collaboration?</i>	<i>This links to earlier perceptions of hierarchy in the research and where my role sits within that organisational structure. Are different “types” of research (arts/social sciences etc) more valued or engaged in inter-disciplinary struggles themselves?</i>
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Figure 4: Snapshot of Collaboration – sequential data analysis

Finally, I re-categorised the data again into four individual researcher tables, so that I was able to see the emergent “story” for each of us over the course of the research.

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and Inclusive Pedagogies

The emergence of pedagogy as a central theme of our action research required me to engage with a range of pedagogical literature with which to examine and understand my co-researchers' motivations, beliefs, and actions about teaching the school pupils and, latterly, the UG students. The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) focuses on the practice and theory of teaching and learning in HE, specifically how pedagogical enquiry might unite with the practice of teaching and learning to improve and inform both the HE teaching and learning evidence base and the classroom experiences of the teacher and their students. SoTL has its origins in the work and writings of Boyer (1990), who, with his colleagues at the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) in the US, argued that there was a need to give the idea of academic scholarship a broader meaning, to enrich rather than restrict university UG education.

SoTL has gathered momentum over the past three decades, shaping and being shaped by political changes in the positioning and evaluation of teaching in universities e.g., in the UK the

development of the Higher Education Academy (now Advance HE) and the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). SoTL positions teaching and learning as important to and for issues of HE pedagogy including the development of academic staff teaching skills and the quality of student learning. Boyer's four-dimensional model of scholarship, which included discovery; integration; application and teaching, has been developed and re-defined to include the practice of teaching rooted in academic disciplines (Healey, 2000), the fusion of pedagogical, instructional, and curricular knowledge (Kreber, 2000) and critical examination of teaching practices engaging colleagues in "serious questions about student learning" (Hutchings, Huber, and Ciccone, 2011, p7).

The serious questions with which we engaged during our research related to inclusive teaching and learning, an area of teaching scholarship that is evolving in practice and in literature. The writing of Burke, Crozier, and Misiaszek (2017) draws explicitly on feminist, pedagogical and critical theory to address issues of diversity, inclusion and belonging in HE teaching and learning. Developing concepts of recognition and representation in HE pedagogy and the spaces in which students and staff encounter and engage with these pedagogies, Burke et al interrogate the experiences and identity formations of academic staff and students, through nuanced explorations of gender, race, and social class (2017). The concepts of recognition and representation connected directly to our research site, WP as access and as participation, and to the pedagogical ideas with which we had engaged during our research, about classrooms as student-centred spaces for collaborative learning and co-construction of knowledge.

Reflecting on the notes I had made about the pedagogical practice we were interrogating in the taster sessions and UG seminars, I saw how these were connected to and could be framed by the concepts developed by Burke et al (2017). Drawing on Burke et al's ideas about diversity, inclusion and belonging, I evolved six 'principles of practice' which arose directly from the

experiences of my co-researchers in the classroom and our subsequent discussions about pedagogy.

Six principles of practice:

1. Understanding how students experience their learning environment
2. Empathy and sensitivity in teaching
3. Encouraging participation
4. Student perspective as starting point
5. Questions to generate learning discussions
6. Structuring learning opportunities

For example, Sarah was keen to better engage her UG students in conversations about sensitive topics but was concerned about the impact of asking them to share what might be highly personal experiences. Sarah's challenges which we had discussed as "approaching difficult topics" (teacher-centred) I came to see as "empathy and sensitivity in teaching" (student-centred) when reviewed in the light of the need to recognise, represent, and value all students (Burke et al, 2017). Re-visiting the data in this way offered a stronger theoretical basis from which to undertake further analysis. (See Figure 5 below).

DATA SET	QUOTATION	RELATES TO
Pupil responses/co-res obsv notes C1&2	<p>It was funish and interesting (pupil)</p> <p>I enjoyed this one the most! Loved the questions and the paired work (pupil)</p> <p>I related to the topic of dance and loved to talk about the meaning of dance and why people do it (pupil)</p> <p>The session really made me think how we come together (pupil)</p> <p>Groupwork focused their attention well (co-r)</p>	<p>Structuring learning opportunities</p> <p>Encouraging participation (how to)</p>

	DIE model worked well (co-r) Use of scribe to capture definitions (co-r) Maybe signpost where task/video is taking pupils? (co-r)	
Evaluation diagram (v)	Preconceptions “different” group from HE Assumptions about “good stuff” being “enough” (i.e. not thinking too much about student perspective/experience). 1 st group questions major factor in seeing pupils’ perspectives Qs key term in ALL academic discourse and teaching Qs about ? “BRIDGE” thinking more about the “active” implications of Qs Transition from/relation between broad HE principles of questioning/curiosity/research Thinking about learning particular things – independent research (questioning)	Student perspective as starting point (student voice) Questions to generate learning discussions (how to encourage these)

Figure 5: Snapshot of Howard – individual researcher data analysis

Although of course this analysis was still likely to be subjective, it was now based on analytical frameworks which determined how closely we had, as a research team, adhered to action research. Firstly, I employed the three principles of collaboration, co-construction of knowledge and action for social change, in examining whether these had constrained or enabled us as researchers. Secondly, I used action research literature to understand the challenges of empowerment and resistance to different forms of power. Thirdly, I incorporated the perspectives of all four researchers as individual cases to surface and question the themes of pedagogy and power from multiple perspectives. Finally, drawing on my six principles of practice and the inclusive pedagogies literature helped to provide a close examination of what had acted as a barrier to each of us in developing pedagogical practice and how successfully we had engaged in changing or adapting to rectify this.

Ethics

Ethical conduct in action research can be described as putting values into the actions we take with each other and the world. When undertaking research, we engage with “The study of what we value in these relationships and the decisions we make based on those values” (Yoak and Brydon-Miller, 2014, p.306). Brydon-Miller's structured ethical reflection (SER) provides an alphabetical list of values from which a researcher can choose to help guide their research decision making. While I did not explicitly engage with SER, I had key values in mind when undertaking the research. For example, I was conscious of justice throughout, which I was concerned would not be fully served because a) of the limited input of the school pupils; were they being accurately represented? and b) the research benefiting me rather than necessarily benefiting my co-researchers.

Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, and Maguire (2003) state that “Research should not unduly involve persons from groups unlikely to be among the beneficiaries of subsequent applications” (p201). I kept in mind how and where I could comfortably see benefits for all participants; in Phase 1, for the school pupils, I hoped for a positive experience of a taster day, de-mystification of academic staff and, in the long term, more effective taster sessions. In phase 2, for my co-researchers I aimed for a more comfortable understanding of effective pedagogy for access and for participation, so they felt empowered in their teaching.

These ethical principles provided guidance that was particularly useful for research with school pupils who were vulnerable in terms of being minors and therefore potentially having the least research “power.” In addition, I needed to be aware of my insider/outsider status and my professional relationships with my co-researchers. While they were not as obviously vulnerable as the school pupils, they were still deserving of care and respect throughout their participation in the research. These were the principles that guided me in undertaking the research. This is not to

say that they were simple to maintain. For example, I was irritated by the resistance of my co-researchers and saw their resistance to my direction as obstructive behaviour. I was offended by the limited input of Howard and Paul in the second phase of the research and perceived this to mean my research was inconsequential to them. Ensuring that these feelings did not affect our daily interactions or my acknowledgement of their investment of time into my doctoral project was challenging at times.

I sought ethical permission from all research participants, following the University's School of Education ethical guidance. To gain permission from the participating schools, I sent information about the research project to the headteachers and chairs of the governing bodies in order to ensure they were fully briefed about the nature and purpose of the research and comfortable for their pupils to participate (Appendices 25 and 26). I sent letters to parents via the school to explain how the taster day formed part of a university research project. The letter asked parents to complete a form giving their permission for their child (as these were minors) to participate and stating they were happy for anonymous data pertaining to their participation to be used in the research (Appendix 27). I also sent a letter to the pupils (in the spirit of collaboration) outlining the research project and how their involvement would contribute to this (Appendix 28).

I provided information to my co-researchers about the research project, and how I intended to use the research data. I gained the written consent of the co-researchers ahead of our first planning session. I dedicated time during the first phase planning session to answer any questions my co-researchers had regarding process and data. I also later asked them, towards the end of my writing up about the level of detail they were happy to reveal about their role and specialism to ascertain how revealing I could be in the empirical chapters. Each co-researcher provided a written response confirming they were happy for this information to form part of the thesis. Throughout the research I consistently checked in with my co-researchers to ensure they

were still comfortable with contributing their experiences as co-researchers to the thesis data and the conference presentations and articles which arose from the research.

Part of the agreement with my co-researchers, pupils, their parents, and the schools included the explicit opportunity to withdraw from the project at any time. In addition, I ensured the confidentiality of all data, using letters or codes to represent participants and ensuring it was stored securely. While much of the ethical preparation and paperwork for the research focused on obtaining consent for the pupils to participate in the first research phase, there were potentially larger challenges in working with my co-researchers. These challenges included sharing research outcomes and experiences as part of a casual work corridor conversation and talking more generally about their experience on the project, thus waiving their anonymity. However, I regularly checked in with my co-researchers to ensure they were happy with how their role in the research was working and to assess the level of openness with which they were most comfortable.

My awareness of the ethical challenges of undertaking doctoral research with co-researchers grew as the research project unfolded. At the outset, with ethical permission granted, I was happy to proceed with the research, taking their written consent as universal co-researcher/pupil consultant consensus. However, despite the taster sessions providing an informative university visit for the pupils, I realised that I was not comfortable with their limited role and the construction of a taster event with the sole purpose to mine data for my doctoral research. This positioned me as distinctly biased towards my own gain (Chapman, 2019). I asked myself how much say had the pupils really had in attending the event? How useful or informative had it been for them? While I did not have the answers to these questions, and I was clear that the ethical processes had been followed correctly, the lack of autonomy for the pupils troubled me.

Dilemmas also arose for me in the data analysis and writing up, relating to the fragility of the co-researcher relationships which had been nurtured during the research. While I aimed to show in my analysis the motivations for beliefs and behaviours throughout the research, my choice of lenses, particularly in early drafts, meant that I was taking a critical stance on my co-researchers at times. I was quick to judge the actions of my co-researchers when they did not align with my worldview. I was anxious that my writing up was critical but honest and used the iterative analysis process outlined above to ensure my representation of individuals and events was a fair one. Nonetheless I was concerned that the collaborative relationships we had forged despite the structural constraints might still be negatively affected by my analysis. Through our research I had been given access to insights into the world and experience of academics which I wanted to share to encourage better collaboration in university work. A truthful account of gaining those insights needed to include the difficulties we encountered in reaching a stage of collaboration.

Insider/outsider researcher

An issue relating to the ethical questions that are evoked through action research was that of my insider/outsider researcher status. Researching as an organisational insider offers a distinct set of dynamics from undertaking research from an external perspective (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007). As an insider researcher I had prior knowledge and therefore, assumptions about the organisation and my colleagues. This prior knowledge was useful in that time does not need to be invested in acclimatising to a new environment, however it also might act as a barrier to probing deeply enough in interviews, conversations or during the analysis of data. Brannick and Coghlan refer to this insider knowledge as “pre-understanding” and, alongside issues of role duality and organisational politics, highlight these as potential pitfalls for insider researchers (2007).

The notion of role duality was magnified through the multiple roles I found myself inhabiting throughout the research; those of lead researcher, novice researcher, professional staff member, non-academic, WP practitioner. As I wrote in an early reflective article on my experiences: “I was prepared for role duality but not aware of the multitude of shifts and adjustments which impacted my positionality throughout the research process” (Webster-Deakin, 2020, p.12). Navigating between the roles was necessary but, at times, confusing. Adler and Adler (1987) refer to the challenge of insider/outsider researcher as “the ultimate existential dual role” (p73). What this meant, however, was that I was constantly reflecting on my status and the relationship it bore to my co-researchers and to my ongoing professional role.

I was both an insider (in terms of my university role and knowledge) and an outsider (as the non-academic in the research team) (Herr and Anderson, 2014). Being an outsider gave me the advantage of being able to observe and reflect on my co-researchers' motivations and behaviours.

It also gave me a distinct disadvantage (in research terms) as I often drew hasty conclusions about these motivations and behaviours without fully understanding from where they might arise. In addition, my perception of myself as an outsider/impostor limited my early interactions with the research team and stifled what might have been productive discussions about the ways in which my co-researchers experienced the university.

My role as lead researcher had inverted the traditional university hierarchies, so this affected how relationships as co-researchers, rather than stratified colleagues were shaped. This then raised questions about how we interrelated post-research; were the hierarchies only suspended? However, situating my research within my organisation had possible wider implications than simply for my own role confusion or the ways in which researcher relationships evolved. I was asking questions about the policy and practice of the institution regarding issues of access and of participation. I had a voice in this arena due to my professional role, however I was not the organisational lead. My research was therefore exploring and exposing an area which the university might not wish to be interrogated or questioned. In this context my insider research can be seen to be political and even subversive (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007). To safeguard internal professional relationships, I made certain that my senior colleagues were aware of my doctoral focus, and I provided generalised updates on progress and findings to limit any misconceptions about the purpose of my research.

Summary of part two

I have outlined the research design, shared the range of data sources, and explained the approach I took to data generation and data analysis. I have also explored ethical issues and the questions these raised for me throughout the research project. Ethical processes, designed to limit harm or exploitation of research participants, do not necessarily alleviate the burden of concern that the

research is, at its heart, truly equitable and participatory. My approach was to provide as inclusive an approach as I was able, within the circumstances, and to reflect on my conduct as the lead researcher throughout the research and afterwards.

Conducting research in one's organisation also presents several challenges for the lead researcher, in terms of being able to retain some objectivity during the analysis and ensuring that the research is appropriately rigorous and not reliant on prior knowledge or insider assumptions about organisational systems and structures. It also creates tension between the insider researcher's habitual professional role and their role as a researcher, sometimes leading to role confusion or the need to respond fluidly and switch comfortably between researcher and professional identities. The conflict of operating as an insider/outsider within the research provided an additional space which was tricky and uncomfortable to inhabit and was constraining both to me and to the research, at times. Developing the agility and the confidence to move between roles and positions has been part of the learning about action research and collaborating with colleagues from the academic side of university work.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have summarised the action research field and shown where within this field my research is positioned. I have articulated the issues facing action researchers such as challenges of an ethical nature and regarding the validity and reliability of action research. I have introduced the three principles: collaboration, co-construction of knowledge and action for social change, and drawn on the literature to help to articulate how these principles served both as guiding agents during the fieldwork and then as the framework to the analysis of the emergent data. Following this, I have provided a comprehensive overview of the research design, including the ranges and sources of data, how these were collated and analysed and which tools for data analysis emerged as part of the data analysis process.

Reflecting on the research process as a novice researcher, working with a methodology that is loose and non-prescriptive with respect to types of data and data analysis, I have found the research design to be more fluid than fixed, which has been both illuminating and yet sometimes disabling. Balancing the core principles of action research with the pressures of a doctoral timeframe, co-researchers' availability, and school and university timetables has presented several challenges to my commitment to researching with justice, respect, and beneficence for all participants. Similarly, determining how to share the research story in the most candid and yet careful way has provided me with several dilemmas throughout data collection and analysis.

As an insider researcher, and one who is secondary in the organisational hierarchy, there was an inevitable challenge and confusion. In addition to the ethical considerations working with close colleagues raised, I was uncomfortably positioned as the lead researcher, despite my sense of being an outsider to my academic co-researchers. While I may have had insider knowledge, more usually I was operating in Ingham and Luft's "blind spot" of the Johari window (1955). The multiple and shifting identities I inhabited both enabled the research process to be fluid and ever evolving and yet threatened my ability to lead with courage and conviction.

I now move on to the three empirical chapters which are based on the three action research principles I identified as core to this research. Each chapter draws on data to show the lived experience of myself and three academics working together to improve aspects of WP work. In the first of these chapters, I engage with the concept of collaboration, reiterating the purpose of collaboration and examining how closely our research was able to align to this principle in all aspects of our research process. I explore the enablements and constraints to collaboration in action research in our specific context and identify where collaborative approaches have helped or hindered the social change agenda for this research. Finally, I outline the findings about collaboration in university WP work and discuss how generalisable these might be in a wider HE

context and with a range of additional or different stakeholders. The discussion concludes by returning to the concept of co-construction of knowledge.

Chapter Four – Collaboration

Introduction

In the previous chapter I have presented action research as the most appropriate methodological approach for research enquiring into the processes involved in academic/professional university work. I have also shown how my personal beliefs and professional ethos steered me towards action research to explore collaborative ways of working across the professional/academic binary divide. This, the first of three empirical chapters, describes and analyses the processes involved in enacting the principle of collaboration using data from research meeting transcripts, interviews, research diary and research notes. Collaboration is seen as a core element of action research and one which lays the foundations for the principles of co-construction of knowledge and action for social change.

First, I reiterate the principle itself, building on how collaboration has been positioned for this research in the previous methodology chapter and stating the aim of collaboration; the converging of disparate agendas to work together towards a common purpose. Second, I introduce the first of two main themes relating to power: hierarchy, within which I explore how two types of hierarchy (professional and political) enabled and constrained our ability to research collaboratively. Within this section I highlight my struggles with my positionality, and the challenges my co-researchers faced in accepting the need for a collaborative approach. Third, I discuss the second main theme of voice, and explore issues of ownership, agency, and feedback, and how these issues constrained and enabled us. Within this section I engage with the ideal of multiple democratic voices both in the research process and in the re-telling of the research and reflect how successfully this was fulfilled. In both sections, I show how, through the action research process of surfacing conflict

and dissension, we were able to challenge and re-construct our preconceptions of each other and of WP work, to enable supportive working relationships.

Finally, I discuss what I discovered about issues of hierarchy and voice in the context of WP work in HE, and I argue that this type of democratic process allows for the recognition of the knowledge and skills of all contributors and makes for healthy institutional relationships leading to productive outcomes for social change projects. This chapter establishes the utility of collaboration for my professional WP context, as well as more widely as a tool for cross-professional-boundary university work. The professional/academic relationships that evolved enhanced our knowledge of each other and of the issues that hindered collaborative working. The understanding of collaboration in university WP work developed in this chapter will help me to situate and explore the principles of co-construction and action for social change in the subsequent empirical chapters five and six.

The principle of collaboration

In our research, we faced multiple challenges to a collaborative approach, many of which were created by the pre-existing structures and professional relationships through which the research took place (Frye and Fulton, 2020). Employing the reconnaissance period of the research to invest time in clearly discussing and questioning research goals, researcher roles and research ownership was a way to dismantle power relationships and begin the formation of a collaborative research team (Johnson and Parry, 2016). While this certainly laid the foundation for our shared endeavour, we needed to “continually attempt to balance such power differences” which arose throughout the research (Benjamin-Thomas, Corrado, McGrath, Rudman, and Hand, 2018, p.8). Researcher responses to the challenges we faced were frequently driven by or expressed through resistance and emotion, expressions of impotence, struggle, or frustration.

The purpose of our collaboration was to examine and explore the process of designing, delivering, and evaluating taster sessions for local school pupils to determine the principles of successful approaches to WP work. My co-researchers were invested in this area of work, being each regular contributors to events on and off campus and had willingly signed up to participate in the project. We shared an interest in fair access and, I believed, similar political worldviews. Despite these shared perspectives, there was conflict and confusion from the outset, and this arose from, in the first case, the structures in which we operated as professional or academic staff. The conflict and confusion illustrate the two main themes of power: hierarchy and voice, which proved to be a considerable challenge to collaboration (Chanock, 2007).

Hierarchy

Professional hierarchy

Collaboration in action research requires time invested to engage with each other, agree workload and establish group dynamics (Jaipal and Figg, 2011). As we were a newly formed research team, I was keenly aware of the need to provide time and space for us to explore and understand each other's perspectives and coalesce as a team. I knew that some time needed to be invested in establishing common ground, to avoid an early breakdown of communication due to the roles we inhabited, an experience in HE recounted by Pourshafie and Brady (2013). I was fortunate that my co-researchers entered the research project willingly and positively and in support of me and my doctoral project. Howard even referred to the three co-researchers as “team Tara” in our first session.

Despite this endorsement, I was aware that politically driven initiatives such as WP give rise to additional demands on academic staff, and I wanted to surface any resistance or resentment on the part of my co-researchers (Kehm, 2015; Baltaru, 2019). The reconnaissance phase in action

research aims to surface research concerns, questions and challenges, so that these can be explored and clarified to enable the researchers to gain “understandings of one another’s practice” (Clark et al, 1996, p.202) Therefore, in the first research session or reconnaissance, we undertook a range of activities focused on discussions of what constituted effective teaching and what we understood the purpose of widening participation to be using nominal group technique (NGT), a process whereby each participant has a turn to provide their answers to the question which are then collated and the group, in discussion, selects and de-selects the collated answers until a consensus is reached (Delbecq, Van de Ven and Gustafson, 1975). I deemed this an important way to gauge my co-researchers' views on WP work and its place within the university and as part of their roles. Taking part in the NGT exercise enabled us to see that we had broadly convergent views on a) the definition of WP and b) what constituted effective teaching and I reflected in my diary that there was:

“Unanimous consent re the importance of effective teaching statement (also on statement least agreed with) in sorting exercise”

(Diary, Post recon session, Ph1)

Despite reaching a consensus using NGT, my co-researchers brought to the sessions some degree of challenge with which to understand the purpose of the research, ask questions and establish what their roles would be. While they were clear about participating in the research, they questioned the unfamiliar research approach with which they were being presented:

“Is action research not simply articulating lesson planning?”

(Howard, Recon session, Phase 1)

There was confusion over my (probably) inadequate explanation of the idea of action research examining the process rather than being focused on the outcomes. McNiff and Whitehead refer to this as “what is happening here?” rather than “how can I improve my work?” (2003).

“So that’s closer to ‘how can I improve my work?’ but isn’t it tied up with ‘what exactly am I doing?’”

(Paul, Recon session, Phase 1).

I found this difficult:

“I was unprepared for the hierarchical positioning which occurred in this first session due to the use of the language, the academic references and the confidence with which challenges were made to the choice of descriptors I had employed to outline action research and the project’s focus”

(Diary, Post recon session, Ph1)

My fear that I was, to all intents and purposes, an impostor researcher, a professional member of staff who was significantly less qualified than my co-researchers, and therefore ill-equipped to lead a research project, was disabling in the face of academic challenge. As McInnis reports, academic staff are comfortable with stating their expertise in many areas of university work, while professional staff may struggle with doing so (1998). More than this, my inability to respond competently, constrained a shared exploration of the concerns and questions that Howard and Paul were raising:

“Any kind of work is a sort of existential decision to enter into a negotiation... you sign up to that negotiation ‘what is teaching?’ and the context impacts on that but just being a teacher feeds the daily question of ‘what is teaching?’ whatever context you’re in. And the outcome of that can be happy or unhappy”.

(Paul, Recon, Ph1).

“We are talking about political, personal and psychological there; difficult to stick with one” (Howard, Plan, Ph1).

Potts and Brown (2005) identify institutional factors as some of the most likely to prevent fulfilment of collaborative action research. My sense of inadequacy negatively influenced my ability to respond appropriately, for fear of not being able to lead or steer the research team. My co-researchers were raising pertinent points that related directly to the political context of HE, yet I did not enable the deep discussion my co-researchers might have liked and which we certainly needed at this point in the research to “appreciate and engage” our differences and “often conflicting cultures” in HE (Bergquist, 1992, p.230).

Political hierarchy

Despite having invested time during our reconnaissance to establish agreed definitions for *WP* and *what constitutes effective teaching* using NGT, during subsequent planning and review sessions, the political issue of university teaching and learning was frequently raised:

“Such is the dominant ideology.....you just see the values and attitudes of the students that we’ve got...the only thing that is of interest to me, is my progression, my career, maximising my learning opportunities...it becomes a box-ticking exercise”

(Howard, Recon 2, Ph1)

“I think what young people don’t do enough of is listen. They need to learn to listen”

(Paul, Review, Ph1)

Initially I was frustrated by the frequent return to these positions about teaching and learning. Although I was aware of the positioning of students as consumers and how this could impact

academic teacher-student interactions as reported by King and Bunce, I felt that this mindset was counter-productive (2020). Professionally and philosophically, my sympathies were with the university students and the school pupils, rather than with academic teaching staff. Through the re-visiting of this conversation, I became enlightened to the extent of the frustrations my co-researchers had towards a system rooted in managerialism and performativity, and how this affected their response to student behaviours:

“The whole language of performance pervades our working culture and is really negative.”

(Paul, Review, Ph1)

“If we link that to ‘performing’ as teaching and we have a ‘performance review’, it is deeply problematic.”

(Howard, Review, Ph1)

I had not previously been aware of this deep-rooted antithesis towards the performative culture (Wilson and Holligan, 2013). Having been a teacher subjected to Ofsted inspections and a charity manager regularly accountable for the funding awarded, I saw evaluation as a constituent part of my work. However, I was aware of the need to “analyse places of disjuncture within our research team” (Torre and Fine, 2008, p.19). The structural and political constraints surfaced by my co-researchers were adding an unexpected but useful dimension to our shared understanding of the barriers to WP work and one which opened the door to more informed collaborative working.

It also became clear that the frustration which Howard and Paul expressed through politically driven discussions was one way in which they challenged the HE hierarchy. I viewed students as partners as framed by Healey, Flint & Harrington and student success and wellbeing was core to

my professional ethos (2016). My co-researchers held views in opposition to mine and Paul explained why this was in his interview at the end of the second research phase:

“What quite a few students say is ‘I don’t think I should have to do the thinking; you do the thinking, we in some way reproduce that’. That’s one set of resistances.”

“One reaction to that would simply see learners as wanting to take a short cut, being lazy and maybe there is some of that.”

(Paul, Interview, Ph2)

There was not always consensus about student behaviour or our educational philosophies yet having the time to articulate our opinions in the first research phase provided us with space to listen and try to see each other’s perspective. This was an unusual set of circumstances for professional and academic staff whose working rhythms were often at odds with one another (Whitchurch, 2015). While time consuming and sometimes challenging, this investment was openly appreciated by my co-researchers:

“These subsequent discussions that we have about what we do, how we do it, why we do it is something that we don’t have any opportunity to do.”

(Howard, Recon, Ph1)

“These kinds of conversations they are a space where you can talk about...address important issues of teaching that are practical but also social and political.”

(Howard, Review, Ph1)

At all our sessions I deliberately set the tone of ‘non-work’ and created a more socially open atmosphere by providing cakes and drinks. Middleton states that student outcomes are positively affected by professional and academic staff working together (2006). Early agendas: mine more

practical (designing and delivering effective taster sessions) and theirs (structural and political issues) became convergent through having had these discussions which, following the taster sessions, led to a clearer understanding as to what it was, we were aiming for in WP work.

The opening of a communicative space in this way, despite the limitations of time, pre-research relationships and personal agendas, laid the foundations for our work together. For example, my co-researchers had been anxious and sceptical about observing each other's taster sessions with the school pupils, yet, in our evaluative session after the schools' events, reflected on the support, sustenance and camaraderie the presence of their co-researchers had provided:

“The great thing was having you all in the room because it made absolute sense.....actually it was the best thing to do”

(Sarah, Eval, Ph1)

“Thank goodness all these great people are in this classroom with all this (sic) interesting and helpful things to say”

(Howard, Eval, Ph1)

“I felt happier planning the sessions, lots of morale, teamwork”

(Sarah, Eval, Ph1)

“We could just talk through things and then feeling a lot happier, thinking about adaptation, really thinking about the “team” as well and I think I’ve really enjoyed this.....I’ve really liked it”

(Sarah, Eval, Ph1)

“This idea is that you have a community in your head so you are no longer locked in yourself. You are expressing opinion and preferences reflexively. It is about allowing people to think in a reflexive way”

(Paul, Eval, Ph1)

“We are all in the classroom together and I think you mentioned that word “camaraderie” so on the one hand we are thinking “oh no” because I suffer from imposter syndrome but actually the opposite is true”

(Howard, Eval, Ph1).

“There is no agenda to this. It doesn’t matter; we could fall flat on our face and actually learn a ton of things”

(Howard, Eval, Ph1)

These sessions were felt by my co-researchers to be so beneficial that I was asked on more than one occasion during phase 2, while my co-researchers were working with me on their individual teaching interventions, when the next group session was scheduled for:

“When are we getting the gang together?”

(Howard, Corridor conversation, Ph2)

Our disparate team had, over the course of phase 1, become a “gang” according to Howard. This demonstrated how far we had developed together despite the confines of our respective roles and the divergent views we sometimes had. More than this, the absence in phase 2 of the collaborative space we had used in phase 1 to posit our views, frustrations and questions was keenly felt by my co-researchers. Professional distrust or resentment of one another could easily have disrupted the research, but this was dissipated through our investment in each other

(Rhoades, 1992; Frye and Fulton, 2020). Our collective experience developed a sense of team, was set apart from structural hierarchies and validated our trust in each other as co-researchers and colleagues. We were colleagues working together on a shared and mutually developed agenda, rather than straddling insider/outsider or academic/professional barriers to collaboration (Herr and Anderson, 2014). It had perhaps been a mistake to develop their UG teaching interventions individually as continuing to work supportively as a team might have consolidated the collaboration we had achieved during phase 1.

Voice

Ownership

Linked to the concept of hierarchy, the issue of who owned the research was an invisible constraint which affected whether the research was enacted in the true spirit of collaboration. For action research to work as a collaborative approach, there needs to be mutuality, where no single person has control of the agenda, and cohesion, which is the value each research team member gains from the process (Bevins and Price, 2014). Despite my desire to adhere to collaborative principles and practice, the research was still that which I had initiated and led. This caused constraints I was aware of during the research, for example the limited role of the school pupils and those I became aware of during analysis, for example my use of language in my research notes and diary.

For instance, in my earliest communications, the language I use is indicative of who owns the research. In my introductory email to my co-researchers, I write:

“(This meeting is to) position my research project, answer any questions....and start to understand your views on and experience of teaching”

(Introductory email, Ph1)

The main aim is clearly articulated as primarily *my* research project. I articulate this in my diary early in phase 1, too, when reflecting on the complexities of our researcher relationships:

“It was my project, in which they would play a crucial role”

(Diary, Ph1).

There was an assumption on my part that, as my co-researchers had volunteered to take part, their interest was enough to mean that they were attuned to the agenda I had created and therefore happy to engage with it. Assumptions in action research and in research more generally are dangerous, leading to misunderstanding and misrepresentation of researcher perspectives (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007). Had I been working with co-researchers outside of the university, this assumption might well have alienated the research team members and damaged the research. This type of individual rather than collective voice permeates my references to my co-researchers in phase 1.

“The aim of the review session is to:

1. Create an environment in which effective teaching approaches could be discussed
2. Provide the opportunity to refine and fine-tune sessions
3. Reflect on challenges and barriers to changing or amending their practice.”

(Research notes after taster session 2 delivery, Ph1)

The third aim of the session points to changing or amending my co-researchers' practice but makes no mention of exploring or reflecting on mine. The research is positioned as something in which they are invited to participate, but also in which they will be judged. Approaching the language of the research in this way ran the risk of alienating my co-researchers and accentuating the professional binary divide this research was trying to dissolve (Bartunek and Rynes, 2014).

Although these seem like minor misjudgements, they attest to the ways in which I was constrained to collaborate in the truest sense.

In addition, the language I use throughout my research diary and in the research notes is revealing and at odds with my beliefs about the nature of action research and a collaborative approach. I used the terms “academics” and even “participants” in my diary and research notes during the initial stages of the research although I did not refer to my co-researchers using any other term but “co-researchers” when speaking to them. The use of the word “academics” in my research notes and diary demonstrates my feelings of inadequacy and the separation I felt from my co-researchers (outsider with insiders) and the use of the word “participants” was, perhaps, my way of retaining some control when feeling out of my depth as a researcher. Playing different roles to implement change is a feature of action research (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007).

Inhabiting the role of a researcher as well as a professional colleague complicated my ability to be reflexive about language use at the time of writing my diary. It was only in phase 2 that I started to refer to my co-researchers in the privacy of my research diary as “colleagues” and this aligns with the point at which we were working as equal partners on issues identified by all of us.

Agency

Being aware of pre-existing relationships is key to building collaborative research relationships, leaving previous roles aside (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007). However, the way in which the research team had interacted historically carried considerable weight. I had planned for us all to be observers in each co-researcher's taster session and to share our notes and observations as part of the review. My co-researchers were cautious and sensitive about opening themselves up to having their teaching assessed by colleagues in their professional circle, particularly when out of their natural teaching context with an unknown quantity of learner. Peer observation was viewed

with suspicion, as another “blunt form of performance management” (Fleming and Wingrove, 2017, p.5). While not an uncommon issue for action research, my co-researchers' professional relationships had the potential to threaten their ability to be open and honest with each other when providing their feedback (Goulet, Krentz and Christiansen, 2003). Co-researcher voice used as a form of critical evaluation was clearly articulated as a challenge for Howard:

“Let’s face it, you’re on the line here, it was a bunch of grown-ups checking you out”

(Howard, Interview, Ph2).

Sarah shared with us her personal response to the news that we would co-observe each other in the Evaluation session of the first research phase and used the highly emotive word “surveillance” to describe this.

“(Image of terrified stickperson) Year 9 = terror /PGCE flashbacks – lack of creativity – pitching problems – fear of ‘surveillance’”

(Sarah, Evaluation diagram, Ph1).

“S talked of her abject fear at the idea of us being in a room while she taught”

(Research notes, Eval meeting, Ph1)

Sarah had found the time and opportunity during the research to reflect on her teaching practice of great benefit but identified the paucity of time available to be able to embed this type of discursive approach across all her teaching:

“What we lack in the university context of term-time, however, is the time and space to do this properly with our other modules, and to reflect and get feedback as a result.”

(Sarah, Self-reflection, Ph2)

My co-researchers shared their frustration that little space was made for their voices as academic staff. Paul interpreted the lack of opportunity to discuss and explore the emergent issues about teaching in his regular working week as a clear indication that the university simply did not prioritise teaching:

“The university has no interest in what teaching is and in reflecting on teaching. It literally has no interest.”

(Paul, Interview, Ph2)

Paul and Sarah’s comments express their feelings of frustration and impotence at not feeling able to develop their pedagogical approaches in ways which were removed and separated from the institution’s performative and auditing measures (Shore, 2010). This constrained their belief that, beyond this research, they would be able to continue to benefit from this type of collaborative community of practice to develop their teaching. In their research-intensive roles, there was a tension in balancing time and investment in teaching scholarship alongside their disciplinary research (Brew, 2003). While the time and space we afforded to the planning and reflection in both phases was enabling, it highlighted how restricted my co-researchers regularly felt and the lack of control they believed they had to influence any change. Peer observation as a collaborative process was a new experience, and one which challenged my co-researchers' prior experiences of performative teaching observation. Surfacing these issues through our action research process was useful as it enabled my co-researchers to feel they were heard, something that they believed was not the case in their institution. It also enabled me to start to understand that academic staff felt equally constrained in their roles as did professional staff, albeit by different forms of pressure.

Feedback

Endeavouring to achieve parity of status for all research participants has been reported as problematic with teachers or group leaders unused to “sharing power” and tensions arising because of this (Brydon-Miller and Maguire, 2009, p.86). Alongside the feedback from each other, it was important to me as part of the democratic process espoused by action research to try to harness all knowledge in the research process. Therefore, I was committed to collecting pupil feedback on each taster session. However, my co-researchers were less comfortable about collaborating with the pupils in the research through the process of feedback comments. When I introduced the idea, I noted:

“There was palpable anxiety.... about engaging with the feedback from the pupils.”

(Research notes, Plan, Ph1)

From the perspective of action research, all knowledge is positioned as equally important. Knowledge is democratized when we understand that there are multiple ways of knowing (Hall and Tandon, 2017). In our HE context, however, my professional knowledge and the pupils’ experiential knowledge were less commonly privileged. In the action research literature, providing students with the opportunity to have both a voice and a platform for that voice is heralded as productive for all concerned, hailing the students as “knowledge producers who solve problems within their own educational contexts” (Shosh, 2019, p.15).

It made absolute sense to me to assemble all available knowledge to inform our taster session development, but this was a larger leap of faith for my co-researchers. Our disparate professional backgrounds made this a particularly contested area of the research: one in which I championed pupil voice and my co-researchers were uncomfortable about the prospect of allowing the pupils to give feedback on their sessions. This discomfort constrained Paul’s mindset when considering how to improve his taster sessions following the pupil feedback after taster 1.

“A lot less talking/less speaking more groupwork/there was a lot of talking that could have been cut down/more group work/there is too much talking and there should have been more stuff to do”

(Sample pupil feedback, taster day 1, Ph1)

Paul’s reaction was to question this feedback:

“I want to question the value of talking between them.”

“There is far too much group work and it is not always a good thing.”

(Paul, Review, Ph1).

Paul’s responses highlight the chasm between my beliefs and those of my co-researchers about the value of student voice of feedback as a valid tool for teaching development. Concerns such as Paul’s are articulated by scholars who highlight how questionnaires evaluating “good teaching” are completed by students in isolation with no reflection or discussion with their teachers as to what “good teaching” comprises (Johnson, 2000; Spooren, Brockx and Mortelmans, 2013). I had viewed the pupil feedback as integral to the process and a crucial element in a truly collaborative approach to reviewing the taster sessions but had not been alert to the tension that introducing yet more evaluation would create in my co-researchers. My emphasis on pupils as co-contributors to the research exacerbated the discomfort my co-researchers felt about student evaluation and re-positioned the pupils not just as learners but as experts of their learning (Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, Millard and Moore-Cherry, 2016).

Paul was resistant to changing his teaching approach in response to the pupil feedback as he felt this was another way in which he was losing authority, voice, and power in his academic domain which he already felt to be under considerable threat. The affording of voice, or power to school

pupils or students, was an issue to which my co-researchers had strong reactions. Their experiences were from a position of feeling their voice went unheard and this had a deleterious effect on the way in which they received any student feedback. Student feedback, for my co-researchers, sat within the parameters of neo-liberal enforced academic performativity (Buckley, 2016). By taking a positive and uncritical perspective on the inclusion of student feedback, I was unaware of the difficulties my co-researchers had with this stance. It was useful, informative, and necessary that my position was challenged, and my co-researchers shared their aversion to student feedback.

The process in phase 1 offered the pupils the opportunity to write down any questions they had for my co-researchers during the lunch break. I collected these up, briefly sorted and scanned them, and then posed the questions to the relevant co-researcher in front of the pupils before the event closed. My doctoral supervisor had suggested these questions might be a powerful way to assess pupil understanding of the taster sessions. In fact, they went further than this and demonstrated a genuine curiosity in the three academic co-researchers' lives, disciplines, and educational histories.

“The pupils asked questions ranging from ‘What are your views on politics e.g. Trump, May etc?’ to ‘Why did you pick your subject to do a degree in?’”

(Diary, taster session1, Ph1)

Despite the avowed discomfort of my co-researchers of having to assimilate the pupils' experiences of their taster sessions into session review and re-design, their resistance was overcome when they saw how insightful the pupil comments and questions were. Howard described the pupil questions as a “major factor in seeing pupils' perspective.” The utility of pupil feedback was also highlighted during Paul's first taster session when he had set an activity with

minimal parameters and explanation, so the pupils were unclear as to what exactly they were expected to do:

“A pupil in the session bravely stating, ‘I have no idea what you (Paul) want us to do.’”

(Obsv Notes, taster session1, Ph1)

The question from the pupil forced Paul to a) clarify the activity immediately during the taster session and, b) when reviewing his session later that evening, understand the need for a framework in which to position the activity to make it clearer for the pupils for the second taster session. Sarah was surprised by the questions that arose from her first taster session experience, and seeing the value of questions as a tool with which to communicate with the learners:

“I thought about the questions the Y9 pupils brought up and actually they were quite good and made me realise how much I had under-estimated them”

“I’m going to collect their responses, ask the questions at the beginning and at the end; a good way to check understanding.”

(Sarah, Review, Ph 1).

For Sarah, the pupils’ questions re-positioned her understanding of their ability and potential, which then helped her to adapt her taster session for the second group. For Paul, who had been sceptical of the utility of the pupil feedback, the time between the taster sessions and our Phase 1 evaluative session gave him the space to reflect on the pupil feedback and make sense of it in the context of our shared experience and he was brave enough to articulate it through his reflective diagram:

“It (taster session) was too loose, it wasn’t structured enough, a series of issues with the delivery so that’s the wavy line. That indicates there was a lot of noise coming from me.”

(Paul, Eval, Ph1)

Paul's acceptance of the principle of giving students a voice with which to ask questions as a form of student-teacher communication, then formed the springboard for his Phase 2 intervention:

"I wonder if it might be a good idea for me to say in some lectures to students 'if you have any questions about the lecture or the module, could you really think about it throughout the lecture and just write them down for me; nothing silly'. And then respond to them the next week"

(Paul, Eval, Ph1).

This was a significant shift from Paul's earlier position regarding his relationships with students which he believed needed to be necessarily combative:

"My colleagues avoid challenging the non-participation of students in lectures but I think it should be challenged head-on."

(Paul, Plan, Ph2)

The role of the pupils in our research certainly made for a less democratic process than collaborating with them throughout. However, the use of the pupil feedback from taster one to shape taster two, and to inform phase 2, meant that the voice of the learner continued to resonate throughout the research process, despite being present in the research for a limited time. As an advocate of student voice, I believed the school pupils ought to have the opportunity to shape their educational experiences (Cook-Sather, 2006). Pupil voice was a vital constituent of our collaboration and one which came closest to the pure action research I envisaged, enabling pupil views to be heard first-hand. However, I had not allowed for how confronting this would be for

my co-researchers and, although they accepted pupil input would be part of the process, the discomfort and anxiety for the research team might have been avoided if I had invested more time in discussing how and why voice was crucial to action research. This mismatch of expectations and understanding was an ongoing issue and one that is characteristic of professional/academic relationships in HE (Collinson, 2006).

Summary

In this section, I have explained how, while at first professional and political hierarchies constrained our capacity to collaborate, challenging these hierarchies through our shared actions and reflections enabled us to take a collaborative approach to the research issue, develop and share our expertise and start to consider plans for my co-researchers' approaches to their UG teaching. Inverting the institutional hierarchy by positioning me as the lead researcher, although initially feeding my sense of inferior self, deliberately changed the dynamics of our interactions, and democratic group exercises served to give equal weight to each co-researcher's contribution.

Re-visiting my research diary provided the chance to reflect on the language I used to retain a sense of control or power over the research. The language with which I initially documented the research was a constraint to our collaboration, when my lack of conviction and my uncertainty about the direction of the research evoked non-collaborative descriptors of my co-researchers, despite my core belief in the power of a collaborative and democratic approach in action research.

Lack of academic voice and autonomy made the experience of co-researcher peer observation one which was agreed to with fear and trepidation. This was due to co-researchers' prior experiences of performative evaluations of their teaching and a lack of institutional forums in which they could informally explore and develop communities of teaching practice.

Notwithstanding the anxiety and struggle that the pursuit of collaboration had evoked, my co-researchers were able to identify the benefits they had gained from sharing their taster session experiences.

Equally powerful was ensuring we devoted the time and space during the research to voice our own thoughts about teaching in HE. The issue of voice was initially a barrier for my co-

researchers both in terms of their feeling unheard in their academic roles and in accepting the powerful voices of the school pupils. I have shown how initial co-researcher antipathy to learner voice and anxiety about peer observation, changed to perceiving collaborative approaches to constructing effective learning opportunities as useful and informative.

Conclusion

While collaboration is held as a core principle of action research and positioned as necessary to facilitate co-construction of knowledge and action for social change, the ambition of equitable and fully democratic collaboration is challenging in practice. Despite the purest of researcher intentions, issues of power, both visible and invisible, can remain ever-present throughout the research process. I learned that it is difficult to achieve truly egalitarian approaches due to the pre-existing structures in which the research takes place, whether these be organisationally, societally, or financially shaped (Benjamin-Thomas et al, 2018). Institutional pressures such as funding timelines or the complex relationships of insider and outsider researchers play a significant role in the success of researcher collaboration.

Despite the commitment to democratic research processes in action research, ensuring equity in researcher power relations is perceived to be a significant challenge with the distinct possibility that an action researcher may inadvertently impose rather than alleviate power relations (Cooke and Kothari 2001). To combat issues of power, it was important to build time into the process early on to surface concerns and agree research parameters and conduct the research with attention to the perspectives of others (Wadsworth, 2006). As a research team, over time and at odds with the confines of our respective roles and responsibilities, we worked to develop a “climate of caring, respect and commitment” to ourselves and to each other (Goulet et al, 2003,

p.335). Developing such a climate is vital to collaboration because it allowed us as a research team to move towards and through change and to experience transformation.

In this chapter I have shown how the principle of collaboration was both a challenge and an opportunity for our research. I have clarified and explained the themes that arose from the research: professional and political hierarchies, and issues of voice including ownership, agency, and feedback. Each of these issues enabled and constrained our research activity, our researcher relationships, and our ability to construct a fully collaborative space in which to enact the research. Exploring the constraints we faced enabled us to position the issues relating to WP as central and relevant both to my work and to the academics' teaching, thus transcending the structural limitations imposed by our institution (Whitchurch, 2015). The institutional professional/academic boundaries also constrained the mindsets with which we each engaged in the research but which, through collaboration, proved open enough to start to effect personal change. In the next chapter I clarify and explain the principle of co-construction of knowledge, I explore the types of knowledge we gained, and the processes through which knowledge was accrued, and I provide examples of how we were enabled to collaborate on a second, un-planned phase of research, following the enlightening experience of the first.

Chapter Five – Co-construction of knowledge

Introduction

In the previous chapter I have shown how a collaborative approach positively challenged the structural hierarchies and boundaries within a university, working counter to the traditional ways in which academic and professional staff are positioned in relation to each other (Clegg and McAuley, 2005). Focusing on issues of hierarchy and voice, I articulated the struggles we encountered as individuals in finding common and equitable ground from which to analyse and understand the collaborative WP taster day process, struggles which highlight the challenges of sharing cross-professional-boundary conversations about university work (Chanock, 2007). This chapter will describe and analyse the evolution of the second action research principle of co-construction of knowledge in the research, examining each co-researcher and the knowledge we brought to and gained from the research process, as four individual cases.

First, I re-introduce the principle of co-construction, explaining how this can lead to unexpected as well as anticipated knowledge arising from the research process, which for us was pedagogical knowledge relating to teaching school pupils and UG students. Co-construction can take a range of forms; in this chapter I will show how co-construction occurred whenever our words or actions deepened understanding of our WP work for access and for participation.

Second, I re-visit the inclusive pedagogies literature to draw on the concepts of recognition, belonging and success (Burke, Crozier and Misiaszek, 2017) and explain how our deep engagement with the everyday process of designing and delivering taster sessions permitted us to identify enablements and constraints to designing and delivering effective and inclusive taster sessions. Third, employing the six principles of practice which arose from my data analysis and drawing on the inclusive pedagogies literature, I explore the ways in which knowledge was

constructed in each individual co-researcher case; knowledge about the process of developing taster sessions, the pedagogical knowledge which was revealed through our research to be necessary to deliver these sessions, the knowledge and understanding I gained about the challenges faced by my co-researchers in their academic roles, and knowledge about action research.

In conclusion, I reflect on the learning about co-construction of knowledge as an action research principle and how we were able to create and share a powerful pedagogical knowledge with which to discuss, plan and deliver teaching. I argue that, although co-construction was challenging to enact and was often derailed by personal, professional or institutional barriers, through the process of engaging with the action research, each of us evolved in knowledge and understanding which influenced our personal, pedagogical and professional convictions and, in some cases, changed our practices, positing that WP work benefits from joint academic and professional input to develop pedagogy for student participation as well as access (Hayton et al, 2015). Building on the knowledge we each gained through the experience of designing teaching for access and for participation, the final empirical chapter then reflects on how far the research enabled each of us to change the way in which we approached our university work.

Co-construction of knowledge

Co-construction of knowledge is a process in which all contributors' knowledges are welcomed and treated equally, and through which new knowledge, forged through the fusion and interaction with the knowledge of others, is created. It is a particular challenge within action research to specify exactly how this knowledge is produced and how much change it can effect. Bremer and Meisch describe the co-construction process as one in which a range of "traditions and practices converge, overlap, affect each other, come into conflict, or cooperate" (2017, p.2).

Co-construction therefore involves engaging with and responding to the knowledge of others, aided by shared or personal reflection and/or group or peer discussion. Out of this knowledge-sharing process, it is hoped and strongly anticipated that change in the form of enhanced understanding, or adapted and improved practices, or even social and political transformation will occur (Jagannathan et al, 2020).

As lead researcher, I did not know, nor did I wish to pre-determine how we would co-construct knowledge as I believed this would have conflicted with the collaborative principle of action research. In addition, as I have described in the preceding chapter, I often bypassed the opportunities to delve into the heavily felt concerns of my co-researchers due to my lack of confidence in being able to navigate the discussion. As a result, conversations in which we, as a group, interrogated pedagogical theory were scarce and therefore co-construction was less about knowledge emerging from targeted conversations, than slowly evolving individual knowledge and reflections based on our shared experiences in the research. In the first phase of our research (taster sessions), co-construction occurred in three separate ways: 1) individually, through observing each other and reflecting on our observations 2) individually, through receiving and acting on the pupil feedback and questions and 3) collaboratively, through the shared experiences, and conversations about these experiences, of coming to understand what constituted effective taster sessions. In the second phase of the research (UG teaching), co-construction arose from individual co-researcher conversations to plan their UG teaching intervention, and the outcomes thereof.

Due to the exploratory and multi-perspective process of co-construction, knowledge that arises through the action research process is often unforeseen and can re-orientate the research to focus on an unexpected area of the enquiry. Smith et al (2010) describe this as “surprising moments of connection” in the research (p 415). While I began our research to tackle the issue of academic

disinterest or non-engagement in WP work, through the process of designing and delivering taster sessions, I came to realise that the barriers for my co-researchers were pedagogical and influenced by institutional and sector demands and deficits and that I, too, faced barriers to genuinely collaborative approaches, in the form of my negative preconceptions about academic staff interest in social justice-based university work (Blackwell and Preece, 2001).

Socially just pedagogies and principles of practice

Burke et al (2017) describe their socially just pedagogy as relational interactions between teacher and student which can enable or impede deep connections leading to participation in learning and the wider university opportunities. As outlined above, it became evident that pedagogy had a vital role to play in WP work, both in the construction of taster sessions (access) and the planning of UG teaching (participation). We developed an understanding of effective classroom practice for teaching inclusively and explored how to implement this collectively (for the taster events) and individually (in UG teaching). We learned about the need for inclusive pedagogy through reflecting on teaching school pupils and university students, and how each of us had a role and a knowledge contribution to make to this process. Realising the importance of both professional and academic knowledge for developing pedagogies for access and for participation, provided an alternative perspective to the concerns raised in the literature about academic/WP professional staff collaboration (Burke, 2013).

The experiences of delivering taster sessions gave rise to several pedagogical challenges such as the management of pupil behaviour, taking a didactic teaching vs collaborative learning approach, and engaging in interpersonal dialogue with the pupils, and these challenges shaped and informed our understanding of what worked in the classroom and why. Drawing on socially just pedagogy to represent and recognise diverse groups of learners, I evolved six principles of

practice through the process of engaging with the writing of Burke et al (2017) and analysing the research data:

1. Understanding how students experience their learning environment
2. Empathy and sensitivity in teaching
3. Encouraging participation
4. Student perspective as starting point
5. Questions to generate learning discussions
6. Structuring learning opportunities

The substance for these principles arose from experiencing, observing, and engaging with the challenges faced in designing, delivering and refining teaching for school pupils and for undergraduates. They draw on the questions that were raised by my co-researchers and the answers we found in teaching practice, observations and feedback, and our reflections. Each of these principles relates to the ethos of inclusion, belonging and success which is at the heart of WP work, and which informs the socially just pedagogies espoused by Burke et al (2017). They also build on and give pedagogical substance to the definitions we constructed as a research team at the very beginning of the research, agreeing through the NGT process in our reconnaissance session that effective teaching meant “encouraging students to be active learners” and that WP work was important because 1) “it is central to the conception of a just society”, 2) “education is an unalienable right” and 3) “access to knowledge is about self-esteem and empowerment”.

In the next section I present the analysis of this second action research principle – co-construction of knowledge – as four individual case studies. A case-study approach enables a deep understanding of a phenomenon or an individual when the enquiry is as focused on the process as the outcome. Case study in educational research “focuses on holistic description and

explanation” (Merriam, 1998, p29). Each of the individual co-researcher narratives related to the description and explanation of pedagogical principles of practice. I had initially organised and presented the data relating to co-construction of knowledge as a thematic account, however this approach lost the individual research ‘stories’ of finding principles to inform their teaching. Presenting personal research narratives as case studies enabled me to describe and analyse individual engagement and struggles with ideas about pedagogy and knowledge, which allowed me to explore a wide range of constraints and enablements to co-construction of pedagogic knowledge from different perspectives.

Writing the chapter without consulting my co-researchers was at odds with my ambition for fully collaborative research because their perspectives on my final interpretation and record of the research are missing. As I have described in the previous chapter, despite my commitment to co-construction, my anxiety about my expertise and my inferior sense of self prevented me from asking my co-researchers to participate in the data analysis or to invite them to read drafts of my thesis as I worked on it. The decision not to include my co-researchers in the interpretation and the writing up of research data meant that, however reflective I was, I could not compensate for their lack of input and involvement. So, I must acknowledge that developing individual researcher stories without any input from those researchers is a serious limitation of this research and does not align with the values I had espoused to undertake in action research (Stake, 1995). To counter this limitation, I used the six principles, together with the pertinent literature, to show how knowledges about pedagogy in HE, about our respective roles in developing this pedagogy, about each other as colleagues, about action research, and about the challenges we each faced, were co-constructed in multiple ways through the action research process.

Howard

Background and teaching experience

Howard was a teaching-focused assistant professor at Midtown university, who taught Film studies. A teaching-focused role meant that he was not employed to undertake research for the university, so was not allocated time away from teaching to do so. Regardless of this, Howard undertook academic research, with a specialist research focus on Film Noir, and an interest in the role of music and dance in film. Howard had been working at the university in a permanent role for 11 years, preceded by several years of temporary contracts, and was committed to WP work and a frequent contributor to university WP events for school pupils. He defined the importance of WP work as:

“The promotion of social equality in education is fundamentally important – an inalienable right. It is central to the conception of a just society”

(H, Recon session, Phase1).

Howard saw WP work as connected to his pedagogical and political interests, which positioned him as a co-researcher who brought both teaching knowledge, and a vested interest to the research:

“It (the research) fits in with the kind of set of pedagogical interests I have and more widely some of the political interests I have, the politics of the curriculum and all the rest of that” (H, Final Interview).

Being in possession of a teaching qualification (Cert Ed), and having previously taught in FE for seven years and, before that, trained in TEFL, Howard could draw on non-university teaching contexts and prior experiences of co-learning in his role as co-researcher:

“I thought the whole process in TEFL was just fantastic that there’s no messing about here, your teaching from start to finish is scrutinised by a whole group of people and then you are debriefed on that and classroom tutor, your course tutor, your peers, you know,

right from your lesson, all the way through, rigorously, and I just learned a ton of stuff from that” (H, Final Interview).

Experience of co-construction

Howard had a particular interest in the experience of co-learning with peers, as highlighted above, and in co-construction with university students. He explicitly provided opportunities for students to construct the curriculum in a second year UG module:

“I get them to write the curriculum for the whole semester it’s a mixed bag cos you are giving them quite a lot of control and I have to do a lot of running around and that’s leading to the idea of independent learning” (H, Evaluation session, Phase1)

Keen to find ways to encourage student participation, Howard understood teaching to be an activity reliant on relationships and communication, aiming for “rich and textured connections”, (Burke et al, 2017, p.40):

“The kinds of things that I try and do right from the beginning, is to try and find ways of engaging students even when you’ve got something quite specific and theoretically difficult and conceptually they may not....you’re trying to find a way in which the students can engage with it in such a way that they are playing an active part in the way that they deal with that and the way that they learn” (H, Final Interview).

Howard was already engaged in problematizing and finding solutions to the issues he faced in the university classroom. He was keen to participate in this research as he had had positive experiences of learning from his peers when training as a teacher. A functioning action research team can be seen as a community of practice, who share a felt concern, and the desire to effect change for this concern (Coco, Varnier and Deftereos, 2007). Howard’s prior experience of and

interest in co-constructing knowledge with peers and students meant that he was keen and interested in engaging in a shared process of learning about teaching school pupils.

Knowledge about the student perspective as the starting point for learning (principle 4) and using questions to generate discussion (principle 5).

During the first research phase (taster sessions), Howard was interested to learn about the perspective of the pupils he was teaching (principle 4) and about how they communicated what they needed from him as a teacher using questions (principle 5). Based on his prior experiences and his educational ethos, Howard was comfortable with the idea of co-constructing knowledge with others and not averse to engaging with the school pupils to try to learn more about what they perceived to be the main ingredients of a successful taster session.

At the first taster session, Howard introduced a short YouTube [film](#) entitled “Where the hell is Matt?” which he asked the pupils to analyse using an analytical model called D.I.E, (describe (D), interpret (I) and explain (E)). He showed the film, explained the model, provided an example of applying the model and then asked the pupils to work in pairs. He also invited their questions and was surprised (and pleased) by the questions they asked:

“Why did you pick your subject to take a degree in?/What job did you imagine doing when you were in school?/Have you ever made a film?”

(Sample pupil questions, taster session 1, Ph1).

The questions the pupils asked showed the ways in which they wanted to know about Howard’s interest in film and his own educational trajectory:

“One of the interesting things was at least some of those questions were about, well so what’s your position on it? So that made me think about going back to their perspective. Why would they be interested in your perspective? Why would that have a bearing?”

(H, Evaluation session, Phase 1)

Building effective teacher-student relationships is key to encouraging learner participation and enabling student success (Bryson, 2016). The questions from the pupils had informed Howard’s understanding that the pupils needed to connect with him before they could connect to the material he had prepared. Howard responded to these questions during the lunch break, providing the details of his chequered educational history and explaining how his love of film had been nurtured. He realised, following feedback from the first group of pupils, that he was making judgements about the session content based on his own (teacher) perspective:

“Good stuff being enough (i.e., not thinking about the student perspective/experience)”

(H, Diagram, Evaluation session, Phase 1).

“There is also a sense in which, back to the idea of performance, that if you’ve got good stuff and we stick it out there, then it will pretty much be OK. So there’s a sense about that being enough and I suppose not thinking too much about student perspective or the student experience.”

(H, Evaluation session, Ph1).

The questions from the first taster group of pupils then enabled Howard to review his session plan and re-shape the content for the second taster group to include his own, less than positive experience of pre-16 education and his interest in film. Bovill (2019), writing about students as partners in learning, explains how teachers build communities of learners rooted in trust when

they choose to share information in this way. The school pupils at the second taster event proved to be more challenging than the first and greeted much of the content they were given with silence. According to Hockings, Cooke, Yamashita, McGinty and Bowl (2008), students can use silence to mask their fear rather than as deliberate non-compliance, and his heightened awareness of the idea of the student perspective enabled Howard to engage this second, less amenable group:

“In the second session I used myself a lot more and particularly for that group to challenge the preconceptions of that group.”

(H, Evaluation session, Phase1).

He reflected on this later in the research:

“So the idea that I was a catastrophic failure at school made me wonder if they could identify with me. So what came out of it for me was to reflect a little bit more on what I take for granted about my role as a teacher. Also what I take for granted about their perceptions of what I do.”

(H, Final Evaluation session, Phase 2).

Howard was intrigued by how powerfully including his personal story resonated with the school pupils when he “othered” himself by sharing his educational history “...if I position myself as the ‘Other,’ students perceive themselves as others or that *we all are* the ‘Other,’” (Koro-Ljungberg, 2007, p.739, my italics). Howard’s honest response to the pupils’ desire for information about who he was in relation to his subject and to his role made him accessible and therefore the pupils at the second taster were more inclined to listen and engage in their learning.

The learner perspective in the form of pupil questions illuminated a) Howard's assumptions about the school pupils' interest, ability or motivations for learning and b) his expectation of what was needed to prepare for engaging taster sessions. This experience linked to Howard's belief in questions as fundamental to co-construction of learning at university:

"I expect everyone to have questions because it is in the nature of what we do at university you have just seen a film where people have brought up all sorts of things about it.....very difficult to imagine you could not have a question therefore I expect everyone to have questions. I won't help them out. When there is that silence I will sit there. I just want them to get into the groove of "oh I have a responsibility here, I need to ask a question" so you end up with a dialogue."

(H, Final Evaluation session, Phase 2).

Howard's frustration with student silence related to his expectation of students taking ownership of their learning, particularly when he regularly constructed learning opportunities to enable this. He perceived silence to be a student deficit rather than a way of communicating student need (Smit, 2012). As highlighted by Fanghanel (2007) in her research on the divergence between university student and teacher expectations, Howard was frustrated that his students simply wanted to know how to get a "good" degree while his ambition for their teaching and learning experience encompassed so much more:

"And they're thinking 'right, I'm the empty vessel, fill me up and then I get a 2:1'"

(H, Evaluation session, Phase1).

Howard expressed his frustration with student culture in the context of a marketised HE system in which "knowledge comes in packages and we are the retailers" (Love, 2008, p.6). His vexation with his UG students linked to his experience over many years in HE that teaching had

become the management of student learning and this caused the resultant apathy he encountered among his UG students (Giroux, 2020). Seeing how a dialogue with the school pupils had shared their perspective about what they needed from Howard to engage with their learning empowered him to want to re-create this type of interaction in his UG classroom.

In phase 2, Howard therefore wanted to stimulate a dialogue with the aim of de-mystifying the notion of “research” and encouraging his UG students to take responsibility for their learning. Howard wanted to ensure he was giving:

“Adequate consideration to student-centred learning”

(H, planning conversation, Ph2).

Having seen the utility of questions as tools of engagement in phase 1, we spent time together discussing which questions for his Y1 students would help to co-construct a classroom dialogue and enable him to understand the student perspective. Sharing these conversations was a further insight into my co-researchers' approaches to pedagogy for their UG teaching. Negotiating the questions so that they a) offered the widest opportunities for student input and b) met the ambition of Howard was an activity which would not have occurred should we not have shared the first research phase (Thomas, 2002).

We agreed I would come to two of his workshops to help to collate the student responses to the following:

“1) What is a student? 2) What is a tutor? 3) When did you learn best and why?”

(Questions for Ph2).

The first two questions were asked at the beginning of two of Howard's workshops, (with the third to be answered via email). Howard asked the students to shout out their answers and I noted them on a flipchart. After each session I then created a wordle comprising all the responses.

“Someone/chooses/university/independently/think/learning (student)

Learning/students/expert/small field/assist/accepted (tutor)”

(H, Wordle summaries, Phase 2).

Jagannathan et al (2020) suggest that co-construction that operates without recourse to the wider political context in which it is situated can limit the possibilities for transformative action. I was keen to work in partnership with Howard to build on the knowledge he took away from his interactions with the school pupils, however the time he had to give to planning the questions and then making time in his workshops to ask them was severely limited and allowed little space for further peer co-construction. This highlights the conflicting priorities of academic and professional staff and how these conflicts can discourage collaboration in university WP work (Shaw et al, 2007).

While Howard had been positive about and fully committed to co-construction of knowledge in the first research phase, he mourned the separation from his co-researchers for his UG research activity. Howard recognised how he had learned from his peers through observing their taster sessions and seeing where change, in response to peer and pupil feedback had occurred:

“I liked seeing what people did but also seeing and thinking ‘oh, well maybe I wouldn’t have done it like that’ or ‘I’m not sure you’re reading that right’ and then you did it again and so being part of the dynamic by which changes are effected is really, really good”

(H, Final Interview, Phase 2).

Howard had been keen to participate in the collective action research and, through doing so, expanded his knowledge about engaging the student perspective and using students' questions to inform his practice. When the shared experience of taster sessions outside termtime moved into the individual experience of UG workshops in termtime, Howard struggled to contend with the structural barriers and the need to meet university targets. Inserting exploratory pedagogy into Howard's limited time within a demanding curriculum inevitably meant that he felt compelled to prioritise his teaching and his research over other activity (Seyd, 2000). If co-construction can be seen, however, as the *beginning* of a process of change, through raised awareness, for example, then Howard's feedback is optimistic:

“One of the most useful insights here – especially for those of us who consider ourselves experienced teachers and already quite good at what we do – is to question some of those practices which we have grown familiar with and take for granted”

(H, Written reflection, post-Research).

Summary

Howard engaged fully with the process in the first research phase (taster sessions) but struggled to commit fully in the second (UG teaching). The knowledge he gained was related to opportunities to listen to and understand the learner perspective, and, despite his wide experience of teaching in varied contexts, he was still surprised at how the school pupils were more willing to engage with the work he had set once he had related to them on an individual level. Building relationships through questions and feedback in this way, even in a half day taster event, proved to be a successful strategy, and one that was then embedded into his taster session planning for the second, less amenable group of school pupils.

Co-construction occurred when Howard was listening to the questions the school pupils asked, when these steered his review and adaptation of his session materials, particularly the addition of a self-introduction. It occurred when Howard was observing his peers and reflecting on what he saw, influencing or affirming his own classroom practice. Even though the documented co-construction was based on individual reflections, and interactions with the pupil and peer feedback, Howard found the camaraderie of the researcher team a more stimulating environment in which to evaluate and refine the knowledge he was developing through participating in the research. Howard's ambition in phase 2 to open a dialogue with his UG students about ownership of learning was less successful and fell victim to his lack of time during termtime. This emphasizes the burden of WP work when it is balanced on top of teaching, research, and academic departmental roles (Kehm, 2015).

Paul

Background and teaching experience

Paul was an associate professor at Midtown university where, at the time of the research, he had worked for 10 years. Prior to his role at Midtown, he had held academic posts at two other universities, the first of which he gained immediately after completing his PhD. Paul was employed as a research and teaching academic in French Studies and his research interests included the culture and politics of France. Although he did not have a formal teaching qualification, Paul had engaged in WP and admissions work for many years at Midtown and felt that this was worthwhile university work, depicting WP work as:

“Encouraging pupils from all backgrounds to engage with HE. Showing pupils that there is ‘nothing to be scared of’ in HE. Making contact and building bridges between HE and all schools”

(P, Recon session, Phase 1).

Experience of co-construction

Unlike Howard, Paul’s classroom experiences had not encouraged him to develop co-learning approaches with his UG students. However, in common with Howard, he was frustrated by his experience of students positioned as consumers which forced him as a university teacher to respond, “rapidly to fluctuations in customer demand” (Love, 2008, p.20):

“You tell them what they need to know. They re-tell it. They get a good mark”

(P, Planning session, Phase 2)

This political positioning and perception of UG students meant that Paul struggled to imagine students as potential collaborators of learning. Paul stated he found it “onerous having to think of

ways to engage students”, seeing student need as a deficit that he felt he was expected to remedy (Burke et al, 2017). The reluctance he felt to engage at any deep level with his students beyond his educative role was caused by his own sense of being unprotected or unsupported by his institution:

“Everything the university does is to expose us to the endless sea of needs of the client group which of course isn’t good for them in terms of their learning”

(P, Final Interview, Phase 2).

“I think we’re far too exposed and you need protection; there’s two ways you get protection. You get protection institutionally; we don’t get that”

(P, Final Interview, Phase 2).

Paul felt isolated and alienated in his university role, challenged by the demands of the students for an easy route to academic success and unsupported by the institutional demands on him for research and teaching excellence without the time or support in place for him to achieve this. This meant he was quite resistant to the idea of opening his teaching up to co-construction of any kind, even in the form of managed pupil and invited co-researcher feedback. This resistance created tensions between my ambition for the research (democratically generated knowledge) and the reality of working with academic co-researchers and bore out Whitchurch’s findings about the need to work with that tension when pursuing collaboration with academic colleagues (2008).

Knowledge about structuring the learning (principle 6) to encourage student participation (principle 3) and understanding how students experience their learning environment (principle 1).

During the taster sessions, Paul engaged with issues of structuring the learning (6) to encourage student participation (3). He also reflected on his understanding of how students experience their learning environment (1). Despite his experience preparing and delivering sessions for university WP events in the past, Paul was uncertain how to approach the taster sessions due to the age of the pupils and the fact that they would not all be studying French:

“I don’t know what to do in the session – I have never taught Y9 before”

(P, Planning session, Phase 1).

When he discovered they were not all learning French at school, Paul was flustered as he could not see how to engage them without shared knowledge of a book or a film. After much indecision he focused on the concept of populism in politics, sharing images and quotations of recognisable politicians to highlight the concept of populism. The pupils enjoyed the content, particularly Paul’s impressions of a certain U.S. president:

“Interesting views on politics, quite engaging/Like when we discussed what he was teaching us, also liked his lecture/(I liked) the accent, the impersonation, and the many views of different politions (sic).”

(Examples of pupil feedback, taster session 1, Phase 1)

Although there was enjoyment of the content, in the pupil feedback there was a clear desire to play a more active role in the session:

“There is too much talking and there should have been more stuff to do/More group work/There was a lot of talking that could be cut down/Less speaking more groupwork.”

(Examples of pupil feedback, taster session 1, Phase 1)

The pupils' desire for more active learning demonstrated they were eager "to gather information, to problem-solve, and to reflect upon knowledge" (Bovill, 2019, p.1026). Paul was initially disinclined to listen to the pupils' viewpoint, and reluctant to alter his approach for the second school group of pupils, seeing pupil feedback as another form of evaluation which could be used to denigrate his teaching (Johnson, 2000).

"Evaluation is of course problematic."

(P, Review, Ph1).

It was Howard who helped Paul to think about how he might respond to the pupil feedback without impinging on his convictions about teaching and learning:

"Why don't you ask the pupils what they think of the image of the politician and use their responses to help you to introduce the idea of populism?"

(H, Review, Ph1).

The suggestion from Howard helped Paul to re-conceptualise a more student-centred structure for his taster session, simply by thinking about the use of questions to help to structure the learning more clearly. This emphasised the benefits to my co-researchers of exploring this as a team of researchers; an experience that was at odds with the way in which they experienced their university teaching as an isolated and audited activity (Wilson and Holligan, 2013).

Paul then conceded that the session needed to change: "it should be just a bit more challenging – enough to stretch them," which provided me with the first opportunity to initiate a theoretically-based discussion about how to structure the learning to enable this:

"Have you come across Vygotsky's ZPD?" (Tara)

"I don't think I have" (Paul)

“It is quite a useful tool for thinking about the starting point of the learner and where you want them to get to by the end of the lesson/session or programme of work” (Tara)

“The key is to think about HOW you can enable them to get there; what tools will you be providing them with to achieve what you want or need them to achieve?” (Tara)

(Review, Ph1)

This was the first occasion on which a collegiate conversation focusing on theoretical pedagogical knowledge had occurred and in which the non-academic colleague (me) ventured the expertise. Despite my anxiety about my theoretical knowledge, it was necessary to provide “theoretical underpinning” to support Paul to develop his pedagogical expertise (Norton, 2009). Rooting our research within teaching practice enabled a theoretical discussion and empowered me to share my “professional insight” within the “contextually relevant” conversation (Gazeley et al, 2018, p.5).

Alongside the theory, the observation comments from Paul’s co-researchers provided further detail about how he might structure the learning more clearly:

“Use the handout to generate student discussion/Maybe use a powerpoint to describe the task for the students/Not sure if the task was completely clear – needs more scaffolding.”

(Examples of co-researcher feedback, taster session 1, Phase 1).

Structuring learning with clear and tight parameters contributes to all learners being able to understand the learning environment rules (Reay, Crozier, and Clayton, 2010). Paul was initially resistant to the idea of having to adapt his teaching in a learner-responsive way but engaging in dialogue with his co-researchers and the strategic use of a theoretical model helped him to reflect on the pupil feedback pragmatically, without reference to the political tensions he felt about

evaluation of his teaching. The separation of our research from the daily grind, physically and mentally, freed, and supported Paul to take a risk in the taster sessions and to be responsive in his teaching design (Wanless and Winters, 2018). Despite the second group of pupils being less receptive than the first, his co-researchers were able to see the impact of those changes:

“Opening question about Trump a good starting point – better engagement/The categories of populism clarified – the images representing each category – good clearer focus/More structured pair work yielded better responses/Images are now embedded in the narrative.”

(Examples of co-researcher feedback, taster session 2, Phase 1).

Paul’s initial approach contained limited student-teacher interaction which had led to low levels of learner satisfaction (Gorard et al, 2006). Accepting and acting on pupil and co-researcher feedback provided Paul with an insight into structuring clear opportunities for student co-creation of knowledge. Seeing the positive results of his adapted approach in the second taster session re-positioned students and colleagues as Paul’s partners rather than opponents (Colon Garcia, 2017).

At the evaluation session about the taster events, and then at the final research project evaluation, Paul was able to identify why he had needed to structure and adapt his taster session for the second group:

“Taster 1: Lots of teacher noise directed at pupils; little pupil noise coming back

Taster 2: Two-way dialogue between teacher and pupils”

(P, Diagram, Evaluation session, Phase 1).

“I certainly wasn’t able to hold their attention and had far too much material in the first one” (P, Final Evaluation session, Phase 2).

Although Paul was interested in taking this new understanding about structuring learning into Phase 2, this conflicted with his convictions, which still held firm at the end of the research project, about the unwillingness of students to participate in class:

“I can’t help feeling with some students that is an excuse. It is an excuse not to engage.

If no one else answers then eventually the teacher will”

(P, Final Interview, Phase 2).

Co-construction requires that researchers have “the ability and the resources to negotiate and adapt” (Pohl, Rist, Zimmerman, Fry, Gurung, Schneider, Speranza, Kiteme, Boillat, Serrano, and Hadorn, 2010, p.271). The resources in research phase 1 - time, space, shared experiences leading to shared points of reference - meant that Paul felt supported and able to view teaching and learning interactions as a space in which he could take risks and feel comfortable with contradictions (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005). In research phase 2, however, stepping back into the familiar but agenda laden UG teaching space, severely limited Paul’s ability to re-engage with the understandings he had developed through teaching the taster sessions. Paul’s approach was to ask his students to feedback on their perceptions of university learning, which was an explicit move to encourage student participation by showing that Paul was concerned with “sharing (classroom) power” (Bovill, 2019, p.1031). He decided to start by asking for the student view on what constituted a seminar and a lecture, desirous of enabling them to see what their role was in each of these learning environments:

“What is a lecture? What is a seminar?”

(P, Questions for UGs, Phase 2)

He wanted to encourage more student participation, or, as he described it:

“Making explicit what the expectations are so in a way trying to nudge students”

(P, Final Interview, Phase 2)

Paul’s motivation to explore the ideas he had encountered with the school pupils further in phase 2 with his UG students was driven by his frustration with his students’ ‘functional’ mode of learning:

“We’re shifting towards what I would describe as a more functional mode...a model of learning which infects our students to a greater or a lesser extent. If you’re in that functional mode then it actually makes sense for you to say, ‘what do I need to do?’”

(P, Final Interview, Phase 2).

Paul found it difficult to view his UG students as collaborators in their learning or co-constructors of knowledge, when the students were positioned as consumers of a service that he, as a teacher, was providing, which Paul perceived was both reducing his “academic authority” and also threatening university “academic standards” (Henkel, 1997, p.142). Structuring the learning to encourage student participation was not only a desire to enable student ownership of learning, but also to try to counter the impotence he felt as an academic:

“It almost makes me physically sick because to me it's really, really disempowering saying ‘you’re the source of everything’. It’s really passive-aggressive of putting you in the position of the gatekeeper and doing that it.... absolves them (students) of responsibility” (P, Final Evaluation session, Phase 2)

Paul spent minimal time asking and then discussing the questions with the UG students and his students continued to behave in ways that Paul found difficult to deal with. Despite his success with the school pupils, Paul became re-engaged in his concerns about classroom power and

authority (hooks, 2003). This meant that his UG teaching intervention (getting students to take more active ownership of their learning) was a struggle both as a collaborative research process and in its pedagogical implementation. The struggle to make significant and sustainable UG classroom changes highlighted the tensions inherent in our professional/academic roles and the difficulties of aligning our agendas in the “real” world of academia (Burke, 2013).

The power that Paul yielded as an academic, despite the impotence he felt, created classroom “politics of identity and recognition” which “play out in insidious ways” (Burke, 2008, p.202). The knowledge about structuring the learning, gained through teaching the school pupils, failed to translate successfully into his UG classroom. Paul shared with us how dissatisfied he was with the tenor of the subsequent demands of his students as they approached the examination period:

“Towards the end (of the module) I had two revision sessions...’what sort of questions will we get in the exam?’ ‘Well I haven’t written the exam questions yet and I am not sure they will help you anyway’...there was this one student who got really upset and said ‘well you’re the teacher! It’s your job to tell us what you want!’”

(P, Final Evaluation session, Phase 2).

Paul’s sense of disempowerment was fuelled by the evolution of a sector: one in which he has been since leaving school, into a model far removed from his idea of education with his role as a teacher and a researcher increasingly resembling “a middle rank executive in a business organisation” (Collini, 2012, p.19). It was hard for Paul to anticipate any benefits from changing his UG teaching approach as his experience was of being held captive by an unrelenting marketised system:

“I think our society is saying you need to know what to say at a certain point. The school is saying that to them. The system they come through is telling them that, I think”

(P, Final Evaluation session, Phase 2).

One way in which Paul did move towards a different understanding of how his students experienced their learning environment was when he was comparing the silence of the second group of school pupils with his own experience of attending academic conferences:

“Because even I, when I go to hear an author speak and there is room for questions at the end I think ‘ah, you should have slightly more sympathy for students who don’t want to ask questions’. Because I don’t want to embarrass myself in front of the author”

(P, Evaluation session, Phase 1).

The connection Paul made between his own behaviour and that of school pupils when evaluating the taster sessions, enabled him to recognise and understand the pupils’ silence as the same fear of embarrassment he had experienced. The recognition of his experience at a conference enabled Paul to see how classroom interactions were shaped by “the identities and subjective relations of teachers and students” (Burke et al, 2017, p.43). Paul’s reflection on the parallels between his and the pupils’ experiences briefly provided him with insight into how his students experienced their learning environment:

“It never even occurs to us that that anxiety is about having to say the right thing”

(P, Final Interview, Phase 2).

Although Paul recognised the anxiety which he understood might impede student participation in his own behaviour at conferences, his discomfort with catering to student need made him resistant to what he perceived to be the “blurring of teaching with caring” (Burke et al, 2017, p.100). This meant that those students who asked for more guidance were potentially positioned as “bad” students against the “good” student who “manages their own learning and constructs

knowledge” (Holdsworth and Thomson, 2002, p.6). Therefore, it was perhaps easier to attribute student anxiety as an “excuse” for non-participation in class, and, in so doing, potentially misrecognising those students who expressed themselves in this way.

Summary

Paul was desirous of teaching students with higher levels of classroom engagement. Using the knowledge he gained during the taster session process, he was keen to encourage student participation in the classroom and challenge the binary of teacher/student. Paul was able to identify what had impeded a more participatory first taster session (too much teacher talk) and adapt his approach to remedy this, despite a more challenging second taster event group of pupils. Finding his teacher role relentlessly draining in what he experienced as endless student demands on his time and energy, Paul hoped for more learner contributions through developing a dialogue with students around classroom participation. However, Paul’s prevailing sense of powerlessness within his academic role prevented him from exploring the power balance in his own classroom any further.

Paul accrued knowledge through the feedback of the pupils and of his co-researchers and of the ways in which he understood the need to structure the learning to enable better learner engagement and participation in phase 1. During the research it was difficult to assess whether Paul had found the opportunity to co-construct knowledge through action research as beneficial to his teaching beyond the taster sessions in phase 1 and planning conversations in phase 2. It was more than twelve months later when he mentioned to me that he was thinking of asking his Y2 students for their pick of hand-held camera-made films with which to open their first seminar discussion and introduce the course focus. This was Paul planning his teaching to explicitly start with the learner’s perspectives (principle 4). It was possible that the experience of co-

constructing pedagogical ideals through the feedback, questions and researcher conversations remained with Paul and influenced his thinking one year later.

Sarah

Background and teaching experience

Like Paul, Sarah was an associate professor with a research and teaching remit at Midtown university, where she had been working for 13 years. Sarah's research interests included Latinx history and culture in the US, with a special interest in visual culture. Sarah had a PGCE, having originally trained as a teacher after her undergraduate degree, although she had decided not to follow that career path. Sarah was a keen supporter of WP work and had been the faculty academic WP representative for several years. She defined WP work as:

“An act of social responsibility/Community engagement and effective relationships with local schools and families” (S, Recon session, Phase 1).

Sarah's commitment to WP work and social justice in education was linked directly to her research and teaching, which focused on marginalised communities, whose voices she was passionate about sharing, so she was keen to ensure that her teaching embodied her worldview:

“The thing that I've been really passionate about because it's in my research and it's in my commitment to outreach is about diversity, how do we embed diversity in the curriculum”

(S, Final Interview).

However, despite being accustomed to delivering sessions for both WP and admission work, her previous school teaching experiences had impacted her confidence:

“I had trouble with year 9 boys (in PGCE) and had an assumption that that was what was going to happen..... I did get those memories of where I was, you know, struggling to think about different strategies but not coming up with the right one”

(S, Evaluation session, Phase 1).

Knowledge about student perspective as a starting point (principle 4) and teaching with empathy and sensitivity (principle 2)

Sarah engaged in knowledge co-construction with her students and with me during the second research phase, and through this, engaged with the student perspective as a starting point (4), while being mindful of employing empathy and sensitivity in her teaching (2). In the first research phase, Sarah delivered a taster session which introduced the concept of murals and focused on local murals as well as global murals. The session culminated in the pupils designing their own mural to communicate a message of importance to them. Sarah’s prior experiences of teaching Y9 pupils meant that she had approached the planning of her taster sessions with assumptions about pupil ability:

“I had gone deliberately to do something very, very different with year 9s. I just made that assumption. I had worked hard on making it different actually, as far away as possible from what I do with any of my UGs and it took a while for the penny to drop”

(S, Evaluation session, Phase 1).

Sarah had experienced a “palpable sense of fear and anxiety in relation to who they were” when planning her taster sessions for the school pupils and was surprised by their interest and levels of engagement in learning (Burke et al, 2017, p.89). She had assumed that she needed to dumb down her teaching for WP work, a common belief across HE institutions (Shaw et al, 2007).

“These sessions have challenged my assumption that I need to significantly alter how I structure tasks for different year groups and that there has to be radical differentiation when teaching the same material to UG and secondary school audiences”

(S, Evaluation session, Phase 1)

Sarah had also been surprised by the informal feedback she received from the accompanying teacher of one of the school groups who had assumed her use of creative activities (designing a mural) to introduce a concept was an approach she used with her university students:

“I was surprised when one of the teachers in the first session asked me if I ran a similar task for my UGs. I automatically said ‘no’...I then got to thinking that perhaps it is possible to run a similar activity – with some modifications in terms of student autonomy and terminology - for UGs”.

(S, Reflection on taster sessions, Phase 1).

The teacher’s comment and the pupil in-session feedback enabled Sarah to reflect that her understanding of pupils as significantly different to university students was disadvantaging her pedagogical approaches with both groups:

“And I did need the students to say, actually we would have liked a bit more time on this rather than you saying loads of stuff.... you know when you’ve got those kinds of constructive feedback coming from different areas and it concurs as well, you think, yes, this is something that I need to work on.”

(S, Final Interview).

Sarah understood her educative role as one with challenges of power, inclusion, and social responsibility, both in her research and in her approach to teaching (Giroux, 2020). Her desire for equitable classroom power relationships framed her pedagogical ethos:

“I feel the seminar room should be a space for students to feel comfortable”

(S, Final Interview, Phase 2).

However, she found enabling student participation to be difficult in practice:

“There have been moments in a seminar where one student has been brave enough to break the mould a bit and want to talk about either things that have happened recently or what’s happened to them. You don’t get it very often” (S, Final Interview, Phase 2).

Like Paul and Howard, Sarah was keen to develop her practice but failed to see how she could do this successfully while balancing the administrative, research and teaching elements of her role. Sarah struggled to overcome what she found to be the increasingly reductive nature of student-teacher relationships (Love, 2008). Her concerns about fulfilling the curriculum requirements impacted her desire to innovate in the classroom:

“I’m stuck in that mode where I think this is what they’ve got to learn, these are the things.... I’ve got to tick all these boxes in just an hour and its impossible”

(S, Final Evaluation)

Feeling time-poor in her academic role meant that Sarah felt frustrated in her university teaching:

“I’ll be honest, I think I am a bit stuck in a rut and I think I’ve got these tried and tested methods and I haven’t really experimented with different things”

(S, Final Interview, Phase 2).

The time and energy invested in adapting and refining her taster session in phase one, and the insights into how well a kinaesthetic activity can work, however, meant that Sarah was now enthused about developing creative approaches to her UG teaching:

“And now I’m thinking about year 1, building block exercises for XXX module which I’ve taken over again, in September, and I’ve just been thinking through some potential units and activities this morning, actually, how I might use some of those building block exercises with words, terminology, those sorts of things, challenging people’s assumptions, those kinds of activities, not sure quite what yet”

(S, Self-reflection, Phase 1).

In the second research phase, Sarah wanted to work with her Y2 UG students using the Puerto Rican “National Anthem” to inspire the students to create their own poster, story, or poem. Having been enlightened to the pupil perspective through the ways in which the school pupils engaged with her session and shared their insights through questions, Sarah was keen to elicit student contributions and understand the student perspective with her UG students. In particular, she wanted to help her students to connect to the material she was teaching and about which she felt passionate. She discussed with me the best way of eliciting a more personalised engagement with the content she was teaching:

“How do you plan to explore their understanding of, or empathy for the Puerto Rican community? (T)”

“Hmmm...I guess we will read the poem and discuss...” (S)

“How about asking them ‘when do you remember not fitting in or not belonging?’” (T)

(T & S, Planning conversation, Ph2).

Sarah wanted to help her UG students “to have a bit of passion or connect with the material” and thought that my suggestion of personalising the content would work well. At the same time, she recognised that by relinquishing her control over the materials, this created a sense of “unsafety” for her (MacDonald, 2013):

“I think this relates to my own (possibly flawed!) need to cram everything in and ensure the students are prepared (rather than accepting that only some things will be achieved in a class, that learning goes on afterwards, and that perhaps a key outcome of every seminar should be that students engage key ideas and come away enthused about something, rather than having analysed the primary and secondary materials exhaustively in the session).”

(S, Self-reflection, Phase 2).

Conceptions of teaching and learning are one of the largest influences on teaching practice in HE (Prebble, Hargreaves, Leach, Naidoo, Suddaby and Zepke, 2004). Sarah’s experience of engaging with the feedback from the pupils after the taster sessions, and her observations of her co-researchers’ evolving taster session approaches, enabled her to envision alternative modes of introducing the complex concepts she was teaching. Even though she felt convinced this was the right route to follow to engage the student perspective, she faltered throughout the process:

“I spent quite some time preparing the task sheet and keywords and experienced a lot of indecision along the way! Because I’m not used to doing this type of task, I felt concern at first that I was ‘giving’ the students the answers and possibly determining their responses, and whether instead, I should’ve worked on eliciting keywords from them in

the actual session based on their own readings of the primary source, El Spanglish National Anthem”

(S, Self-reflection, Phase 2).

Despite Sarah’s concerns, her students responded to this different approach, and she was delighted to observe the ways in which they connected to the curriculum content and co-constructed their understanding of the Puerto Rican community by relating it to their own experiences:

“So this was a bit different where I realised they might not have dissected the primary sources, but what they were able to do, through the posters, was talk about their personal experiences and that was the first time that had happened in a classroom where they were able to connect to the material, use the material to reflect on their own experiences, you know, what home was for them, what family was for them, what identity was for them”

(S, Final Evaluation, Phase 2)

From the responses of her students during the seminar about Puerto Rican community, Sarah recognised that providing interactive, creative learning opportunities was a more inclusive way of ensuring all learners access the curriculum:

“OK they may not work all the time, but if they get a student to think differently, you know, and they may have come in for 15 minutes and thought OK I’m off and I really did not get this text, I couldn’t penetrate it at all, but then they may have got something from doing these other tasks, so.....”

(S, Final Interview).

Encouraging them to work in groups and make connections to their own possible feelings of displacement (leaving home, coming to university) gave rise to powerful contributions:

“One student who had not contributed all term spoke very openly about his own life and how he had lived in six different countries and said ‘I don’t really know where home is’...lots of students spoke about very different things and right at the end one student said ‘I get it now, I know what this module is about, I know what all these other sessions have been about’”

(S, Final Evaluation, Phase 2).

Presented in this way, the module concepts of belonging, citizenship and identity connected to and represented the students’ lived experiences (Burke et al, 2017). Sarah’s culturally situated pedagogy, which, according to Bowser, Danaher and Somasundaram (2007) can be successful in removing feelings of alienation in groups of diverse learners, was driven by her desire for her students both to recognise and to be represented by the content she was teaching:

“Overall, then, this was a very productive and actually quite liberating experience for me: it generated a level of unease in that I was trying something new and breaking old habits, but I was also really surprised and enthused by the students’ responses and the fact they felt able to discuss things in an open manner. I rarely have this experience, and if it happens, it’s usually an isolated case, and I don’t think this would’ve happened without rethinking the nature and delivery of seminar materials”

(S, Self-reflection, Phase 2).

Enabling student input in the classroom in this way had been a high-risk endeavour for Sarah but showed her how students “can play a role in knowledge co-creation” (Bovill, 2019, p.1028). This

had positive implications both for how the students engaged with the learning, but also for how they perceived their learner identities (Reay, Crozier, and Clayton, 2009):

“For me I had that really good feeling that the students were able to open up and were able to talk about their own experiences and share them with one another and that had never happened for me before, if I am honest, so it was a bit of a....it was quite enlightening, really, it did have a dramatic effect”

(S, Final Interview).

Forgoing curriculum constraints and allowing space for the students to explore the concepts in new ways in Sarah’s seminar enabled students’ personal narratives to be shared, establishing a “communal commitment to learning” (hooks, 1994, p.148). While Sarah had been pleased to elicit such personal and invested contributions, she was concerned that she had taught the session with empathy and sensitivity so that students felt comfortable in the learning environment while doing so:

“Did I handle this discussion with enough tact and sensitivity and how does this relate to the broader issue of how we embed a discussion of personal experiences and diversity in the classroom?”

(S, Self-reflection, Phase 2)

Sarah showed an understanding of the limitations of a classroom in which activities requiring personal revelations can force students into areas of severe discomfort and fear of “potentially exposing their identities” (Burke et al, 2017, p.89):

“I was concerned that some people’s views might not have been represented as well as they might be within the groups, especially if their own experiences had made them more

critical of the UK experience, e.g., some registered the view (more explicitly in small groups) that the multiculturalism being expressed in some posters was perhaps more an ideal than a reality for some.”

(S, Self-reflection, Phase 2)

This awareness of the unequal power structures in her classroom made Sarah conscient of the need to approach not only teaching content with sensitivity, but also the teaching *of* that content:

“It’s got me thinking about, we assume we can just put the material out there without thinking about *how* are we going to deliver this material. That’s the question and I’d completely missed it. I’ve been doing it for years, not necessarily the wrong way but....”

(S, Final Interview).

Sarah had been focusing solely on the subject matter but not the translation of that subject matter into taught content or “the content of instruction,” expecting that the students would be able to connect easily (Shulman, 1986, p.6). Contemplating how to teach the material had enabled co-learning with her students which, in turn, led to deeper engagement with the curriculum content.

Sarah’s work with me in the second research phase was considered and reflective. She drew on the learning gains from the taster sessions to engage in a dialogue with me about her university teaching and our conversations about how to connect material to students’ experiences gave rise to an idea for a co-authored conference paper about our experience of co-constructing knowledge. Writing a paper together which was accepted at a conference was an endorsement of how our respective knowledges could complement and support one another as colleagues, and as collaborators, so we could “go beyond currently taken-for-granted, reified forms of interaction.” (Goulet et al, 2003, p.338):

“I had tried teaching about diversity and colonialism in an earlier unit on Native Americans and land rights, but it fell completely flat. This time, however, I was able to deliver unfamiliar and complex material more successfully precisely because I found ways to connect it to the students’ lived experience.”

(S, Conference presentation, CARN, October 2018).

“This was the first time I had experienced students feeling secure to talk about their own personal experiences of migration, moving from home to university, having different affiliations, groups and identities in their own lives, talking about experiences of discrimination and privilege.”

(S, Conference presentation, CARN, October 2018).

In the presentation, Sarah cited the action research process for the taster sessions as the springboard for the revival of her pedagogical interest and her creative classroom skills:

“It was truly liberating to have time and space to reflect critically on my teaching practice as part of a community of learners on Tara’s project; this experiment in delivering and adapting outreach sessions for UG learners gave me the inspiration I needed to break old habits, test out new approaches, and finally inject some creativity and satisfaction into my own practice. Universities need to find time and space to enable this type of reflection on an ongoing basis...”

(S, Conference presentation, CARN, October 2018).

Summary

Sarah had been anxious about teaching the school pupils due to her PGCE experiences, yet she found the process of teaching them, receiving their feedback and answering their questions one

that challenged her assumptions about pupil ability and behaviour. The school pupils' desire to engage more fully in the kinaesthetic exercise she had included led to thinking about the structure of her UG teaching, as well as raising questions about how to connect students better to the perspectives of the marginalised communities that formed the content of her UG module. The pedagogical opportunity Sarah created for her students following her experience of delivering the taster sessions in phase 1 helped to consolidate student identities, by privileging the knowledge they brought and shared. This student input served to illuminate the concepts Sarah was teaching. Rather than feeling constrained by the alien experiences of another culture, the students felt empowered and supported to speak about their parallel experiences of displacement, unfamiliarity, and loneliness.

The satisfaction Sarah derived from the students' contributions in her seminar and from embedding visual materials and activities into her teaching fuelled Sarah's desire to adapt her practice. Understanding how stepping away from a rigid structure enabled students to participate more fully and in different ways - "some of the students who were quiet decided they were going to do the drawing" (S, Final Evaluation session) - or become far more engaged - "one student who had not contributed all term spoke very openly about his own life" (S, Final Evaluation session) - helped Sarah to confront her anxiety about taking risks in the classroom and focus on her desire to be inclusive and use her materials about "difference" to engage in conversations about experiences of feeling different. Sarah actively co-constructed the learning through allowing her students to become partners in the classroom.

Tara

Knowledge co-construction as the “lead” researcher

Co-construction is enabled by the “reciprocal exchange of ideas and practices” (Tillema and Orland-Barak, 2006, p.6). I was attuned to knowledge for which I had created the conditions to flourish (taster session phase) however, I also needed to monitor my contribution as an insider/outsider researcher honestly and reflexively. My interest in learning about my co-researchers' pedagogical barriers to WP work and the changes they made because of this learning was such that I engaged with the phase 1 and 2 knowledge as external to me. I was far less focused on any knowledge I might be accruing, as I perceived myself to be the facilitator or “animator” of the research and therefore the curator of the knowledge (Tilakaratna, 1987, p.23). I was interested, at least at the outset, in learning about my co-researchers' *processes* of preparing for taster sessions, rather than the constraints to those processes and the reasons behind those constraints. Even when planning this chapter, my original focus was on the knowledge evolution for my three co-researchers rather than my own.

Knowledge about my biases

As I described in the literature review (chapter two), my professional background prior to my university role constituted secondary school teaching and education charity project management. Although I have a teaching certificate and qualified teacher status (Q.T.S.) my teacher training was school-based and focused far more on classroom practice than on the theory supporting this. I had discussed with my supervisor the idea of introducing teaching and learning theory to my co-researchers as part of the planning sessions, however my status anxiety meant I had avoided using “language that resonated” for fear of academic interrogation (Whitchurch, 2008, p.386):

“My natural reaction was to offer practical pedagogical models such as Bloom while in fact what they wanted was a theoretical understanding of the emergent issues, themes and learning they were developing through this experience”

(Research notes, post-Evaluation session, Phase 1).

Friedman writes about how his desire to be an action researcher makes him blind to the needs of the community with whom he was researching; they wished for action while he was espoused to the theoretical concept of participation (Arieli, Friedman, and Agbaria, 2009). Opposite to Friedman, but sharing some of the same blinkered vision, I wanted to focus on the process of how to build interactivity into the taster sessions or provide scaffolding¹⁶ to the tasks, while my colleagues wanted to interrogate the evidence for this approach. Winkler (2001) recounts the difficulties of introducing theory to teachers whose experience had been amassed through practical classroom experience. Her conclusion is that theory is needed to develop expertise. This created a challenge for me due to my thin theoretical knowledge, my lack of confidence in my ability to explain teaching concepts and a level of frustration that my co-researchers were not eager simply to be experimental. This further highlights the mismatch of expectations when professional and academic staff try to work together in a collaborative way.

As a teacher, then an education broker for NEET¹⁷ learners, my role had been to put the learners' needs as central to my work, including finding ways to engage and inspire them to learn if they were disengaged. This meant I struggled to understand why other educators (in this case my co-researchers) did not do the same when preparing for the first taster session:

¹⁶ See Wood, Bruner & Ross (1978).

¹⁷ Not in education, employment or training

“What I did was offer reassurance. What I felt was a degree of irritation that this (taster session planning) had not been prioritised.”

(Diary, Day of Taster 1, Phase1).

My irritation sprang from my strength of feeling about the realm of fair access to and socially just participation in university programmes, mixed with my sense of impotence that I could “exert little power within academia” (Martin, 1998, p.36). Even though my co-researchers and I all engaged in teaching undergraduates, my background meant that I prioritised the quality of teaching and planning my teaching above other endeavours (research, administration etc), which I discovered was not the case for all of us:

“ ‘Thank you. It is really helpful thinking through the problems before I walk into the classroom’ (Paul). An interesting insight into the approach to teaching that is the life of the academic”

(Diary, post-Planning session with Paul, Phase 2).

My diary entry is scathing about Paul’s approach to his teaching, based on my belief system that all teaching needs to start with the student perspective (4):

“Can anyone view something or engage with something without making a certain set of personal judgements based on their own experience to date?”

(Question to Paul, Interview, Phase 2).

My question to Paul challenged him to reflect on his view of students and their class contributions which he felt were too personalised. Yet I was simultaneously making personal judgements about Paul’s level of commitment to teaching students and developing inclusive pedagogies. The academic/professional divide was hard to navigate when it had instilled long-

held prejudices about colleagues who worked in the opposite realm of academia (Chanock, 2007).

Knowledge through and after action research

In my diary, nine months after I had completed the fieldwork, I note:

“I engaged with academics, through doing so I understood their world better, and thus I understood myself and my sphere of influence better”

(Diary, October 2018).

Herr and Anderson (2014) suggest that action researchers need to ask themselves “Who am I in relation to my participants and my setting?” (p57). To gather knowledge about my co-researchers' approach to WP work I needed to be aware that my perceptions of their motivations and commitment were “merely one truth among many” (p59). One example of this is the final interview with Paul. I had wrestled internally with Paul's views about students and teaching throughout the research, finding them to be so far removed from mine and therefore difficult for me to relate to. At some distance from the intensity of the research, I listened to Paul's reasons for his position:

“We know as well that in a bigger sense, a kid in a classroom is not as powerful as somebody in management but it's all the same thing, it's all the same thing. What I want to say basically to people is ‘drop your weapons, we'll deal with this, let's deal with this without weapons, can we?’”

(Paul, Final Interview).

My views about academics and WP work were easily corroborated if I only listened to what Paul was saying, rather than why he was driven to say it. Paul's emotive use of language to describe his relationships with students, and his desire for a harmonious classroom (indicated by “drop your

weapons, we'll deal with this, let's deal with this without weapons") was vital information for me to understand how disempowered he felt and how this impacted his enthusiasm for teaching. I reflect on this in my diary:

"In fact his view of what it is to be a teacher is not so different to mine.....this made it easier and less alarming for me to talk openly with him"

(Diary, post-Paul's interview).

Zuber-Skeritt highlights the necessity for an eclectic approach to teaching in HE that accommodates an academic's beliefs as well as stimulating their interest in teaching (1992). Working with Sarah helped me to see how pedagogical innovation could not sit as distinct from her disciplinary knowledge and teaching. Sarah's commitment to teaching students about the struggles of minority communities in the US directly informed the way in which she adapted her teaching in phase 2:

"Adapting the material and shifting my practice became vital for talking about diversity in a more enabling way. I now know we can't just teach *about* diversity in the classroom; we must also reflect on *how* we translate, plan, and deliver this material"

(Sarah, CARN conference presentation, 2018).

I had started with the "how" that Sarah refers to when she needed first to consider the "what". The two form the basis of pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge described as:

"Blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction" (Shulman 1986, 8).

By starting with Sarah's module content and using that to shape the students' learning, I worked with Sarah towards "connecting lived experiences to disciplinary knowledge" (Sarah's focus) which enabled "student belonging and engagement" in the seminar space (my focus) (Hanesworth, 2015, pp.5-6).

Sharing my own teaching practice had not been part of the original vision for the research and was only proposed to my co-researchers in phase 2. Even though I was working as a co-researcher with other insiders from my organisation, I realised retrospectively that our relationship was not one of equals within this research as we were examining their practice without interrogating mine. In my focus on WP work, I had made a common mistake: treating "one's personal and professional self as an outside observer" (Herr and Anderson, 2014, p.63). Inviting my co-researchers to see me teach was necessary to provide them with the same opportunity to feedback on my practice as they had given me to do so:

"I was really impressed with the opening task, e.g. Tara's decision to run short, 30 second presentations involving students using a single material resource to explain what they will teach and how. This short, interactive task generated real momentum as well as audience support and enthusiasm for the presenter (non-presenting students usually switch off in presentations longer than 10-15 minutes, so 30 seconds is good practice, especially for students without much experience of presenting). The pressure of going up to the front to deliver a prepared task also focuses the mind, and I will use the short rather than lengthier presentation model in future, especially for year 1 classes"

(S, Observation notes, Phase 2).

Sarah's process of analysing my teaching provided us with common ground in which to situate our subsequent pedagogical discussions. Embedding this opportunity into the research, albeit at a

later point than perhaps I ought to have, provided the equalized power relations required for action research, and saw us engaging in “partnerships through which we reflect and discuss how teaching and learning experiences can include and value everyone” (Colon Garcia, 2017, p.5).

Summary

In my approach to the research, I had been focused on ensuring that my co-researchers gained new knowledge about how to design and deliver taster sessions, without reflecting on what types of knowledge I might need to engage with to support them to do so. In addition, I was quick to judge any alternative perspectives on teaching and learning as pedagogical knowledge deficits, rather than investing time in understanding the reasons why co-researcher beliefs and convictions were so strongly held. This meant I was in direct opposition to principled action research; I was conceiving of knowledge co-construction as a uni-directional rather than a multi-directional process.

Working alongside my co-researchers, observing their developing understandings, and supporting them in their ambitions for their teaching was an unforeseen outcome of the research. My understanding of WP as simply “access” was positively challenged by seeing how my co-researchers connected the learning from phase one (taster sessions) to issues they wanted to tackle in phase two (UG teaching). More than this, the limitations I felt as lead researcher highlighted to me the need to equip myself more adequately with the pedagogical theory which would support academic WP work and engage more equitably and confidently with academic colleagues in university work more broadly.

Conclusion

Expertise and knowledge were valuable currencies throughout the research which both enabled and constrained us in co-constructing taster sessions and UG seminars. The pedagogical

knowledge about the most effective ways to create accessible taster sessions was co-created through the feedback of the pupils and our interactions with and support of each other, using the framework of plan, act, observe, reflect with which to refine and adapt the sessions. Action research with outsider co-researchers (community members, young people, a specific cultural group) is seen to be challenging for university researchers, however I would argue that despite being insiders of the same institution, we each felt like the outsider at times in discussions, whether political or pedagogical (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995).

Positioning our research in the realm of access and participation (in phase 1) allowed Sarah, Howard, and Paul to step away mentally from the curriculum, managerial and disciplinary constraints of their UG teaching. This enabled them to review and reshape their pedagogical knowledge and comment on each other's practice in a context in which they felt less regulated and freer to try new approaches. For Howard and for Paul, the enablements of phase 1 (collective process, outside termtime teaching, immersive timeframe) became the constraints of phase 2 as each struggled to see their plan through with the same commitment they had shown to refining their taster sessions amidst the pressures and time restrictions of termtime. Yet some of the insights gathered, while not evident in, for example, Paul's teaching in phase 2, re-surfaced the following year when he was thinking about how to incorporate the student perspective into his new film module.

There were constraints to this co-construction throughout the research: the pedagogical convictions with which we started, the challenges of integrating the principles of practice into the UG teaching environment in phase 2 where those convictions reappeared, and, in my case, preconceptions about one another. My initial feelings of not being able to contribute effectively to knowledge discussions were powerful and disabling and it was only through seeing where my expertise was needed in the co-construction process that I was able to engage fully with the

action research process. There were also significant differences between how far each co-researcher moved during the research and how well I was able to work with each. In the case of Sarah, her engagement throughout the research including observing my classroom practice led to ambitious changes in her teaching which she started to implement at all levels of UG teaching. For Paul, the struggle against the performative culture and the effect this had on his classroom perspective was difficult to divert once teaching resumed.

Co-construction required each of us to be open to each other and the knowledge we brought. When we achieved this, our knowledge co-production blossomed, whereas when we struggled, there was a tendency to return to long-held positions and habits, or what Argyris refers to as defensive routines (1993). Even the smaller gains, for example where Howard reflected on the need for continual questioning of teaching practice even for an experienced teacher, shows the role knowledge about WP might play in HE pedagogy, enabling (in this case Howard) “to be conscious and critical of your goals as an educator” (Sanger, 2020, p.61). As Sarah stated, without engaging in the taster session phase, she would not have discovered the opportunity to challenge and adapt her UG teaching practice. This suggests knowledge about pedagogy for access can contribute to the knowledge base for pedagogy for participation. Certainly, the process of developing the knowledge we needed to adapt the taster sessions and the knowledge about the constraints to achieving this have changed my understanding of how I might work better with academic colleagues.

In the next chapter I discuss the third principle, action for social educational change and where our collaborative co-construction might be seen to have been successful in addressing questions of inclusion, belonging and success in both access and participation contexts. I explore the ways in which opportunities for action towards change were missed or avoided and what knowledge

has arisen from this. Specifically, I reflect on my positionality and the changes I experienced because of initiating and leading this project.

Chapter Six - Action for social change

Introduction

In the previous two chapters I have shown how the action research principles of collaboration and co-construction of knowledge were enacted and how professional, political, and personal barriers constrained our abilities, at times, to be collaborative or to draw on each other's experience and knowledge. I have employed data from a range of sources to illustrate the evolution of four disparate individual colleagues into a collaborative team, and to highlight the multiple knowledges we brought to and gained from the research.

In this final empirical chapter, I re-visit the principle of action for social change, reflecting on the actions emerging from our experiences in the research, and discuss the importance of reflecting on how this principle can support social change in HE work. I outline, first, the changes in our academic/professional working relationships, and second, the changes in pedagogical understandings and practices which are more likely to support more students in university learning. Finally, I reflect on the changes to my researcher role and positionality which arose during and because of undertaking this research. I return to these changes as part of my discussion of the potential of action research for cross-boundary-professional working in universities in the concluding chapter which follows.

Action for social change

The inclusion of the word “action” in action research is deliberate. It reminds the researcher that it is not enough simply to mine new knowledge or mutual understandings, but that any learning from the research needs to result in action to improve or remedy a situation. In short, the purpose of action research is to “generate knowledge to inform action” (Savin-Baden and Wimpenny, 2007, p.333). Researchers are encouraged to take an active role in addressing issues affecting

themselves, their work, or their communities (Gaventa, 1988). Acknowledging the political nature of the research process requires action researchers to act in a “more direct and open manner in addressing social issues” (Brydon-Miller, 1997, p.660).

Inevitably, taking action to effect change can give rise to challenges rather than broker solutions. Walker and Loots (2018) highlight the gap between working towards change in action research and how to identify whether that change has occurred. Reid et al (2006) concur, suggesting it can be difficult to achieve and tricky to measure. In action research, the focus is on emancipatory change and enabling vulnerable communities to access the knowledge and resources needed to improve their lives, such as work to ensure refugees are safely housed and educated (O’Neill, Woods, and Webster, 2005). In our HE context, I was hoping for positive changes through a better understanding of the barriers academics faced to participating in WP work, with the ambition of creating more accessible outreach activities such as taster sessions for those students with barriers to accessing HE.

Changes in our professional relationships and ways of working

Change in personal perspective

I had entered the research process with the hypothesis that my academic colleagues lacked altruism or interest in WP work and with the ambition to dissolve the binary divide which prevented us from collaborating. Engaging in the sustained action research process over several months enabled me to work with a far less judgmental ethos with my co-researchers than previously. In my research notes and during her interview, Sarah and I reflect on how the differences in our roles which we had been negotiating at the outset, were far less pronounced and now appeared to share common characteristics:

“It would be fair to say each of the four of us.... have shifted in our understanding of how our respective roles of academic researcher, lecturer, WP practitioner, doctoral researcher, intersect and complement each other in the process of creating the “taster” sessions and planning, reviewing, and refining these” (Research notes, Ph 1).

“I think we’ve been open about our fears as well which has been really good. We haven’t held back on anything and I think that’s how you do build a team. And we’ve never been critical. I think most of us are on the same page about things as well which obviously helps and we’ve got the same commitment and philosophy about what we want universities to look like, so that’s helped” (S, Interview).

Researcher difference can often be a barrier to collaborating in action research and tensions and dilemmas occur where collaboration with outsiders or others is sought (Bartunek and Rynes, 2014). Identifying each of my co-researchers as different from me instilled barriers into our interactions but also helped me to see why investing time in working together to understand differences was so useful. Seeing how we were all straddling multiple roles (research, teaching, admin), just in different formations and contexts, enabled me to understand our commonalities rather than focus on the differences:

“It is also necessary to acknowledge how increasing pressures on academic staff together with other institutional demands on their time and energy have resulted in what is now a standardised condition for staff of working ever-increasing hours, often with worsening pay and conditions of employment leading to a disillusioned and demoralised workforce” (H, Written reflection post research).

In addition, as I have discussed in chapter four, understanding where our priorities differed, enabled me to understand how elements of university policy which I enacted and championed,

(such as WP and EDI work), was experienced by my co-researchers as additional ways in which the institution (and its clients) held academic staff to account:

“These institutional processes are designed to demonstrate that there is in place a rigorous system to ensure that teaching is subject to quality control and scrutiny, and that teaching standards are upheld. It is noteworthy, however, that within these processes there is little opportunity for a genuine reflective space. As many colleagues would attest, such processes often seem like box-ticking exercises for what looks like an increasingly spurious form of ‘quality’ control.”

(H, Written reflection post research).

Gaining insight into my colleagues’ motivations, beliefs and experiences at Midtown helped me to accept and support my co-researchers in their struggles with taking or sustaining action towards change. This is counter to the oppositional professional/academic narrative as discussed in the HE literature, which prevents professional/academic collaboration and therefore limits change (McInnis, 1998). Personal change through action research is important to reflect on and to document, as it is often because of change occurring to individuals that collaborative work and relationships are made possible.

Positive change through collaboration

There were several moments throughout the research in which knowledge sharing, understanding or experiences in the research resulted in changes in our professional relationships. For example, preparing for and delivering taster sessions as a group of co-researchers provided us with the opportunity to support each other, reflect on our work, and offer advice and encouragement in ways that we would not have otherwise experienced. Howard shared how powerfully this had resonated with him:

“The experience of working with colleagues in classroom settings and the subsequent interactions was hugely productive. It enabled discussion of both the mechanics of classroom teaching but also a much deeper consideration of the philosophical dimension of what we do and how we do it”

(H, Reflection on the research).

Sarah, who had been anxious about peer observation, also asserted that it had been a positive experience, especially after the second taster with the more challenging group of female pupils:

“It was a real positive to have the other staff members of the group in the room because it gave me a chance to commiserate with the team and maintain some morale”

(S, Reflection on the research).

Paul concurred in his reflections:

“The experience of participating in participatory action research reminded me of the pleasures of team teaching and collaboration” (P, Reflection on the research).

Howard was keen to comment on the lack of opportunity for shared experiences between academic peers in his day-to-day teaching role:

“It is fair to say that most university teaching is undertaken as a ‘solitary’ activity by the teacher in the sense that the teacher is usually alone with his/her students for the duration of the class and, indeed, for the entire module(s)”

(H, Reflection on the research).

As a result, he reported the benefits of engaging in collaborative activity:

“For me, the experience of this project was hugely beneficial and enjoyable: a rare opportunity to work with colleagues and students while raising questions about teaching and learning practices”

(H, Reflection on the research).

The positive experiences my co-researchers related about working collaboratively chime with the literature which argues that bringing together complementary knowledges and skills and making connections to other areas of academic university work enabled positive collaborative initiatives to flourish (Greenhalgh et al, 2006; Hayton et al, 2015). However, whether our researcher collaboration could lead to long-term, sustainable change remains unclear, situated as we are, within a structure based on hierarchy and oppositional agendas and working practices. Howard articulated this concern in his post-research reflection:

“It is often the case that senior management are imposing on staff a series of decisions according to an agenda driven by market concerns with little or no pedagogical value and usually without consultation with those involved. Taken together these circumstances are scarcely conducive to the encouragement of creative, collaborative curriculum development”

(H, Reflection on the research).

Working in what Whitchurch (2015) describes as a safe but risky way with academic co-researchers, while at odds with the structural HE constraints, enabled us to be more open to developing new pedagogical knowledge pertaining to work with school pupils and UG students.

Pedagogical change

As I have shown above, embedding WP work into the action research allowed for different relationships to be developed which enabled new knowledge to be formed. For example, in the first research phase (taster sessions), despite his aversion to student evaluation, the consistent messages Paul received through the triangulated feedback (pupil written feedback, co-researcher observation feedback and his own reflections), meant that he acknowledged he needed to redress the balance of teacher: pupil talk to scaffold the pupils' learning for his second taster session:

“One of the main things I responded to after the first school session was the need to recognise that, in terms of content, ‘less is sometimes more’”

(P, Reflection on the research).

Pupil input in the first research phase was a challenge to our researcher relationships as it raised various co-researcher objections which I found difficult to understand or empathise with. As I have discussed in chapters four and five, Paul questioned the validity of pupil feedback as a form of taster session evaluation, and all three co-researchers found the open hostility of some of the pupils at the second taster a considerable challenge to deal with, as described by Howard:

“It raised questions about how to develop approaches to teaching which were obliged to acknowledge a class's potential for signalling indifference to the subject at hand and to the teacher, and to deploy techniques – often with high levels of practised skill – which subverted the teacher's authority in the classroom”

(H, Reflection on the research).

However, pupil feedback and input were also a positive mechanism for pedagogical change. For example, Howard saw how sharing his personal educational history could be used to inspire visiting school pupils to re-engage or persist with their studies (Burke et al, 2017). Sarah, too, found the pupil input enlightening, and it encouraged her to try to take action in her UG

classroom because of her experience of adapting her taster session in response to feedback from the school pupils:

“I had to rethink my assumption that I always need to cover everything in a seminar and questioned whether this type of thinking undermines the need to take a flexible approach in the classroom”

(S, Reflection on the research).

Sarah’s overarching desire for her phase two intervention was to embed discussions of diversity in her classroom. This focus, and the positive experience she had had of seeing the school pupils engaged in creating their own murals, enabled her to consider moving away from the bonds of curriculum and primary sources and provide her UG students with the creative freedom to share and interpret their own personal histories. This also allowed Sarah to re-engage with creative approaches to learning about visual culture which was removed from her experiences of traditional university teaching but far more aligned to her worldview of how pedagogy should be:

“I could now embed visual culture in my teaching practice too, which is rather apt given that I’ve always stressed to my undergraduate students that visual culture is a powerful and alternative form of literacy. I had finally realised this statement in my own teaching”

(S, Reflection on the research).

Sarah’s convictions about the need for her to be the source of all knowledge for her class were challenged and, as a result, this allowed more students to make far richer contributions than was usually the case. In our conference paper¹⁸ she explained:

¹⁸ Collaborative Action Research network (CARN) Conference, Manchester, 2018.

“This experiment in delivering and adapting outreach sessions for UG learners gave me the inspiration I needed to break old habits, test out new approaches, and finally inject some creativity and satisfaction into my own practice”

(S, CARN conference, October 2018).

Although the change Sarah made affected only a single group of UG students, Sarah was able to re-use the strategies in other UG classes having tried them first, with the school pupils, and second, with this class. In addition, as I recount in the previous chapter, Sarah’s thinking about how she taught her sensitive material was transformed by the students’ responses and she anticipated this would positively influence opportunities for her future students to participate fully and confidently in their learning. In her recent reflections on the research she writes:

“Addendum: In 2021, after more than a year of online teaching, I am no longer teaching on the first-year core module Approaches to American Culture. I am, however, still using some of the same ideas and techniques in my optional module for second-year undergraduates. These techniques have enabled me to scaffold students’ learning through worksheets and sets of keywords and include more creative tasks, for example, an image-text poster designed to map out different character trajectories in a fictional narrative about migrant life in the American city”

(S, Reflection on the research).

Feedback from a colleague or consultant can help to effect positive change in the quality of HE teaching (Prebble et al, 2004). Feedback from and classroom interactions with the school pupils and her UG students provided concrete evidence of what enabled them to engage and connect to their learning, a powerful catalyst for change for Sarah. Action for change is evident in Sarah’s

pedagogical approaches in phase 2 and since the research was completed, and has been sustained despite the pressures of her workplace, a threat articulated by Howard:

“I labour this point because the excellent pedagogical work accomplished by this project, and its potential for further development and application, are subject to the realities of an institutional environment with values which can often be seen to contradict good pedagogical practice”

(H, Reflection on the research).

Pedagogical change occurred through our interactions with pupils whose behaviours in tasters and feedback post-tasters provided an immediacy of feedback to my academic co-researchers that is lacking from university WP work. Engaging in teaching school pupils and UG students as part of a research project enabled us to “explore processes in depth” and my co-researchers to test out diverse ways of sharing disciplinary knowledge (Hayton et al, 2015, p.1261). Howard’s reflection on the ways in which everyday reality might impede change taking place provides a useful and critical lens with which to consider where actions were limited and change, therefore, negligible.

Missed opportunities for change

Action research aims for action as a result of knowledge or learning, but, equally importantly, action researchers strive to “find spaces for self-critical investigation and analysis of their own reality” (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2006, p.127). Howard and Paul benefited from our collaborative taster session first research phase yet were not able to continue the momentum of change into their second UG teaching research phase. Paul recognised this and articulated how the challenges of re-locating the research into the disempowering and frustrating UG teaching context had prevented his whole-hearted investment in the second research phase:

“I probably didn’t devote or have enough time to discuss that with them but it was also unfortunate they were....they were one of the most resistant groups I’ve ever had unfortunately on a new module” (P, Interview).

Paul’s description of his group as “resistant” returned him to his earlier position in the research, as explored in chapter five, where he had struggled with the need for the school pupils to take an active role in their learning and when the second group of pupils used silence to express their non-engagement. This signalled to me that Paul’s pedagogical thinking had not evolved very far from the first research phase and that there was a resistance on his part to change or adapt his teaching to enable less student “resistance.” I found it disappointing and difficult to respond to in a constructive way when there was little appetite for change.

In the second phase of our research project, my co-researchers positioned me as “critical friend” to help them develop their interventions for more engaged UG students (Costa and Kallick, 1993). Enabling or accepting the early end of their interventions rather than helping Howard and Paul to continue to interrogate their original wishes for classroom change felt as if I was not fulfilling my critical friend role. Yet, conflicting with my desire for action was an equally weighted concern: my heightened awareness of how disillusioned my co-researchers felt in their teaching roles and, while it was disappointing not to embed significant change with them in their classrooms, I felt it necessary to be respectful of their boundaries in the second research phase, especially as this second phase spoke to and had been shaped by their agendas.

My decision to step away when my co-researchers felt they had gone as far as they might, acknowledges the limitations and the reality for effecting wholesale, positive change as action research instigators; co-researchers are unlikely to be “empowered, liberated and transformed on our schedules” (Maguire, 1993, p.175). This heralded a move from our interactions occurring as

a professional transaction (I ask academics for input; they provide it), to working with my co-researchers with sensitivity and respect of their limits. This was a choice I made in our HE context where I had the lesser status. In another situation with a different lead researcher, other choices might be made. Where we might not quite have been engaging in textbook participatory action for change throughout the process, we were researching, and taking action

“participatorally” (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995). Change can occur through action research in many ways: some on a personal level as I have discussed above and sometimes in small and possibly limited ways. The process of engaging with and reflecting on change, including the reasons why it might not be occurring, provides us with clearer insights into others’ mindsets and motivations and can still be valuable.

Changes to researcher role and positionality

The literature about professional university support staff in HE highlights how professional staff feel sidelined or ignored (Pourshafie and Brady, 2013). My ambition (for it was mine alone at the outset of the research) was to challenge the existing hierarchies which were part of the university structural barriers to fair access and participation, the impact of which Farrell (2009) found to have a “negative correlation between a hierarchical or bureaucratic administrative style and (student) retention” (p87). In retrospect, I must question whether my ambition to challenge the university hierarchy was not only driven by my desire for fair access, but also strongly related to my own sense of role impotence.

As I have discussed, being positioned as the lead researcher with a group of academic colleagues was an inherent challenge as the single “non-academic” in the research team. Despite my role as lead researcher and pioneer of the research enquiry, I have recounted how unequal to this task I felt and how this impaired my ability to lead, challenge and question all that occurred in the early stages of the research and later, in phase two (UG teaching) when Howard and Paul lost their momentum. Herr and Anderson show the possibilities for insider and outsider researcher positionality in action research in their Continuum and Implications of Positionality table (Herr & Anderson, 2014, Table 1). The table suggests four positions between which a researcher might expect to move during the research: Insider researches self/own practice, Insider in collaboration with other insiders, Insider in collaboration with outsiders, Reciprocal collaboration (insider/outside teams). I was operating somewhere between the first two points at the start of the research, thus meeting the criteria for both of the following: Insider (researches own practice) and Insider in collaboration with other insiders. However, if I was the (WP) insider as compared to my co-researchers (and certainly I did not feel, for much of the research, that we were united in our experiences and understandings) my experience aligned more neatly with: Insider in

collaboration with outsiders. By the second research phase (UG teaching) it could be said that I was engaged with Sarah in: Reciprocal collaboration (insider: outsider teams).

Researcher positionality is a useful barometer with which to recognise how closely you are adhering to the ideals of action research and a way in which to acknowledge the “gap between idealism and the realities of participatory research projects” (Maguire, 1987, p.127). My positionality fluctuated in response to the moment in the research, the exchanges of knowledge with my co-researchers and how collaboratively we were engaging with each other. I was striving for the ideal of reciprocal collaboration throughout the research, but the reality of our researcher and working relationships meant that there was challenge, conflict and confusion which made for more of a binary outsider/insider positionality. The fluctuations in this positionality also illustrated how we were able to navigate those challenges, establish common understandings and unpack issues at key points during the research, such as Paul’s recognition that he was equally anxious about speaking out at conferences as were his UG students in his classroom. This shows how action research has the potential to enable social change through re-negotiation of previous and long-held positions.

Whitchurch (2008) talks about third space professional staff, those who work in an unbounded way across their institution, such as WP staff, as those who are “re-conceptualising the space that they and others occupy” (p381). I believe that each of us engaged in re-positioning ourselves and re-conceptualising our roles in relation to each other and to the school pupils and UG students throughout and even after the research. After the research had finished, Howard used the idea of his personal educational history as his introduction to a session he was delivering at a residential WP summer school. He had found this a powerful way to de-mystify university and university “professors” during the taster sessions in our first research phase, re-positioning himself as an academic failure rather than an elite university academic. By re-using this approach, he ensured

that the sixth formers at the summer school had the opportunity to recognise themselves and see their potentially complex educational histories represented. Sarah re-conceptualised how she introduced her curriculum content to her UG students, sensitively including the experiences of her students, leading to higher levels of engagement and personal investment in the learning. Paul re-conceptualised how to introduce his film module using a student-centred starting point, one year after the research. As Paul's case demonstrates, evaluating change in action research is a complex activity as it may not always be immediately evident that change has taken place. This has implications for asserting the validity of action research as a methodological approach, when the changes are nuanced and, sometimes, distanced from the research.

I had conceptualised my role as a change agent; in my day job I tried to effect change in terms of university access for students with barriers to accessing HE, and in our research, I was hoping for change in relation to and with my co-researchers. I had assumed that it was they who needed to change, their practice that needed to evolve. I had brought significant bias into the research, based on my experiences as a professional member of staff and reinforced, to some degree, by the literature about power struggles in action research that I had engaged with prior to and during the research (e.g. Mason and Boutilier, 1996; Jacobs, 2010; Gaventa and Cornwall, 2015). In many ways, it was easier and neater for me to concur with literature and perceive my co-researchers as those privileged individuals who held the power in the researcher relationships with the school pupils and with me. Yet while I was ascribing privilege and elite status to my co-researchers, I did not at any point in the research ask them why they thought so few colleagues volunteered for WP work, thus positioning myself as the expert in this matter. When Paul sought me out before we embarked on the second research phase (UG teaching) to ask for my help, he ventured, unsolicited: "I think the reason that people don't volunteer for WP is because they don't know how to do it" (Paul, Café conversation, Mid-phases).

This was illuminating for me because it captured the essence of the learning from the taster sessions about pace, content, interaction, and pupil voice. Reflecting on this conversation later highlights how little I had thought about *my* need to change how I presented WP work to the colleagues in my School, what types of conversations or support I ought to be offering to them, and how the assumptions I had been making about academic will, altruism or interest had been influencing my actions. My ability to be reflexive during the research had been tainted by what I had expected to occur and how I had expected my co-researchers to behave or respond. Despite my avowed commitment to action research principles of democracy and integrity, I was guilty of *talking about* the values necessary for an emancipatory process, rather than *applying* them in action (Prilleltensky, 1997).

Conclusion

Katsarou (2017), in her discussion of action research paradigms, suggests that transformational change through action research can be individual or personal to a researcher, while at the same time social or political through the changed behaviours and actions of the research team.

Katsarou's idea about the multi-faceted impact of action encapsulates the changes Sarah made to her teaching mindset and practice, resulting in a reconnection with teaching theory long since forgotten or not perceived to fit into the pedagogical realm of HE. The changes which Sarah reports to be embedded in her UG teaching are offering all her students ways of engaging in and contributing to their learning through the explicit inclusion of their voices, their experiences and the multi-modal forms of text analysis Sarah now uses.

Taking action which can lead to change is an ambition of action research and one which is not always easy to identify or to quantify. Changes in beliefs, convictions and mindsets are those which may occur during the research but not be fully understood until later (Kennedy, 2018).

The reflections of all three co-researchers provide evidence of awareness of the shifts they made, both large and small. In my case I gained insight into where I had expertise that was useful to my academic co-researchers and colleagues (practical pedagogical knowledge) and where I lacked expertise about how to communicate and support academic staff (theoretical pedagogical knowledge and offering collaborative planning).

In this chapter I have discussed the enablements and constraints to actions emerging from our research and the types of change resulting from this action, including pedagogical, relational, and personal. I have reflected on where change was not fully realised or sustained and what the barriers to this were, including my own role in hindering or supporting my co-researchers towards positive change. I have also considered where my bias about my academic co-researchers prevented me from understanding why they might have struggled to accept or make changes to their teaching and what this realisation means for my future WP work. In the concluding chapter, I discuss the experience of undertaking collaborative research with academic co-researchers, summarising the knowledge that has arisen from the action research, and outlining the contribution this knowledge can make to cross-professional-boundary university projects.

Chapter Seven – Conclusion

In this concluding chapter, I draw together the strands of the thesis to reflect on the research and clarify its contribution to knowledge. First, I re-visit the original problem of working with academic staff on WP university work. Next, I reflect on some of the enablements and

constraints to collaborative work encountered by the research team, and on the changes of perspective, relationships and practice which occurred as a result. Following this I discuss how professional/academic staff collaboration can positively affect the structural hierarchies and mandated processes of a university. I then focus on the principles I derived from action research as tools with which to encourage collaborative approaches to WP work, clarifying the contribution to knowledge this thesis makes. Finally, I raise the issue of how WP work will fare in an increasingly regulated and decreasingly creative university space and ask whether action research might propose an alternative approach to the issue of professional university and academic staff working together on cross-boundary areas such as WP. Taken together, these strands offer insights into the barriers faced by university staff in both academic and professional roles working in a highly regulated and hierarchical sector. This thesis, therefore, contributes to knowledge about the processes of productive, collaborative relationships between academic and professional university staff, challenging the current regulatory HE approaches by emphasizing the importance of relationships and the relevance of professional and academic expertise to address issues such as fair access. The process and findings recounted offer an argument for employing action research processes to encourage collaboration at a deep and interpersonal level, to recognise and draw on the expertise of all staff, leading to improved experiences for staff and for students.

Academic engagement in university WP work

In chapter one, I posited the issue of academic engagement in WP work. I related how working as a professional member of staff in an area of university work requiring academic input meant that I was reliant on academic colleagues' goodwill and interest in WP. I reflected on how I was unsure why there was little appetite for this type of social justice project, particularly when I perceived fair access to be a primary concern for universities. I also recounted how my professional background and experience prepared me for liaising with schools and colleges but not for engaging academic staff. As a WP professional staff member, I conceptualise my role as sitting in the unbounded 'third space', allowing me the autonomy and creativity to choose the focus of the School's WP work and develop outreach activities to cater to local school pupils' needs while fulfilling institutional policy. In chapters four and five I have recounted how I was surprised to discover that my co-researchers felt lacking in autonomy, which affected their ability to be pedagogically bold and creative in the classroom.

My frustrations with the apparent lack of academic commitment to WP work had prevented me from seeing fair access from their perspective: as a top-down university policy and another administrative task for which they were unlikely to be recognised, promoted, or rewarded. This had led to a gap in my understanding of and communication with academic colleagues, leading to a desire to explore the tensions created by the institutional binary divide using a collaborative, discursive process, such as action research, which made time to examine how both professional and academic staff approached WP work and provided space to surface differences, share knowledge, and reflect on our motivations, beliefs and practices as teachers. Understanding the ways in which my co-researchers experienced WP work and UG teaching provided me with insights into the challenges of their roles and helped me recognise the knowledge I needed to bring to collaborative work with academic colleagues.

Enablements for and constraints on collaboration

In chapter two, using the literature examining the identity and experiences of professional university support staff, I provided evidence of the dysfunctionality of professional working relationships between academic and ‘non-academic’ staff and the alienating impact of this on professional staff. Issues of nomenclature and hierarchy are reported to impact on professional staff morale and sense of value within their organisation. At the same time, the evolving direction of HE and political interrogation of the university’s role, has impacted on the workload, status, and autonomy of academic staff, signalling sector-wide disenfranchisement. Academics may cite the imposition of policies designed to increase student numbers and generate income, and the subsequent rise of professional university staff, who are often characterised as not understanding or empathising with academic staff, as the source of their malaise. Conversely, professional staff may feel the skills and knowledge they bring into the academy are side-lined and ignored by their academic counterparts. These attitudes do not augur well for successful collaborative or cross-boundary working relationships between academic and professional staff.

In action research, shifts of power are both an ambition of the research (i.e. privileging the voices of the unheard) and a challenge to the research (i.e. resistant co-researchers). In chapter four I recount the early stages of the research, where I felt myself to be the outsider with my co-researchers as the insiders. In chapter five I also relate how difficult it was for my co-researchers to adapt their teaching or adjust their mindsets. Change was occurring, but it was uncomfortable change and therefore we were resistant to it. This period of discomfort was difficult but necessary: collaboration with colleagues with different agendas, priorities and areas of expertise was always likely to be complicated with professional tensions or conflicts that were unlikely to be easy or straightforward to resolve. To develop trust, understanding and respectful working

relationships over the longer term, it is crucial to create an environment in which colleagues can acknowledge, accept, and work through this type of professional discomfort.

We began the research as one professional and three academic staff, a relationship in which there were clear paradoxes; as a practitioner, I habitually worked in a context of rapid change and adapted my practice responsively, whereas my co-researchers, as academics, were more comfortable with an informed and evidence-based approach to their research and their teaching. Positioning our research around pre-determined taster sessions, although a plan not fully collaborative in its inception, provided us with a clear and tangible focus to work towards, experience and then reflect on together, which went some way to challenge our differing starting points. This activity incorporated the need for responsive action (during the taster sessions and following feedback from the first taster session) and theoretically informed reflection (during review and evaluation sessions and individually). By engaging with the tensions created by the differences in our respective university roles and therefore our individual perspectives and experiences, we recognised the importance of working in partnership to explore these differences and discover where these converged, and what new knowledge emerged for all of us.

The second phase yielded more mixed results than the first, although my co-researchers were unanimous in identifying the benefits they gained from engaging in the knowledge co-construction process as a team. I was anxious that the new knowledge we had uncovered during our time together might quickly become a distant memory once the team had disbanded. After all, Howard and Paul had found it challenging to sustain their focus on the research once working in isolation from the rest of the team. The difficulties my co-researchers faced in continuing to develop their teaching in the second research phase might not, therefore, position action research as an appealing tool for cross-boundary collaborative working in universities. The messy and non-linear nature of action research is well documented in the literature, using

action research principles against which to determine how far research is pure or impure. I argue that impure or imperfect action research still has the potential to offer university academic and professional staff insights and to co-construct knowledge that would otherwise not be produced.

Pedagogy was an unexpected focus of our research, arising from the pedagogical knowledge needed to plan and deliver the first phase (taster sessions) and plan and teach the second phase (UG teaching). In chapter five I report how engaging with the (sometimes challenging) behaviour, questions and feedback of the school pupils gave rise to an interest in exploring the practice of inclusive teaching and encouraged my co-researchers to pursue a second research phase. Our research became less about WP work and more about how complementary knowledges could be harnessed to make positive changes in pedagogies for access and for participation. Tentatively drawing on theory as well as practice to formulate effective and accessible taster sessions provided us all with the opportunity to extend our expertise and develop a common language with which to discuss teaching.

To enable university staff to collaborate, and to share and develop knowledge about university work, the linear and often rigid systems, and processes of a university like Midtown need to be challenged by both academic and professional staff. Universities must place value on their staff, the expertise they bring, and the benefits to the individual and to the organisation of these types of cross-boundary conversations and projects, rather than keeping professional and academic roles as bounded and inflexible. Successful collaboration might not result in extensive outputs but is more likely to result in improved professional relationships and mutual understanding and respect. It is also likely to generate knowledge, even if the knowledge is about what is not possible within the limitations of a university or a university role. As I outlined in the previous chapter, not all co-researchers moved comfortably towards change as a result of participating in the research. However, the strength and validation that we derived from investing time in our

practice and in each other as colleagues attests to the benefits of such an approach and is especially necessary to counter the confining effects of ever-increasing regulations on every aspect of university life.

Contribution to knowledge

The main contribution to knowledge made by this thesis is about the processes of productive, collaborative relationships between academic and professional university staff. This knowledge challenges the current regulatory HE approaches by emphasizing both the importance of professional, co-operative relationships across different professional roles in the university sector and, the relevance of the combination of professional and academic expertise to address issues such as fair access. This knowledge can be broken down into knowledges in different realms, which I address below: personal knowledge; practice knowledge about conducting action research in HE; pedagogical knowledge about access and participation practices; political knowledge about the constraints academic staff faced in their roles, and the scholarly knowledge that was needed to support collaborative cross-boundary relationships in universities.

Personal knowledge

Personal knowledge is a valid outcome of doctoral research, particularly professional doctoral research, as the knowledge gained during the research process has a profound and lasting effect on self and career. Personal knowledge has had a role to play in constraining and enabling collaborative approaches to the research, brought, as it was, by all four co-researchers. We gained an understanding about where we needed to develop our knowledge and skills to deliver or support the delivery of effective WP taster sessions or UG seminars. Personal expertise about disciplines was combined with pedagogical knowledge to co-produce shared knowledge about access and participation approaches. The greatest growth in personal knowledge is mine and

touches on each of the other realms of knowledge: I have knowledge about the processes of action research and the enactment of action research principles (practice). I recognize the knowledge I bring to my WP role and how I need to present this to encourage and support academic staff to develop WP work (pedagogical). I have knowledge about my colleagues and what impedes them from investing time and energy into teaching practice, including WP work (political). I am aware of what I can contribute to a contemporary UK university and am more confident in articulating the knowledge I have, and more informed in how I communicate this (scholarly). The experience of acquiring knowledges in this way as a university professional working with academic staff sheds a light on how the two groups might work together and forge relationships leading to productive change.

Practice knowledge

Conducting action research gave rise to knowledge about the practice of collaborative enquiry in HE with co-researchers from academic and professional staff groups. As a novice researcher committed to the principles of action research, I approached the research with ambition and optimism. The experience of navigating action research and aiming to enact the core principles of collaboration, co-construction and action for social change provided insights and understanding about the difficulties of ensuring that democratic principles are upheld both during the research itself and, as I have explained in chapter five, in the writing up of the research. I have developed knowledge about both the practice and the theory of action research, and how each is strengthened by knowledge of the other. This research provides context-specific practice knowledge relating to collaborative working in HE, which demonstrates how an action research approach can successfully challenge the regulatory processes that often disable or impede collaborative working in HE. This knowledge can be generalised and extended to enable productive co-working across professional boundaries in multiple sectors.

Pedagogical knowledge

In action research, researchers need to be open and prepared for unexpected knowledge to emerge as relevant to the project. This allows for the responsive co-creation of knowledge according to the research conditions, events, and co-researchers' input. Pedagogy was an unexpected area of knowledge arising from the need to plan and deliver the first phase (taster sessions) and plan and teach the second phase (UG teaching). Our pedagogical knowledge was developed during the classroom experiences in the research and this knowledge was clarified through my engagement with the inclusive pedagogies literature and the development of six principles of practice in the writing up. I came to the research with innate, practice-based pedagogical knowledge, gleaned through classroom-based teacher training, rather than theoretically-informed knowledge. My co-researchers' discovery that pedagogical knowledge was necessary for them to refine their own and evaluate each other's teaching forced me to draw on my pedagogical knowledge and use it to support my co-researchers in their classrooms. The process of collaborative research allows for knowledge to emerge organically, revealing how pedagogical knowledge is crucial to the development and delivery of WP work and that pedagogy is at the heart of WP work, both for access and for participation.

Political knowledge

Educational research is influenced by the context in which it is situated, in terms of practice and policy. Action research, through its iterative, discursive, and shared processes, allows for a deeper understanding of the political tensions in which the research is situated. Knowledge which I aspired to uncover through the research related to the constraints to collaborative WP work with academic staff. I had brought several biases into the research, including an assumption that academic staff were not invested in this type of social justice project. Working directly with academic colleagues as co-researchers and spending an extended period with them during the research lifespan provided clearer insights as to why colleagues were not regularly participating in this work. Through our discussions about the difficulties of teaching school pupils and our efforts to address key concerns raised by my co-researchers about UG student engagement, I gained insights into the challenges my co-researchers faced from the bureaucratic leadership of their institution and their sector, and how embattled they perceived their academic status to be. I grew in knowledge and understanding about how lacking in status they felt, which was at odds with my perceptions of the university hierarchy. Action research processes involving the investment of time and dialogue, offer the opportunity to understand and explore the social and political realities of colleagues and develop political, context-relevant knowledge which can re-frame future cross-professional-boundary communications and collaborations.

Scholarly knowledge

This research has shown the importance of consolidating practice-based and pedagogical knowledge through engagement with fields of literature relating to WP in HE and inclusive pedagogies to communicate and share knowledge credibly and coherently with academic staff. When I began in my WP role, I assumed that my previous career in education and leading social justice projects gave me the knowledge I needed to manage a WP programme at a university.

Knowledge gained through this research process show how experiential insights have been enhanced by theoretical groundings, and the knowledge about the pedagogical theory and practice of WP work in universities provide connections into other areas and priorities of university work such as EDI, and teaching and learning. Personally, scholarly knowledge has developed practice-based expertise which I can share using the recognisably academic language of a university workforce. This has enabled me to successfully apply for promotion on the academic track, attain Senior Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy, have a voice as School EDI Director, and confidently present papers at conferences about my WP and EDI work, and about action research. Enabling the growth of knowledge through personal evolution and collaborative research shows how the regulatory processes in HE can be successfully challenged, resulting in improved practices, deeper contextual understandings, and mutually respectful professional relationships.

The role of action research in supporting collaborative university work

Since this research began, the landscape of WP has shifted. Universities are now required to develop Access and Participation plans which outline the steps each institution plans to take to ensure that students with barriers to accessing *and* participating in HE are an institutional priority. Universities are asked to provide evidence of a whole provider approach, including teaching, learning and assessment participation strategies, and to include students representing the diversity of the institution in evaluating the APP content. With the increased focus on equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in universities in response to the rise in student numbers and the diversifying of the student population, WP work is no longer an initiative focusing solely on schools and colleges outreach (access) but part of the response to the student experience (participation). Arguably, WP is finally getting its moment in the sun. The “WP” bracket now purposefully includes care leavers, mature students, white men from low socio-economic

backgrounds and refugees as well as those young people living in postcodes with low participation in HE or who are first in their family to apply to university¹⁹. This requires WP colleagues to find ways of working across professional boundaries with staff with responsibility for the student experience, student welfare, the personal tutoring system or EDI. Even though work with schools and colleges is largely unchanged in terms of its focus on de-mystifying university and creating sustained as well as short-term interventions for schools and individual pupils, WP staff are now a presence in larger university conversations.

This increased visibility, however, carries with it the threat of increased regulation and, in the longer term, decreased opportunities for collaboration and innovation or, as Collini suggests, a reduction of “voluntary cooperation and individual autonomy” (2012, p.134). Student support roles, for example, which historically comprised a named and known individual to contact and elicited a personalised response to students, have been supplanted by technology and teams of staff, rendered invisible and, to a degree, impotent by electronic mailboxes. I am not convinced that providing a higher level of regulation of WP strategy via the APP will enable a seismic shift in how academic staff views WP work. As I have discussed in chapter two, excessive monitoring of any area of university work reduces it to a tick-box exercise and adds to the academic administrative task load. This is unlikely to increase the willingness of academic staff to participate in WP work. Neither is annual monitoring likely to engender collaborative cross-boundary conversations in which knowledge is shared and created about inclusion of all students. Without embedding principles of collaboration and co-construction of knowledge in professional/academic interactions, staff perspectives will remain unchanged and divided.

¹⁹ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/>

Despite a more substantial body of statutory guidance and an APP framework for WP work, there is still no specific guidance for professional staff working with academic staff, so action research principles of practice can offer a template for collaborative working. Taking collaborative approaches to work with the wellbeing and success of students at its core has the potential for deeper connections between academic and professional staff workstreams which transcend the regulatory requirements. Enlisting a strategic and shared institutional approach to working in this way with democratic principles and equally valued academic and professional expertise would significantly change the professional/academic working landscape and leverage the knowledge of university professionals. Professional colleagues in areas such as academic development and EDI bring a wealth of expertise which, in partnership with the specific knowledge of academic staff, could enrich the experience of university students. Removing the boundaries of university work through making time for all staff to have the opportunity to co-develop knowledge can contribute to better informed approaches with students and more supportive and respectful relationships in the institution, leading to positive change.

Conclusion

The dearth of examples of successful collaborative working, and especially collaborative WP work in the literature points to the need for change to offer adequate support to students with barriers to accessing HE. Third space or blended professionals such as academic development staff, library staff or education and student experience staff, working with academic staff, have the capacity to mediate multiple institutional barriers and boundaries. To enable students to be recognised, supported and successful at university, collaboration with academic staff is integral to the work of professional staff, as teaching staff become the first point of contact for students. Finding spaces and strategies in which to develop these partnerships seems, therefore, to be

crucial to WP and other university work such as student welfare, student recruitment and academic skills development.

Action research argues for all knowledge to be valued and for no single type of knowledge to be held in absolute authority. Working in a university with academic colleagues presents a challenge for this element of action research ideology; a university is a place of research and learning so academic expertise inevitably headlines. Universities, however, are having to adapt to new technology, more diverse student groups with different needs and an increasing number of external measurements of “excellence”. University professional staff provide necessary knowledge for the evolving sector. Engaging all staff in conversations to find common ground and new ways of solving recurrent issues using collaborative and change-focused principles such as those that can be extrapolated from action research, would alleviate some of the anxiety and displacement felt by both academic and professional staff. This, in turn, would help to create a culture of cross-boundary staff support and nurture, embedding institutional values which can then benefit the university students.

The experience of research using action research was challenging. Opening the communicative space to start a collaborative project in a managerialised and hierarchical environment was tough. There is, of course, an inherent tension in proposing an exploratory and inclusive form of working in what is an outcomes-orientated, politically driven and highly regulated sector. I tried to create “an arena for the expression of interpersonal needs and the development of social contexts in which these needs are met (and frustrated)” (Wicks and Reason, 2009, p.248). I cannot claim to have always achieved this, yet the space that was co-created was safe enough for us to rehearse being unsafe, and one in which we were able to move slowly past our professional barriers towards collegiality. My co-researchers spoke about how sorely they needed such spaces and moments in which to collaboratively reflect on and question their everyday (teaching)

practices. The research began with a premise but not a precise question and the principle of co-construction of knowledge was needed to reveal the questions the research should be asking about collaborative working with academic staff, and the knowledge that these questions then uncovered. Investing time with and in each other to uncover new knowledge, to finesse inclusive policies and practices, is both of paramount importance and meets deeply-felt academic and professional staff need.

Tables:**Table 1:**

<i>Positionality of researcher</i>	<i>Contributes to:</i>	<i>Traditions</i>
Insider researches self/own practice	Knowledge base, improved/critiqued practice, self/professional transformation	Practitioner research, narrative research, self-study, autobiography
Insider in collaboration with other insiders	Knowledge base, improved/critiqued practice, professional/organizational transformation	Feminist consciousness raising groups, inquiry/study groups, teams.
Insider in collaboration with outsider(s)	Knowledge base, improved/critiqued practice, professional/organizational transformation	Inquiry/study groups
Reciprocal collaboration (insider-outsider teams)	Knowledge base, improved/critiqued practice, professional/organizational transformation	Collaborative forms of participatory action research that achieve equitable power relations

Continuum of researcher positionality and implications. Source Herr & Anderson 2005.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Email to schools to recruit to the research project

Thinking Ahead – studying arts subjects at university

We would like to invite you to bring some of your year 9 pupils to attend a half day of taster sessions at the university of XXXX. Pupils will attend 3 sessions of 45 minutes each in French (not language), Film studies and American studies as well as have a mini campus tour with undergraduate arts students.

The purpose of the day is to give pupils an introduction to visiting a university campus and experiencing a university seminar. It is targeted at those year 9 pupils who have the ability but might perhaps lack the confidence to think about applying to a highly selective university such as the University of XXXX.

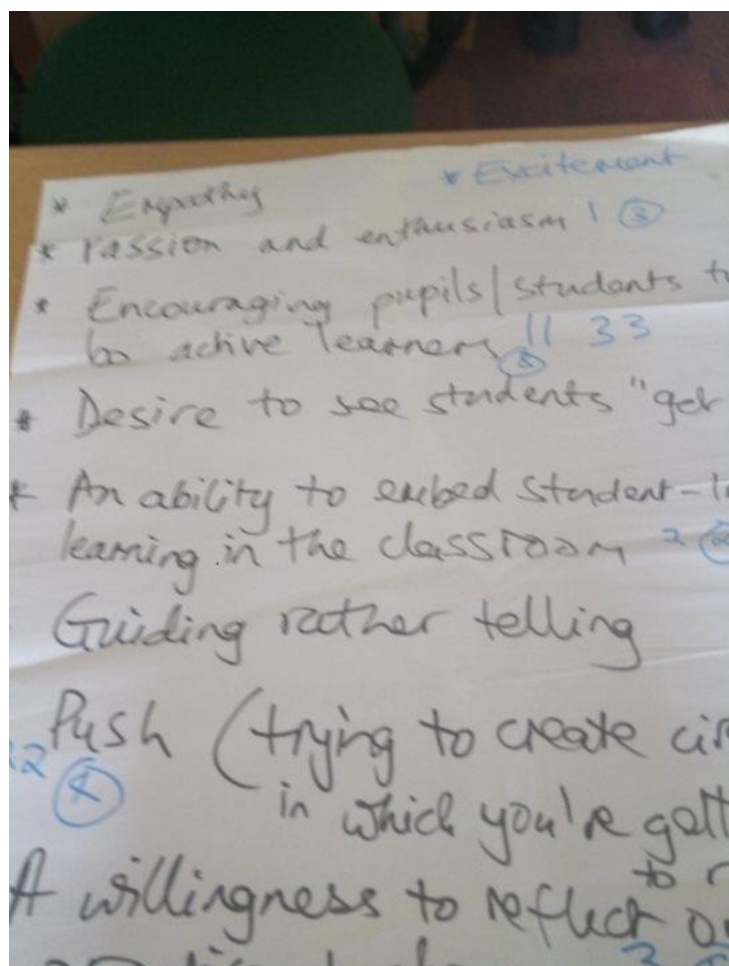
Part of what we hope to achieve is a better understanding of how academic staff can deliver really engaging sessions to this age group so we would also like to ask the pupils questions about their experience of the event over lunch which will be provided.

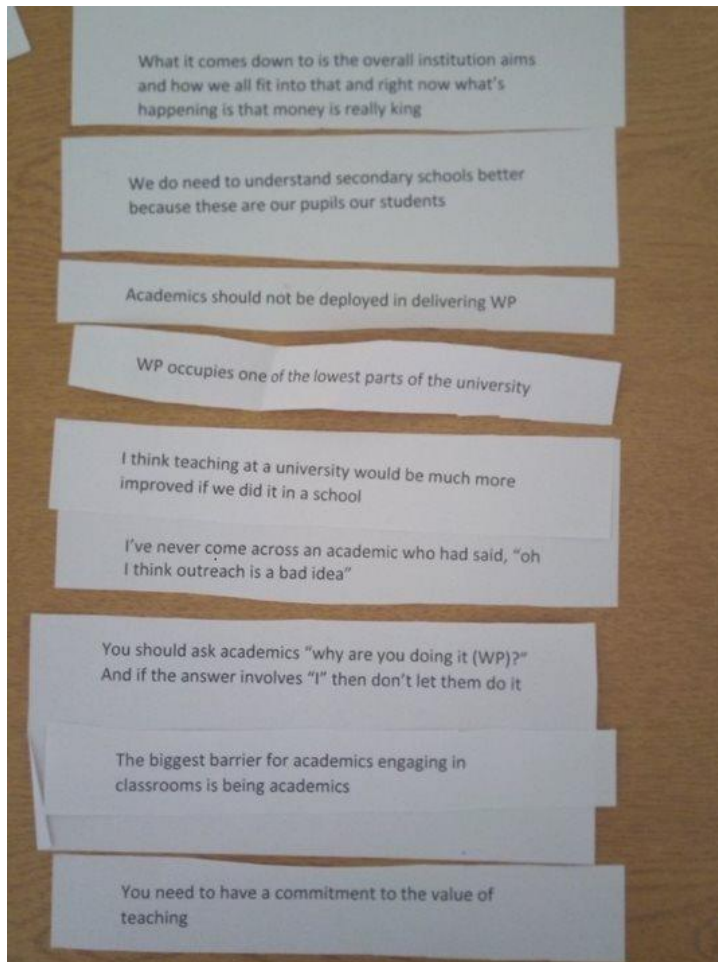
The day will run from 09.15am-1pm and all enquiries should be sent to XXXX

This event will run on two dates so please express your preference: 16th OR 18th May

Total number of places for EACH date: 20

Appendix 2 Reconnaissance – discussion about effective teaching



Appendix 3 Reconnaissance – statement sorting exercise**Appendix 4 Reconnaissance meeting – my reflections**

Recon meeting purpose is to "position my research project, answer any questions...start to understand your views on and experience of teaching" - ownership of research - power in PAR

Attached the Hayton 2015 DCA research project article and a short piece I wrote about action research, early on in my thinking.

Recon Meeting

NGT questions:

Why is WP important?

X 3 final statements (much discussion)

What are the characteristics of good quality teaching? Encouraging students to be active learners

Sorting statements from recon interviews

DiaryRecon

Questioning the nature and purpose of it (AR) - *purpose of recon is to question, yet I felt under this; why?*

Felt slightly on the back foot...an awareness of my inexperience and narrowness of understanding compared to theirs - personal perspective on our respective statuses

NGT worked well - process well planned and appropriately chosen (skill/knowledge of leadership)

We managed to create a top 3..not necessarily a consensus - mainly convergent views on the most important characteristics of good quality teaching: difficult to stick with

Appendix 5 Sarah's Taster session Lesson Plan

Lesson Plan **Date:** 16/5/17

Class:	Time:	Room: (A8) A1
Aim(s): To understand and mural as "a people's art" + to design a mural that reflects this idea		
Objectives:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to understand what a mural is + connect to own individual group experience • to plan + group mural based around images + keywords to group pack • to feed back on why they created this mural + to question "what is art?" 		
Learning Outcomes:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge + understanding of the history purpose + context of mural • Critical thinking skills + knowledge of key words • Effective group work, time management communication skills 		
Resources:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PowerPoint slides • Group packing containing a) task sheet b) key words c) images d) quotation from mural artist 		

Starter Activity:

Time	Teacher:	Pupils:
930 (1)	Introduction: who I am + what I do	
10	Show images of contemporary mural WHAT IS A MURAL? Show images of traditional + global mural.	Pupils to say if they recognise images or know where they are Pupils to say if they've ever seen a mural where.

LESSON OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

Date: _____ Time: _____
 School: _____ Class: _____
 Language: _____ Teacher: _____

Focus of the Lesson Observation:
 P. 100 (Poetry)

Observation notes and key points:

Concepts of left & right may need explanation before asking where Trump is: (political spectrum)
 At the French consulate taken down, it's for him
 → standard.
 categories of body language could do with illustrations — pictures or clips
 Quêke talker (à partir de son forum) → now using
 Examples
 Exercise based on slogan has too little to go on
 — they have to draw on memory — difficult for
 students to do — doesn't understand what's required.
 5 min exercise. → although, students don't use
 with examples

on:

Year 9 Arts event

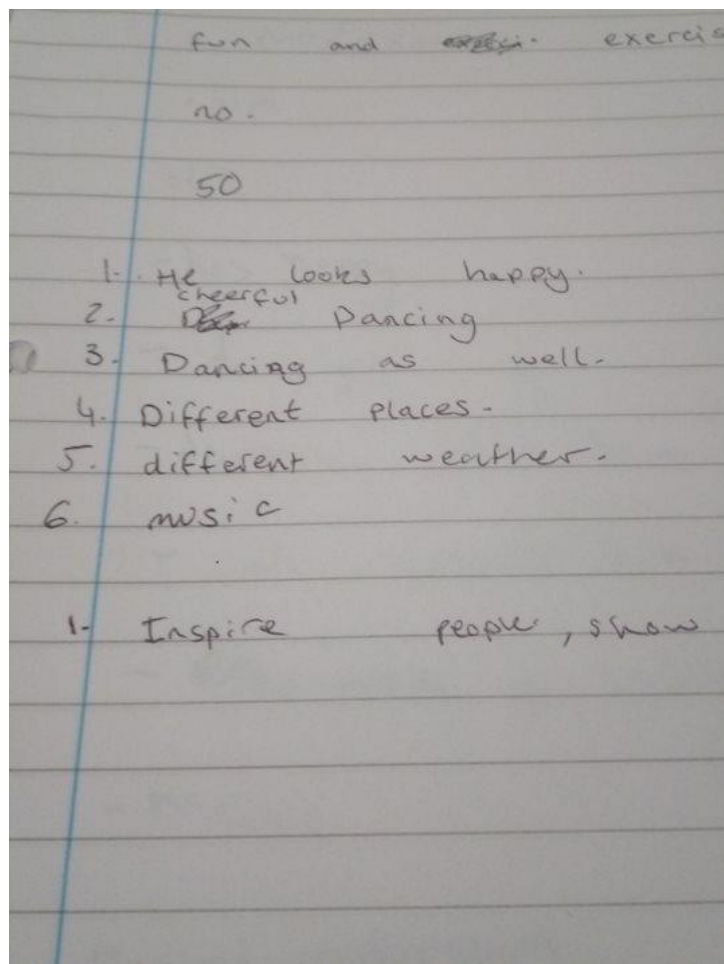
SESSION THREE

What did you enjoy about this session?

Fin and engaged us a lot and liked how he used a video
to get the point across to us.

What could be improved in this session?

A lot of talking and not enough activities

Appendix 8 Pupil work in taster session (Howard's session)

Appendix 9 Pupil questions for the co-researchers

Year 9 Arts event

QUESTIONS FOR THE UNIVERSITY TEACHERS

QUESTION FOR:

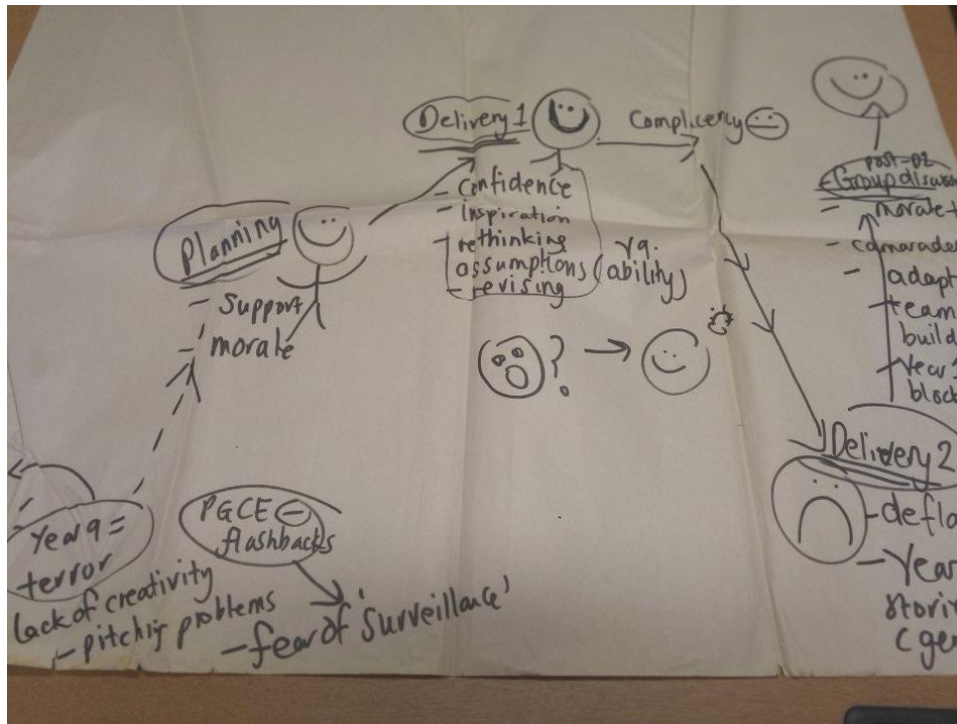
How long do the lectures last.

QUESTION FOR:

Why did you pick ~~to~~ your subject to
-take a degree in

QUESTION FOR:

Appendix 10 Sarah self-reflection at end of Phase 1



Appendix 11 Plan for Phase 1 Evaluation session

- Review feedback (individually).
- Draw a diagram of your experience of teaching the WP pupils on flipchart, keeping in mind the three questions below:
 - What have you learned from teaching the WP pupils?
 - How (if at all) has this learning influenced your thinking about your UG teaching?
 - What (if any) changes/approaches might you wish to make or explore with your new first year cohort? Discuss and share with whole group.
-
- What do you think about the language in the paper (teacher-focused and student-focused learning/deep and surface learning)? Is this something you consider when preparing your teaching?
- What language do we currently have with which we can talk about our teaching? How can we develop this?

Surface/deep

Student/teacher centred

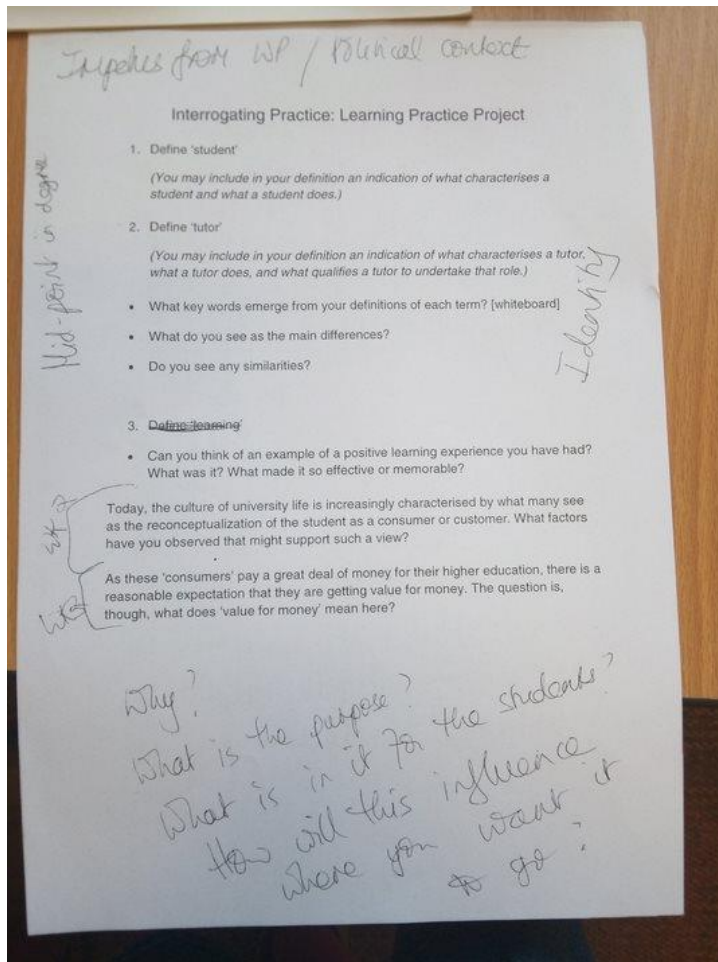
Active/passive learning

Transmit

Transform

Pedagogic content knowledge

Appendix 12 Ideas and questions re Howard's P2 plan

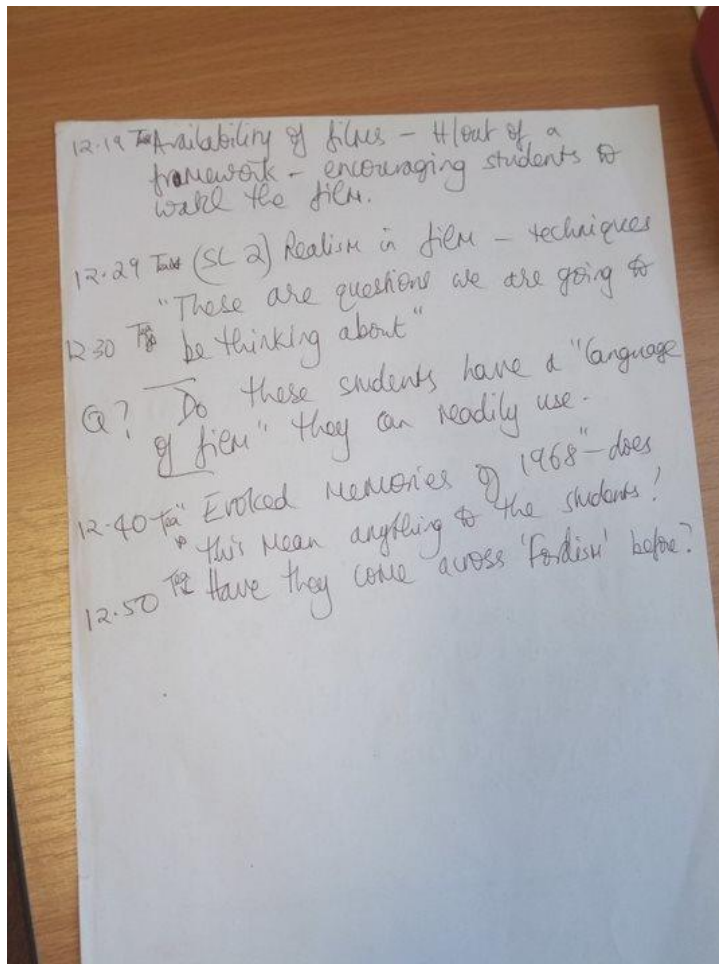


Appendix 13 Sarah's UG seminar lesson plan

Learning Plan		
Tutor's name: Sarah	Day/Date: Friday 8/12/17	Time: 4-5pm
Topic: Citizenship in the Puerto Rican Diaspora	Number in group: Approx. 15	Venue: LASS A3
Learning Objectives		
<i>(only include as many as are relevant; do not need to complete all 3 sections)</i>		
Know: (1) the broader Puerto Rican context, e.g. colonial relationship with US and lack of political sovereignty/independence (2) the status of Puerto Ricans in the United States (e.g. migration, citizenship, racialisation, assimilation, bilingualism, diasporic and transnational identities)		
Understand: (1) keywords/concepts including citizenship, transnationalism, diaspora, intersectionality (2) the importance of El Embassy art project as an expression of the above		
Able to: (1) identify the key elements in El Spanglish National Anthem used to express the transnational identities of Puerto Ricans in the US 2) create their own version of a national anthem using the task sheet (as a poster) 2) use this activity to reflect critically on concepts of citizenship, identity, nationality and their own positionality / sense of belonging		
Resources required:		

PowerPoint slides; board; printout of El Spanglish National Anthem; task sheet; paper and pens for posters			
How can staff/student helpers support you? N/A			
Time	Section / tutor input	Pupil activity	Resources needed
4.00-4.05 (5 mins)	<u>RECAP AND INTRODUCTION</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last week's seminar on belonging, space and 'DIY citizenship' • What is the status of Puerto Rico and its relationship to the United States? • Can you think of any similar recent examples of territories wanting independence or sovereignty? 	Students respond to questions	
4.05 – 4.15 (10 mins)	<u>SET UP PAIR BRAINSTORM ACTIVITY</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does it mean to be Puerto Rican in the United States? • Think about Jorge Duany's claim that Puerto Ricans are a "nation on the move." • How would you describe your identity in a sentence or two or a set of keywords? 	Students brainstorm in pairs for 5 minutes to write short paragraph or set of keywords.	Use board to write down keywords
4.15 – 4.20 (5 mins)	<u>SET UP CONTEXT ON EL EMBASSY</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is El Puerto Rican Embassy and what does it seek to achieve? • What symbols of nationhood and citizenship does it experiment with, e.g. manifesto, passport, anthem? 	Students respond to questions	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What story does El Spanglish National Anthem tell? How does it represent the transnational identities of Puerto Ricans in the US? 		
4.20 – 4.40 (20 mins)	<u>SET UP GROUP ACTIVITY ON NATIONAL ANTHEM</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Split class into groups of 4-5 Hand out poem, task sheet, pens and paper Explain the task 	Students to work in groups of 4-5 to create their own version of a national anthem using El Spanglish National Anthem and task sheet as prompts Students to create a poster to express their ideas	El Spanglish handouts Task sheet Pens and paper
4.40-4.50 (10 mins)	<u>FEEDBACK AND CONCLUSION</u> How does your poster rethink concepts of identity, belonging, nation and citizenship? Do we need a different model of citizenship? If so, what might it look like?	Students to show and explain their posters to rest of the group	

Appendix 14 My observation notes of Paul's UG seminar

Appendix 15 Sarah's reflections on her UG seminar teaching**CITIZENSHIP IN THE CONTEMPORARY PUERTO RICAN DIASPORA****WEEK 11 SEMINAR FOR YEAR 1 CORE MODULE, APPROACHES TO
CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN CULTURE****Planning and preparation**

I was fortunate to have the opportunity to prep the students in the previous week's seminar on zines, sexuality and Third Wave Feminism when I asked the class to design a poster in relation to the primary sources. Together, the two seminars were designed to get the students to rethink dominant models of citizenship, so the class already had some engagement with thinking through the core concepts.

I spent quite some time preparing the task sheet and keywords, and experienced a lot of indecision along the way! Because I'm not used to doing this type of task, I felt concern at first that I was 'giving' the students the answers and possibly determining their responses, and whether instead, I should've worked on eliciting keywords from them in the actual session based on their own readings of the primary source, El Spanglish National Anthem. A lot of this relates to my concerns about how I generate opportunities for student autonomy, independent thinking, and student-centred learning more broadly.

In the session

I felt concerned that I didn't do enough to speak back to the keywords on the task sheet, or the primary source itself. For example, the keywords served as 'prompts', but the students will need to grasp these if they choose this topic in the exam. In this case, I was concerned that the worksheet became a bit redundant in the broader scheme of things. I think this relates to my own (possibly flawed!) need to cram everything in and ensure the students are prepared (rather than accepting that only some things will be achieved in a class, that learning goes on afterwards, and that perhaps a key outcome of every seminar should be that students engage key ideas and come away enthused about something, rather than having analysed the primary and secondary materials exhaustively in the session).

I also noted some confusion about the task, e.g. in essence, I set up two tasks (i) the worksheet task and (ii) the poster to illustrate words and images about an alternative national anthem, when I really wanted the students to focus on the latter and use the first as a prompt. Perhaps this was a bit too complicated (too many bits of paper and sources to refer back to). One group were also unsure about whether they had to create their own version of a national anthem, or rewrite/rearticulate the El Spanglish version. In response to the two classes on Thursday, the Friday group responded less quickly to the task. Some students in the Thursday seminar groups, for example, created posters that reflected their own experiences of migration and displacement by recording the move from home to university and how this involved rethinking their sense of home and belonging into a more layered model of identity and affiliation.

During the Friday session, I was concerned that some people's views might not have been represented as well as they might be within the groups, especially if their own experiences had made them more critical of the UK experience, e.g. some registered the view (more explicitly in small groups) that the multiculturalism being expressed in some posters was perhaps more an ideal than a reality for some. Did I handle this discussion with enough tact and sensitivity and how does this relate to the broader issue of how we embed a discussion of personal experiences and diversity in the classroom?

With all groups (both Thursday and Friday), perhaps the most productive and revealing discussions came towards the end in the follow-up session when students spoke about personal experiences of feeling displaced in the UK and/or of living 'in between' places, for example, in 6 different countries and having to rethinking what home, family, belonging and citizenship mean in relation to place.

Overall, it was a very different experience for me to hear students talking in this way, i.e. about their own personal experiences, and it generated excitement at the level of engagement but also a sense of unease that I could (and should) have managed some of their responses more carefully. The 'stripping down' of the material to keywords and more creative tasks (i.e. leaving out my usual fuller discussion of primary and especially secondary texts) also generated unease in both the planning

and delivery of the material. But, I was generally very pleased (and perhaps surprised) with the level of engagement and that students felt able to express themselves in this environment.

After the session

On reflection, I would probably amend (and perhaps even simplify) the session's materials, explain the task more carefully, and leave some time to revisit keywords/concepts and the worksheet. I still have a feeling that the activity was perhaps just a bit too dislocated from the scholarly debates, and the discussion would benefit from being extended beyond the hour, e.g. a second, follow-up session to then pin down the scholarly debates. But this suggests I'm still clinging to 'old' approaches, and what I need to do now is try out the same sorts of tasks with other modules/year groups. What we lack in the university context of term-time, however, is the time and space to do this properly with our other modules, and to reflect and get feedback as a result. Overall, then, this was a very productive and actually quite liberating experience for me: it generated a level of unease in that I was trying something new and breaking old habits, but I was also really surprised and enthused by the students' responses and the fact they felt able to discuss things in an open manner. I *rarely* have this experience, and if it happens, it's usually an isolated case, and I don't think this would've happened without rethinking the nature and delivery of seminar materials.

Appendix 16 Sarah's observation notes of Tara's seminar**FEEDBACK ON TWD'S LESSON PLANNING SESSION**

I was really impressed with the opening task, e.g. Tara's decision to run short, 30 second presentations involving students using a single material resource to explain what they will teach and how. This short, interactive task generated real momentum as well as audience support and enthusiasm for the presenter (non-presenting students usually switch off in presentations longer than 10-15 minutes, so 30 seconds is good practice, especially for students without much experience of presenting). The pressure of going up to the front to deliver a prepared task also focuses the mind, and I will use the short rather than lengthier presentation model in future, especially for year 1 classes. Getting students to present on specific objects/images will also work well for testing out skills of primary analysis in my Year 1 core Approaches to Contemporary American Culture. The 30 second presentation format is also a great way to build in opportunities for praise and feedback, and Tara handled this extremely well. Tara showed how well it can be used to open a class, grab the students' attention, and serve as a prelude to more sustained small group work.

I also liked Tara's use of a student scribe, and how she related student responses back to points on the board. Tara's interventions to expand and reiterate points were timed and pitched to perfection.

Overall, I was impressed (and surprised) at how many tightly focused tasks (3 activities) had been successfully completed by the students within the first 30 minutes of the workshop. Tara's model of teaching generates real momentum and keeps students on-task at all times. I think building more short, interactive tasks (with timed deadlines) into the first half of my own seminars will really affect student engagement. (I'm still clinging to my old model of a four-part class with intro, short whole class background/context discussion, one longer, main group task, and feedback/conclusion section.)

Tara also explained Bloom's taxonomy in such a way that it related to students' own experience of writing essays, and the point about using this taxonomy to set effective questions for guiding learning is something I've taken on board. For example, I don't

tend to think about student learning in stages or phases, and therefore, I don't consciously plan questions around the idea of scaffolding learning (even though my lesson 'plans' always include a series of questions, but without much reflection on what these questions are actually doing in the broader scheme of things). I also took away the point about Bloom's taxonomy and differentiation as part of my ongoing attempt to think about diversity in the classroom.

Overall, this was an absolutely flawless example of workshop teaching! I came away extremely impressed and with lots of ideas for my own teaching in terms of task variation and momentum, techniques for student focus and participation, and ways to scaffold learning (not just Bloom's taxonomy as an example, but the deepening of learning that took place through varied tasks within the workshop itself).

Appendix 17 "What is a Teacher?" wordle in Howard's UG seminar



Appendix 18 Post-research interview with Paul

P Interview – 4th April 2018

T: So, hallo! Can you just tell me what your motivations were for taking part in this research?

P: I guess to reflect on teaching and, in a practical sense, to come up with strategies for teaching to overcome certain resistances.

T: OK. And I guess at the beginning, it was positioned initially around teaching the WP pupils, wasn't it? So what was your interest in engaging with that element?

P: With the WP?

T: Right at the beginning.

P: I guess it's always good to have contact in a general sense with schools and school pupils and teachers to see what's going on there...I suppose also with the admissions angle as well, erm, but also the idea in a general sense that there isn't really really much difference, I don't think, between learners when they're 14, 15 16 through to university really so the same principle is applied and to a certain extent with younger kids, sometimes they're a bit...it's quite interesting because they don't have some of the...they haven't built up some of the resistances that older learners have so I guess I'm interested in, I'm interested in how learners approach ideas, how they approach their learning but particularly learning about these sort of things that I talk about which are broadly discursive and ideas-led, although as we've discussed in a number of the meetings we've had, I think those principles apply to all learning I guess. The other field of learning I am involved in which is more the languages; broadly the application of concepts to problem-solving...a bit like Maths I suppose.

T: Yes, grammar is (like Maths). OK, yes, great. Can you just say a little bit more about...you mentioned there the idea that the younger learners perhaps had less of the "resistances" than the older learners, the higher education learners have. Can you say a little bit more about what those resistances are?

P: I guess the main resistance if we are talking about university is having come through quite a few years of being taught to test so that's what learners at that stage are very used to. Erm there's all the factors as well about university being a very pressured place, a very...for want of a better word, instrumentalised, learners are very aware, students are very aware they are paying for something and they have a certain set of expectations about that so a central problem for me, a central resistance is I think it's a resistance to thinking it's, I would say, I am sure the people I teach wouldn't put it this way but what quite a few students say is I don't think I should have to do the thinking, you do the thinking we in some way reproduce that. That's one set of resistances. The other big set of resistances are more subjective and emotional I guess and to do with the lack of confidence, to do with the widespread...to do with the various er pathologies that people have, mental health issues and for some students it really is a pathological; that sounds awful I mean they're suffering from an unidentifiable mental health issue. I think in general there is a sense of lack of confidence and the overlap between the first area of resistance that I talked about and the second area is one of the key expressions as we've talked about what resistance to learning is: "I don't want to talk in class because I might get it wrong". I think I've become also aware, which I find really upsetting but I have to admit and maybe this is something of an immaturity but it's something shared with other colleagues, there is a feeling that erm for some students there's a kind of feeling too cool for school; that it's nerdy and...I still find that hard to believe but I guess.....

T: Well I guess every classroom has a make-up which is not too dissimilar to a classroom in a school to a greater lesser degree doesn't it, where you've got the nerds and you've got the cool kids and you've got the ones who sit and say nothing; it's that little society in miniature, isn't it?

P: Yes and erm, again, one of the symptoms of that resistance which maybe has more to do with the first set of resistances than the second set of subjective emotional resistances is what I've now begun to theorise for myself as a wider issue and I would see it as a wider problem of what I called last time when we all got together of the promotion of what I would call, it sounds very pompous but the promotion of a functional personality. I do think we are generally moving, and this is affecting education towards thinking of the self in a social context as a functional thing so that what you have to do is what helps you to function. One clear expression of that in learning is "what do I need to say?"

T: Or "what do I need to write in my essay?"

P: And broadly seeing it, in a way as a sociological expression of a functional self is perhaps a bit more helpful than simply...because one reaction to that would simply see learners as wanting to take a short cut, being lazy and maybe there is some of that but I'm not convinced there is, I think, maybe it makes it a deep problem, I think it's, actually in our society, that's what learning is, that's what is has come to be defined.

T: And do you feel or have you seen that these attitudes to learning at the university, have they changed since you started teaching here and what would you say were the reasons for that change if it has happened? We're going off-piste here but I'm interested.

P: I suspect they haven't changed as much as I feel they have.

T: So, why do you feel they have then?

P: Well it really is multi-factorial. I think you can't dismiss the fact that as you get older as you do the job for longer you get ground down, but your antenna, antennae get finer you can be, you know, again, we've talked about this before but I think it's like, teaching is like interacting with an audience that to the naked eye you could see two classes, or you could teach two lectures and by definition unless you've got interactive aspects to your lectures, the non-interactive bits to your lectures when you're basically talking by definition the audience is silent but you could have two different classes and you could have two different interactions that you, so your antennae get better at picking up so what's going on in learners minds because you don't want to second guess that. So I think there's that and you know people, colleagues do say to me "students have always been reluctant to talk" for example, but, lots of colleagues will say things have changed and the obvious, one obvious explanation would be fees, I think those have had an effect. Not only have they had an effect on changing people's attitudes but they have had a material effect and a material effect is increased teaching hours and I don't think people in the university realise how much increasing teaching hours has changed students' attitudes to learning. Students don't have time to properly prepare, it puts a big emphasis on the learning should take place in the classroom which I think in practical terms feeds into that "well what do I need to say?" so I think that's changed. But also I think it is widely acknowledged that levels of distress and anxiety and mental health issues are greater now amongst young people than they were 10-15 years ago so in a wider context you can't...that impacts on learning. It certainly impacts on the issue of people talking.

T: And that goes back to your earlier point about confidence and emotional resistance.

P: And I hesitate to say it but its kind of a hoary old chestnut now but there probably is an effect of screens and mobile phones, devices, as Liz Bower said at H's event, do young people read as they used to?

T: And I would say....my sons certainly don't read as much as I did. But then they read different things and they are still learning and they still tell me things that I am astounded by so.....it's really hard, isn't it, because that revolution has happened in our lifetime and our mode of learning, what was familiar

to us has transformed almost unrecognisably to the mode of learning that students have now, with the screens, with the online, etc etc, it's really hard to almost recognise learning, for me, to recognise learning in this new context, I find it very hard to assume, to understand, to hope that learning is taking place in the way that I know, in the way that I understand learning to be if that makes sense. So I think, yes, it is massive.

P: Another point to sort of throw in erm sociologically which marks me out as a small "c" definitely a small "c", never, never a big "C", a small "c" conservative, as well as that shift to what I would call (I feel like Miranda's mother!) a "functional" personality, another shift that I find problematic in terms of my teaching is a shift towards a more personalised world in which the person is validated and legitimated to an extent that I find problematic, so, you know, it is a different language to me when students say that a character is relateable. We were talking about this I don't quite know what they are saying but also erm and another way that manifests itself it's very difficult, and this has always been the case; it is very difficult to get students to talk about characters in a novel or a film without making a set of personal judgements. Very hard to get them just to step back and say "how is this working?"

T: Can anyone, though? Can anyone view something or engage with something without making a certain set of personal judgements based on their own experience to date? Surely it's impossible to be absolutely clinically abstract?

P: Yes, I think it is but it is simply as question of degree, its simply a question of focus. I guess its....

T: Sorry, because you....we've uncovered this in our conversations and I don't know whether this relates to this but one of the things is that you don't want to engage with the students per se on a kind of interpersonal level; that's probably the wrong phrase....you want to be their teacher, you want to guide them, inform them, share the information, ask them questions, have discussions but then there's a boundary, isn't there?

P: Yes, there is I mean I don't mind, people can say anything, I don't mind but a good example is if you are talking about class, say, now you might have someone in your group who is from a particular class. When that might become problematic is if they start saying "it's simply wrong to do this" and then, you know, you might want to say: "Is that a class position?" What would be, what you ideally want is for people to say "well I'm working class and, you know, in my family we had these values", sort of, you know, being able to take one step back, that's what you're always wanting people to do, take one step back.

T: OK, so recognising that it stems from their experience rather than that's the blueprint for life.

P: Yes, so you'll often get into, you know and at least you're having a discussion, but students will say "but why didn't the character...why did he leave his wife?" And I'm like I don't think that's a useful question for us because he did (laughs). It's a kind of misunderstanding of the text the texts or whatever it is.

T: Well maybe, and obviously I don't know which text or whatever I just wonder whether...whether that student needs to understand that before they engage with the stepping back. I don't know but that's what I would wonder.

P: Maybe. Does that make sense?

T: Thank you that was really useful. Erm, let's go all the way back to the very beginning because we've talked a lot about the students, as in university students, to when you worked with those pupils, those two classes of year 9.

P: Yes.

T: Can you just tell me, what were your expectations of working with those pupils?

P: Erm, its hard to remember really.

T: We were all sat together, weren't we, planning and discussing and what...can you remember how you felt?

P: Oh gosh.

T: Or take it forward if you can't remember that far back, can you remember the delivery and what happened there?

P: Yes, one of the clear things that sticks out is that erm I certainly wasn't able to hold their attention and had far too much material in the first one. So the second one was clearly much more focused so I remember that.

T: Yes, you put a really good structure in place with your handout and so forth. So that was quite interesting wasn't it, you had to make yourself quite vulnerable through this experience and your colleagues were watching you and you got feedback from the pupils and, you know, you were, I think everyone was very courageous, really, in taking that feedback and, you know, you might have had all sorts of reactions to that. But absorbing that and then re-jigging your session, I would use the word courage, I think you all showed courage during that process. With the second group, when you had re-jigged your session and it was, it did have a bit more structure and so forth and actually, when we got to your session, it worked well. However, prior to you doing your session, when our colleague did her session to begin with, can you remember, there was that table of girls?

P: (laughs) Yeah, yeah

T: And you had a very intense reaction didn't you to their, about how they were behaving. Can you just tell me a little bit about what you saw and the impact it had?

P: Yeah, well as you know I find that really, really difficult to deal with; they were, they were (laughs) they were wanting to display their lack of engagement weren't they?

T: Umm, they were the too cool for school ones.

P: They were the too cool for school ones. Yeah and er for whatever reason that really really upsets me.

T: Do you know why?

P: Well I think, the word that always springs to mind is bullying and I can't stand bullying and I can't stand bullying for reasons that I can't quite articulate its that bullies always exploit a situation. They never er they're always using a weapon. Better be careful what I say on tape and that is why...so you can be bullied by a kid in a class and they've got a series of weapons and you can be bullied by...as I feel I am at the moment by teenage kids because they've got a new series of weapons that they you know their bolshiness, the fact that nobody wants to live, nobody wants to live in a house where there's constant conflict. No teacher can deal with a classroom where there's constant conflict. So that's a weapon that you can use. We know as well that in a bigger sense, a kid in a classroom is not as powerful as somebody in management but it's all the same thing, it's all the same thing. What I want to say basically to people is "drop your weapons, we'll deal with this, let's deal with this without weapons, can we?" that's always my.....and so it really it really upsets me. And so I, I shouldn't do it but I'm addicted to reading the

secret teacher. And there was a thing in the Secret teacher in the Guardian recently about somebody saying their school has no centralised disciplinary detention thing. So the teacher has to organise the detention for the pupil misbehaving in class and then the kid doesn't turn up. And if they don't turn up four or five times then they have a meeting with, finally the central management get involved, but as this teacher said, it's usually somebody from student services who says, "they're really good kids, basically, they need to be shown a bit more love" and part of this process is then the teacher having to show that they were at fault.

T: So they are being undermined?

P: Yes and my blood ran cold so....cos what....my question is....my feeling is...what do you do with that? How do you break...and you know some people are really skilled at breaking that down, the way those girls were but I think my reaction is: I don't want anything to do with it. And, as you know, I always feel, teaching as you know, it's not rocket science but I can't think of another job where, well maybe policing where, but not even that, but where that's already a job to make things accessible. To have various ways of, for example, how am I going to deal with the fact that quite a few students want to talk about things in personal terms, how am I going to get around that, how are we going to build on that, that's to me all legitimate to my job. To deal with that, I don't want to know, you know. And hats off to teachers who can deal with that. And we're talking on tape so it doesn't matter does it, and the two teachers...were they teachers or teaching assistants?

T: They were teaching assistants.

P: I had a brief chat to them and they said "Poof, it's their look-out".

T: They said that and yet, on the tour, they took the decision, didn't they, to split that table up, so they.....and I think both of those reactions are valid, aren't they? It's their look-out; ultimately they are the ones who aren't gaining from the experience, however, the practical first response is "right, let's diffuse this by separating these elements" and I know that just sort of thinking about that whole experience with those school pupils, what, if anything, did you take away from that experience, you know, both in terms of the delivery, also the evaluations, the discussions, the feedback, the whole experience? Negative or positive...

P: Most of them were fine. I mean the two...if you want they're not negative things I don't think but they're not wholly positive. One of the things is in the second...I had things much more organised in the second one but also I had a kind of iron grip on them I thought "you're not..." and I actually, there's a little question in my mind whether the second group were actually as engaged. I think in the first group there were more, there were one or two kids and that's one of the, that's one of the things from WP that always strikes me that unfortunately you don't see as much in students, you really do and a lot of my colleagues say "there was one or two students who get it".

T: Goodness gracious

P: But anyway, WP for me there really are. There's always one or two who sort of sit there and you can see the cogs whirring....

T: And what about the rest?

P: Quite a lot of them will do the stuff in good faith...but the other thing that we haven't talked about is I would have liked to have talked to them more I don't know how much more I would have got out of them about what do YOU think about populism? That's a very intriguing question because in many ways it's very positive, it shows how engaged they were.

T: That they wanted to know what you thought?

P: Yes and I also wonder if there's something there that's interesting about...erm....I mean, if you want, there's a slightly more negative view of that and it's not a bad thing at all, but I'd just like to know more about it...is that the kind of seed of what we see at universities "what do I need to think about this?" It may not be.

T: Oh right, them asking you what you thought about it rather than the way in which we interpreted it at the time which was positive.

P: I think....one of the things about learning is....I think there are two....two positions, two demeanours both of which I think is problematic which is...and they're kind of...they might appear to contradict each other but they co-exist in learning particularly at school. First of all you're kind of being told what to say and then the other thing is your personal opinion. And I'm kind of not aiming for either.

T: We want to get in the middle of that.

P: Yes. Exactly.

T: We want to take the information and sort it out from our own perspective.

P: And you know, students, and that is one of the classic questions that students ask us "can I put my personal opinion in?"

T: Yes and they struggle with understanding how to do that.

P: Yes and I'm also flummoxed but I don't quite know what a personal opinion is really.

T: It's not something that is written in the book. That is what it means. That is how I understand it. So can I....so my answer is always "yes, as long as you back it up with evidence".

P: Yes. I'm never comfortable saying that because I don't know what that means really. I know a lot of people say that and clearly it makes sense its.....erm.....

T: So, OK, so that's interesting. So I think some of the things you said after that WP experience erm we talked about that group of girls quite a lot I think afterwards but I think also the other thing you said to me was, I think a lot of colleagues just don't have the confidence to teach a group of school pupils because they don't know what they're walking into and I thought that....you said something along those lines when we were talking about why there weren't more people who say "yeah! Let me do WP"...apart from all of the other reasons like time etc and I thought that was quite interesting and that made me think a lot about this issue of confidence and I guess the thing that you took away was you wanted to understand better....you wanted to get your students who you teach to engage more and own their learning more. Basically that's what you want almost what you want wholesale in your teaching?

P: Yup

T: And so then we spent a lot of time talking about how can we, OK, this new module, where can you go? What might you do? How might you approach it? And in the end you just sort of decided that you wanted to get their views on what constitutes a student, what constitutes a teacher and then (sorry, I'm paraphrasing just because of time) and then actually in the end you didn't have....that exercise....I mean I don't know I it should have gone anywhere else orI don't really know but you felt at the end that it hadn't made any difference, arguably.

P: I guess I did, yes, and that was probably partly my fault for not really....

T: I don't think we have to attribute blame...

P: But I probably didn't devote or have enough time to discuss that with them but it was also unfortunate they were....they were one of the most resistant groups I've ever had unfortunately on a new module and I don't say it to kind of defend myself but erm and I'm always a bit reluctant to subscribe to these general views but I think there is a general view out there that that second year were...the current second year are a little bit difficult to teach. And I don't think it helped as you know, as we all know, the university was rather chaotic for, well.....

T: Most of the last....

P: Most of the last semester, well, still is!

T: Most of the last eighteen months. So, yes, and I guess I sort of feel, because if I'm honest as well, obviously I was attempting to support you and talk to you and so forth, maybe I....I think I was aware of those things you're talking about; of the time, of the constraints, of the challenges, of the challenging working environment we are in so I didn't come back and say "well J, what shall we do next?" which I think was probably the right decision as I'm not prepared to push people so they buckle under but I am just wondering...do you feel out of the whole experience that there's anything that you have gained I suppose, that you might want to take forward in an ideal world when you're not feeling stressed to the hilt and so on and so forth?

P: Er..yeah, I think....obviously I'm not teaching at the moment and I am not even thinking about teaching but there's a point in the summer where I've got to think about teaching, really, and I guess, I do want to re-visit that "making things explicit".

T: Are you teaching that same module again when you come back?

P: Yes, yes I am

T: So, I mean, so do....I guess, what am I trying to say? So, are you saying that to be nice to me by virtue of the recording (because you don't have to)....

P: No because I think you...what I was going to say was there's sort of several strategies that you have to balance. The two that spring to mind are: making explicit what the expectations are so in a way trying to nudge students out of seeing a lecture so out of the nice discussion we had seeing the lecture as a map rather than the territory which I think is a very nice way of describing what we must all surely be aiming to. So there's making that explicit and building in that explicit, I think that is worth persevering with. I also think, maybe slightly reluctantly, I'm always just never organised enough to do this, of trying to just do certain things to reassure students like I did think "why not show them last year's exam paper in the very first class?" Immediately I thought of doing that I thought, I realised why I don't do that and the reason I don't do that is not out of stubbornness, it's also out of....if you're not careful doing that sort of thing it'll do you more harm than good because people think oh that's what he's looking for...

T: So then tunnel vision to the end.

P: Exactly. Erm, so then you begin to think so maybe don't show them the exam paper but just tell them what the themes are but even as I'm talking about this I just don't.....

T: But that isn't your preferred or natural style

P: No, no.

T: So I guess, I think if you want to, if you want to make a change it has to be something that yes pushes you out slightly but isn't entirely out of your comfort zone because otherwise how can it be authentic for you? So what is it, by showing them that exam paper what is it that you are trying to do?

P: What I would be trying to do is simply erm I think, I think quite a few students are sitting thinking OK, is this on the exam, is this on the exam? You know, as you are writing, do we need to say this in the exam, do we need to say this in the exam?

T: OK OK

P: Of course by showing them the exam paper. Because that's what, that's one of the things that we haven't talked about which I think is intriguing about teaching and deeply problematic and also I must admit comes from the kind of interference of having teenagers as you will know being a parent. I do think and this is the small c conservative in me and this has no doubt always been the case, but young people have a problem with listening.

T: And one of the things that you talked about really really early on is er wanting er conceptualising your students as active listeners.

P: Yes.

T: And that was a phrase I remember.

P: Yes, it seems to be that what they do is have a facility to simply screen stuff out. So either this is too complex, this, you know, this isn't going to be on the exam, so you often look at assessment and you think, well, 60% of what I've said has not registered at all which is erm another problem there is stuff that you're doing and saying and teaching you're expecting people to use as a map.

T: Right

P: And I suspect that what's happening is that its not being used as a map its being sifted through so you know that's a key statement that you need to make in....so....

T: I know and I remember you saying that they all used a particular statement in the exam

P: It's a dog eat dog world

T: So I understand that frustration. I really like though that idea that you're talking about; this notion of a map and the navigation of learning. The navigation of the lecture or the navigation of the information or whatever and I just....and one of the things that you did really effectively with the WP experience was to re-structure what you were delivering and give the pupils a quite kind of clear structure so that they were guided through it. And I just wondered this notion of the map: could you give the students a map at the beginning so that when you're talking to them and sharing those ideas, themes, concepts, that they fit somewhere on the map so they are not discarded as irrelevant.

P: Mmmmmm

T: And I don't know what that map looks like and I am happy to talk to you about that in more detail, but it seems to me that you have got some good ideas, about trying to reduce these resistancies that you mentioned right at the beginning. And while you aren't in the throes of teaching, there's an opportunity there. Can I just ask you when we met as a group recently you said, because I asked everyone what they thought the research was about. Because it started off being about one thing and ended up being about another; certainly that's the way I'm interpreting the story at the moment. And I think you said you

thought it was about conceptualisations of teaching and learning. Can you just tell me why you think the research is about that?

P: I guess that's from the get go what we've really talked about and I guess part of me thinks you can't teach without conceptualising what you are doing; you probably can't do anything without conceptualising what you are doing. But another part of me thinks there are an inherent set of tensions and contradictions around teaching at the present moment that mean you have to reflect on it to be able to....to find a strategy for doing it, I think.

T: Yeah. And how.....

P: And to put that more simply, its no doubt because it's one of the only main things I've ever done, I've never done another job but I guess it does apply to other jobs as well but I do think there's something special about teaching or certainly about learning about education, what is it? It's a very open question. I guess you could say the same "What is hell?" "What's working in law enforcement"? Maybe all those things pose very fundamental questions and I guess the problem you face as a and I would define, I would use a deliberately political term, as a worker, in that field you're faced with a set of real tensions so you can fake it, you and the learner can fake it, you can fake learning. It looks like learning but its not and I think there's a big.....as a society that's what we're doing. And we kind of know what we're doing it's the whole teaching to test; I describe it as you know as the Turin test; it looks like computer pretending to be a human being really. And we all know that since time immemorial you know, I passed Maths because I was coached.

T: Ditto.

P: So you can, and there's that whole role, you know, a lot pushes you to be a coach in teaching in that way and I really don't think that'sI'm very interested as well in I think what's called in psychotherapy the endless.....and I love it, it's a poetic phrase, the endless sea of need, that any client group has endless needs. I think we're far too exposed and you need protection; there's two ways you get protection. You get protection institutionally; we don't get that. In fact everything the university does is to expose us to the endless sea of needs of the client group which of course isn't good for them in terms of their learning. The other way you get protection is a sort of esprit de corps and we don't have that so much.

T: And I guess we had it momentarily as a group?

P: yeah, yeah.

A: nd I think all four of us felt that was a real strength and a real opportunity to churn over some of this. Alongside the doing there was a lot of thinking and churning.

P: Yes. So I guess, to answer that, you've got to conceptualise what you're doing otherwise you don't know...you end up not knowing what you're doing. And you end up getting pushed into corners that you don't want to be pushed into I think.

T: And I also wonder what you're.....whether...what you're describing there and I agree that's where we are institutionally, as a sector, whatever, whether there's a bit missing really. So, teaching takes up so much time and yet its not the top priority. So we've got research way up above which is squeezed into the gaps, isn't it, or into that day or you didn't even have the day last semester. Squeezed in around this thing called teaching. And yet research is king, research gets the plaudits. And this thing called teaching, there isn't, yet, supposedly there will be by, what is it, 2025, there isn't a coordinated approach to induction and training of new academics, its ad hoc isn't it, per School....its not....there isn't a kind of cohesive university approach?

P: No.

T: There will be supposedly.

P: Yeah, well I'm already being pressured to do one.

T: OK well we might come back to that. But you know, now, when you have developed yourself over however many years and developed your own understanding of what teaching and learning is, that's going to be quite hard for you to...its going to be challenging for you to engage with. But anyway we won't talk about that now.

P: No, no, no.

T: So I think there is a gap. If we are doing all this teaching where is the space and where is the commitment and where is the support, whatever that might look like, for teaching? Because one of the things that you've talked about and its come up elsewhere as well is teaching is just another (and I'm doing it in my next conference actually) we've got SET and SEM, we've got NSS we've got the TEF, its about we're being evaluated, evaluated, evaluated. Where's the bit at the front end that's providing support and structure and building confidence in teaching and I don't really see that happening.

P: No. No absolutely.

T: And there isn't a teaching...there is a community I suppose but I think it is interesting that one of our colleagues found the fact we got together regularly so enriching because there isn't that space to do that.

P: No there isn't no you're absolutely right, and in that sense, as you know, that's what I'm interested in, in what has now become my research. Which I guess is to do with managerialism and organisations and work, and what you see there classically is first of all, the university has no interest in what teaching is and in reflecting on teaching. It literally has no interest. Its interest is in delivering satisfaction. So I would say a legitimate question for a university is: "What do we want to do in terms of teaching?" I don't see anywhere in this university where that question is asked. Either at an institutional level and/or between colleagues. So an obvious question to ask is, we are (maybe some people would disagree with this, I suspect most people wouldn't, maybe some would) but we are dealing with people coming from school who have been taught to test. Now I think we're being pushed down the road of doing that more and more, of recreating what they had at school and I think that's a bad thing. And I think a lot of people would agree with that and to me that's a legitimate issue for the university to address.

T: But are they...I don't know, is there actually, are we as a sector, however, being so swamped with students that the anxiety within the sector, not even in this institution, is such that we are just getting them through like a sausage factory? And that becomes priority because we've got so many students, how can we possibly personalise learning and make it student-centred and so forth. I don't know the answer but that's what occurs to me. Is it that we have (and I'm talking myself out of a job here) we have made university more accessible so now we are dealing with the volume, the numbers which mean increased...and hence increased teaching hours etc etc and so the sector has shot itself in the foot completely. So there's no room for teaching and education and almost those concepts.

P: Erm, possibly, but I think there are other things as well I think, again, putting my sort of research hat on again, it's a classic neo-liberal move in an area that we could broadly describe as a profession to rob that profession of its professionalism. So a professional, if I can use that old-fashioned term, but I would also use the term worker, part of what you're doing is you're reflecting on what you're doing and that feeds into the profession and we've been robbed of that. And the classic neo-liberal way in which you're robbed of that is for what you're doing to be defined through a set of data. You know what the data are and you know my views on student evaluation but you know I would come back to that student

evaluation is....I cannot see that that stands up to any methodological scrutiny at all as a way of improving teaching. Its not designed.....it has nothing to do with improving teaching, where is the evidence that it measure teaching performance. What is teaching performance?

T: And what is the criteria that they are marking it against? Is there a marking scheme in the way we have one for essays? No there isn't.

P: Clearly once you begin to talk in those terms you would think ah! Clearly you would need someone with expertise to apply but then you're thinking: hang on! Assessing teaching by applying a set of quasi-scientific....we know how problematic that is. We've not even risen to that level. Its insane. So yeah we are....but its extraordinary how all those mechanisms have made universities I think lose any grip or any conception of what they're doing. But again this is you know, people might accuse me of being melodramatic or apocalyptic but this is what neo-liberal organisations do. They spiral out of control. But I think the resource that the university get for free is our professionalism. That we still under all those circumstances, we still, everyone I know, at some level, we still have our little strategies to get through so yeah we don't, so there's no, as an overall point, the university as an institution is not orientated to teaching and learning, its orientated to research and satisfaction.

Appendix 19 Co-researcher reflections on what the research has been about

Hi all,

Sorry I had to run off last week!

Tara, having looked at the slides again, I feel the slides that emphasise transformation are the most important ones (if from my own perspective).

So, the main one would probably be: participatory action research as a way to change or transform teaching. Transformational learning through engaging with WP together with the broader conceptualisations of teaching in HE are both important too, but maybe the first statement gives a better sense of the overall dynamic or active process that I feel I've gone through as an individual and as part of our group. It seems a bit more all encompassing to me, although going on my individual experience alone, I am still very keen to emphasise putting WP at the forefront of changing my teaching practice.

Secondly, and having now seen the last few slides first time, I think that creating a community of practice and creativity have been really important throughout, but perhaps these are secondary or rather outcomes of the first, if that makes sense?

I hope this helps a bit. Not sure what everyone else thinks?

Sarah

Hi Tara & All,

Apologies for the late response.

I find myself in large agreement with Sarah with the emphasis on participatory action research as a way to change or transform teaching. For me, the spark for that transformation came from the opportunity to pause for a moment to reflect on the perspectives of pupils, easily overlooked or given scant attention. That in turn leads to a more philosophical consideration which goes to the heart of what we do and how we do it (the kind of consideration which more often than not we don't have the time or the energy to address).

The space in which that transformation can take place is central to these concerns. Unlike the institutionalised box-ticking exercises that pass for teaching evaluation in universities, the community of researchers (us) operates as a democracy of ideas and creative curriculum development in which there is actually a meaningful cooperative at work which can push open some new doors and enable quite radical consideration of existing practices. One of the most useful insights here - especially for those of us who consider ourselves experience teachers and already quite good at what we do - is to question some of those practices which we have grown familiar with and take for granted. That crucible of research development with colleagues in cooperative endeavour is indispensable to the project, it seems to me.

Here, the 'edge' of WP is instrumental in enabling some sharp critical thinking so, again like Sarah, I think that remains a crucial component. Back to the initial point, there is an important component in my experience here in enabling engagement with students themselves about what constitutes learning and teaching and that seems especially important in the present political and economic environment of neoliberal ideology. That ideology operates to override those concerns so there is also an implicit political critique in all this which is a welcome antidote to the marketisation of higher education.

Hope this makes sense. Let me know if not!

Howard

Appendix 20 Howard's reflections on participating in the research

I was very interested in this research project for several reasons. Some background context may be helpful. Since my teacher training I have been interested in the dynamics of curriculum development and particularly in collaborative curriculum development. Also, since working in Further Education, I have a great deal of experience of, and commitment to, team teaching. Before returning to HE again – firstly as a postgraduate student, secondly as a lecturer – I undertook an EFL Certificate course. Such courses are typically focused on intensive evaluation of curriculum planning and delivery by the course tutor and peers. One of the most important things I learned from this experience was to appreciate the opportunity for close scrutiny and analysis of our teaching, especially by those peers. Ensuing discussions would often result in rethinking what I had planned and how I had taught it, invariably with a revised approach to how I would teach it subsequently. I emphasise this point because most teaching – that is, in the sense of classroom interaction – takes place without any such peer interaction.

It is fair to say that most university teaching is undertaken as a 'solitary' activity by the teacher in the sense that the teacher is usually alone with his/her students for the duration of the class and, indeed, for the entire module(s). Of course, the teacher is not solitary in the sense that

there are a number of evaluative stages in the assessment of his/her teaching for each module. The convenor's design of the module and to some extent the delivery of it will be evaluated in the moderator's report and this in turn will be reviewed by external examiners. Students evaluate both module and teaching in anonymous scores and commentary. There is also a process by which teachers are subject to peer review (usually once, for one class, every two years, when the scheme is operation).

These institutional processes are designed to demonstrate that there is in place a rigorous system to ensure that teaching is subject to quality control and scrutiny, and that teaching standards are upheld. It is noteworthy, however, that within these processes there is little opportunity for a genuine reflective space. As many colleagues would attest, such processes often seem like box-ticking exercises for what looks like an increasingly spurious form of 'quality' control. Similarly, in the student evaluation of module (SEM) and student evaluation of teaching (SET) documents, student feedback is usually incomplete and often reducible to a numerical scorecard and, while some respondents are responsive, many are not. Where students do comment, their criteria often reveals a customer-orientated concern with perceived relevance or difficulty and – especially today – with the extent to which module materials are seen as 'relatable'. And, in the same way that 'like' indicators function on social media, some respondents are more likely to 'like' a module if there is a perception that there is not too much reading and it is not too difficult and that the tutor is not a 'hard' marker.

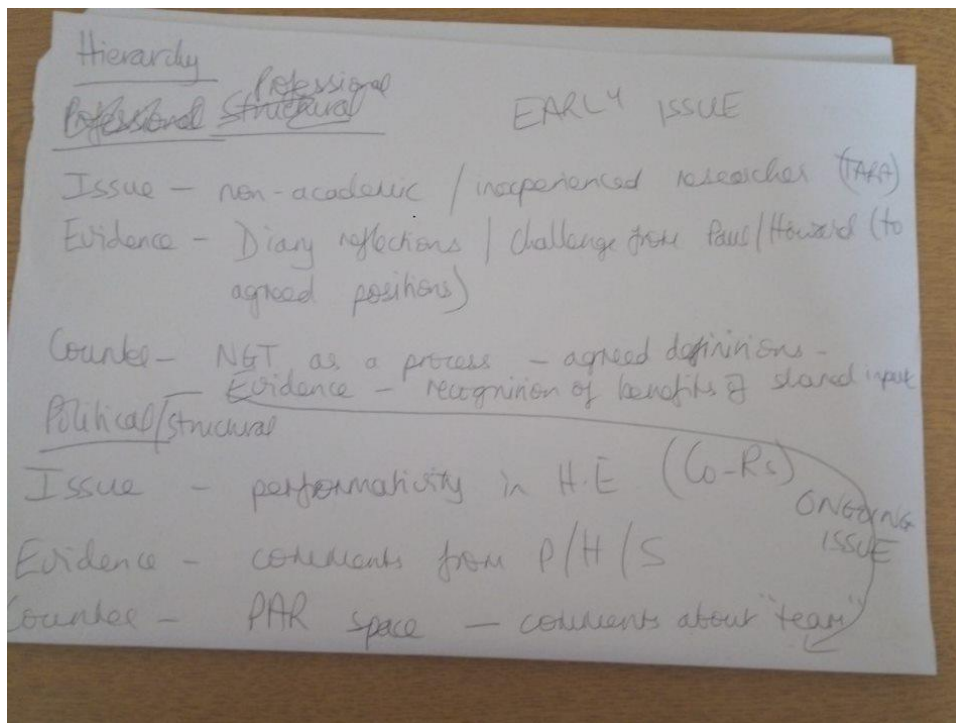
Senior management places considerable emphasis on these findings and teaching staff are expected to respond and adapt accordingly, often in ways that appear to be based on criteria drawn from customer satisfaction surveys. It is interesting to note that the cultural historian Joe Moran has recently published an article in which he reports that he now refuses to read any anonymous commentary by students in module evaluation surveys, arguing that in writing anonymously students have no need to take responsibility for what they write and there is no incentive for them to write reflectively and precisely (*THE*).

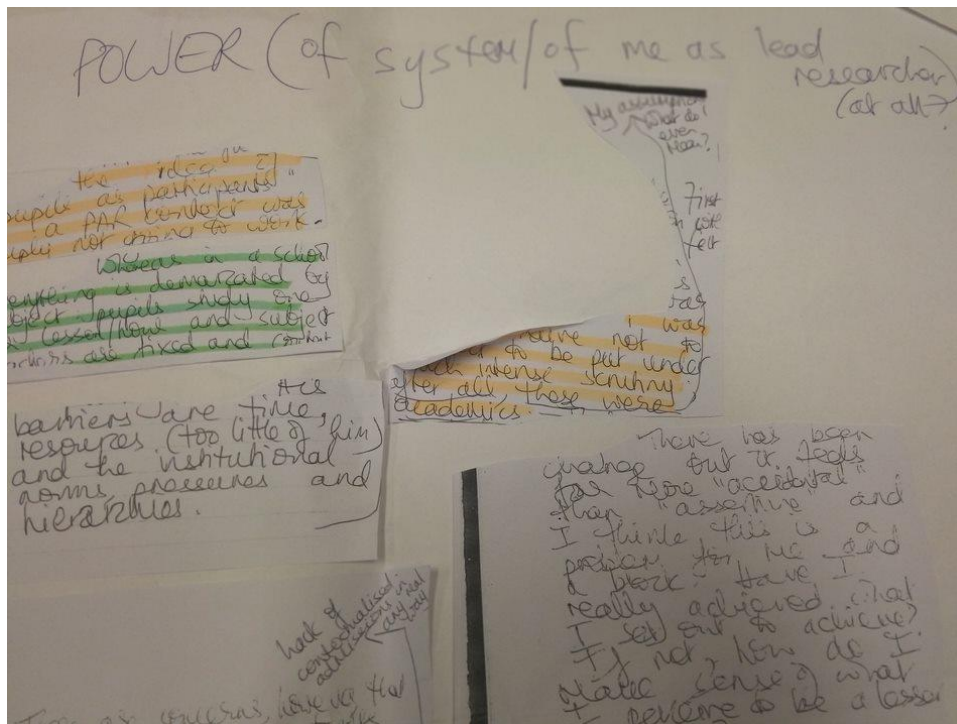
In addition to all this it is also necessary to acknowledge how increasing pressures on academic staff together with other institutional demands on their time and energy have resulted in what is now a standardised condition for staff of working ever-increasing hours, often with worsening pay and conditions of employment leading to a disillusioned and demoralised workforce. Here, it is often the case that senior management are imposing on staff a series of decisions according to an agenda driven by market concerns with little or no pedagogical value and usually without consultation with those involved. Taken together these circumstances are scarcely conducive to the encouragement of creative, collaborative curriculum development. I labour this point because the excellent pedagogical work accomplished by this project, and its potential for further development and application, are subject to the realities of an institutional environment with values which can often be seen to contradict good pedagogical practice.

For me, the experience of this project was hugely beneficial and enjoyable: a rare opportunity to work with colleagues and students while raising questions about teaching and learning

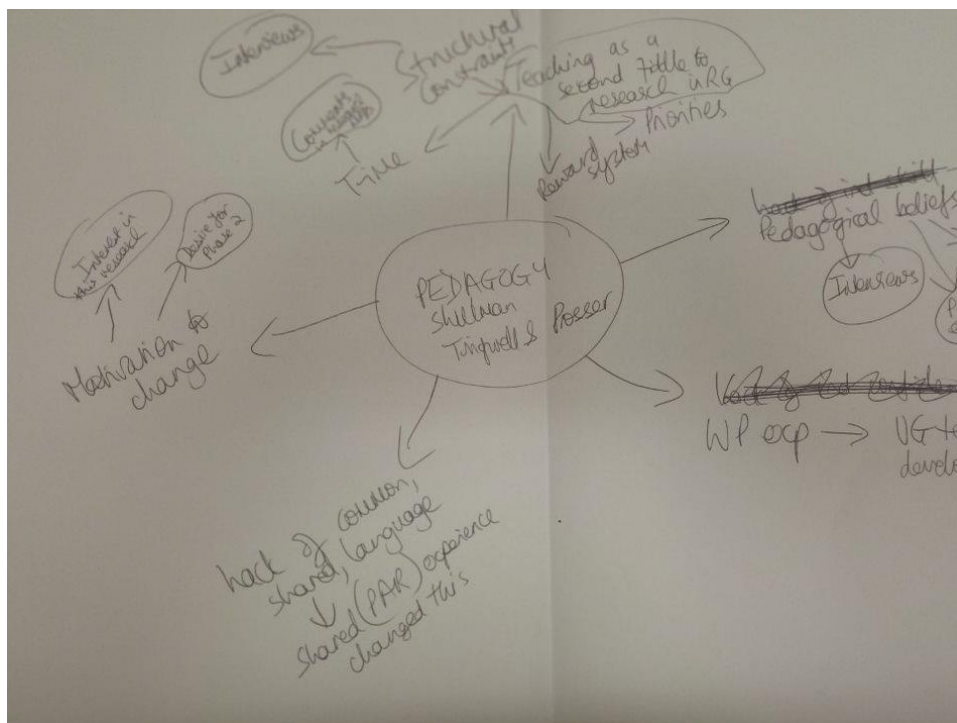
practices. Even at the most basic level – indeed, going back to the basics of classroom teaching reminiscent of my teacher training experience – was a very useful way of ‘pressing the pause button’ and looking closely and deeply at what was happening in the classroom with colleagues teaching their sessions and me teaching mine. This was enhanced by working with an altogether different and unfamiliar age group with its own classroom culture to navigate. This presented its own difficulties, not to say terrors. This in itself was an interesting challenge, particularly in the sense that it raised questions about the how to develop approaches to teaching which were obliged to acknowledge a class’s potential for signalling indifference to the subject at hand and to the teacher, and to deploy techniques – often with high levels of practised skill – which subverted the teacher’s authority in the classroom.

One of the most productive elements of participatory action research (PAR) is that it is not based on any ideologically or theoretically predetermined model or fixed methodology or controlled experimentation. Such research models can have a somewhat remote quality and operate at some distance from the realities and practicalities of day-to-day teaching. One of the most productive aspects of this PAR research was in the opportunities it provided for reflection on one’s teaching practice and consideration of how this could be developed. Most importantly, this was facilitated by a teacher-researcher with an understanding of those issues which pose problems for the achievement of those goals. The experience of working with colleagues in classroom settings and the subsequent interactions was hugely productive. It enabled discussion of both the mechanics of classroom teaching but also a much deeper consideration of the philosophical dimension of what we do and how we do it. This was a rare opportunity for that kind of discussion which is both necessary and mostly absent from our work. I should like to thank Tara Webster-Deakin for the opportunity to participate in this invaluable research project and for her excellent work in facilitating its development.

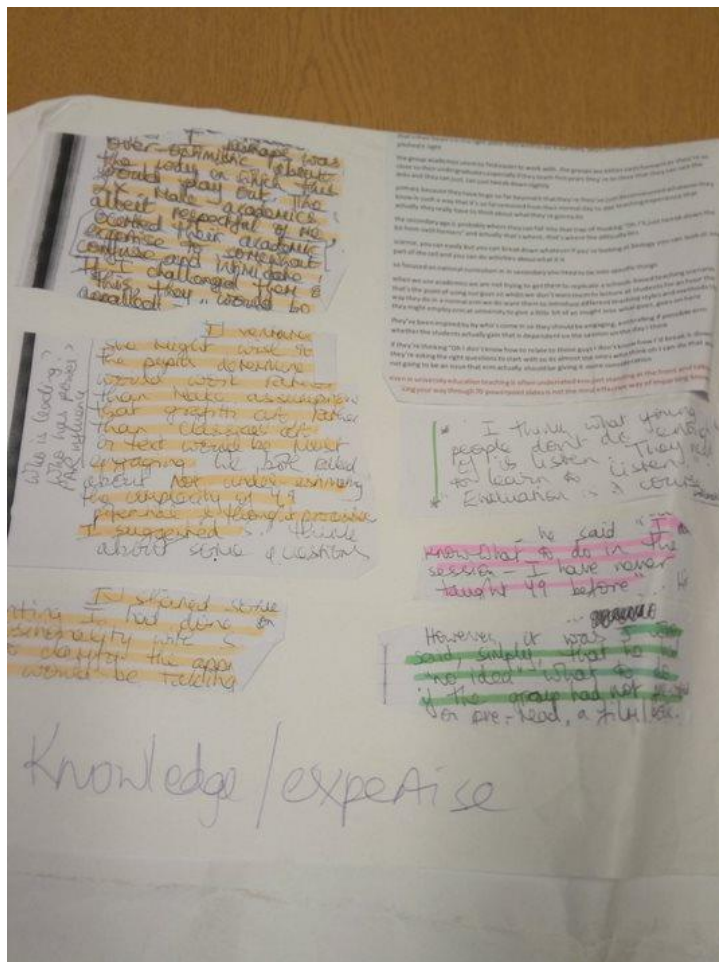
Appendix 21 – Data Analysis (Hierarchy)**Appendix 22 Data Analysis (Power)**



Appendix 23 Data Analysis (Pedagogy)



Appendix 24 Data Analysis (Knowledge/expertise)



Appendix 25 (Governors' research letter)

School of Cultures, Languages and Area Studies

Dear Sirs and Madams,

I would like to ask for official permission to conduct some research with students and staff at X school. The aim of the research is to explore how academic university staff might engage more effectively in outreach with schools and colleges.

Using action research, I will work with 2 or 3 academic colleagues to design and deliver a half day of taster sessions to your pupils and their teacher. After the sessions we will seek feedback from the pupils and their teacher about how they found the sessions. It is hoped that the pupils will gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of university and university study through their participation in this research project.

The participants included in the research are:

- Myself, the EdD researcher and research project facilitator
- 2 /3 academic staff teaching at University of XXXX
- Y9 teacher teaching at X School
- Group of Y9 pupils studying at X School

I have satisfied the requirements of the Ethics committee in the School of Education at the University of XXXX. These include transparent guidelines regarding educational research, particularly in the case of working with children and vulnerable adults. Thus, in my research I use a pseudonym to protect the name of the institution and I will also use this approach to protect the identity of individual participants who will only be identifiable by a letter or a number in any transcripts. I will ensure that all digital data is kept securely in a password protected file and all paper (such as consent forms) is kept securely in a locked filing cabinet in my office at the university. The research ethics committee may be contacted at XXXXXXXX.

As some of the participants I will do research with are classified as children by the definition in the UK, I will require the permission of parents as well as the participants themselves. I will make it clear before I conduct the research with the pupils that there is no requirement to participate; it is completely voluntary. At any stage participants are free to withdraw from the research without fear of negative consequences.

There is no perceived risk of harm expected to participants from their participation in this project. Both the Associate Professor and I have a valid DBS check and significant experience of working with school groups. Pupils will, at all times, be accompanied by their teacher. If there is any concern about participation in this project, parents/carers have the right to deny consent or to withdraw their child from the research.

The main data collection will take place during the summer term 2017 over the single half day event. Once the thesis arising from this research has been completed, a brief summary of the findings will be made available by the researcher upon application. It is also possible that the results will be presented at academic conferences and journals. The data will be kept securely for seven years after the date of publication, before being destroyed.

If you have any questions about the research or my credentials, please contact me on XXXX.

You can also contact my research supervisor, Professor Monica McLean at XXXXXX

Many thanks for your interest in this project.

Tara Webster-Deakin

EdD research student

Appendix 26 (Headteacher research letter)

School of Cultures, Languages and Area Studies

Dear Headteacher,

I would like to ask for official permission to conduct some research with pupils and staff at X school. The aim of the research is to explore how academic university staff might engage more effectively in outreach with schools and colleges.

Using action research, I will work with academic colleagues to design a half day of taster sessions for your pupils and their teacher to attend. After the sessions we will seek feedback from the pupils and their teacher about how they found the sessions. It is hoped that the pupils will gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of university and university study through their participation in this research project.

The participants included in the research are:

- Myself, the EdD researcher and research project facilitator
- 2 or 3 academic staff teaching at University of XXXX
- Y9 teacher teaching at X School.
- Group of Y9 pupils studying at X School.

I have satisfied the requirements of the Ethics committee in the School of Education at the University of XXXX. These include transparent guidelines regarding educational research, particularly in the case of working with children and vulnerable adults. Thus, in my research I use a pseudonym to protect the name of the institution and I will also use this approach to protect the identity of individual participants who will only be identifiable by a letter or a number in any transcripts. I will ensure that all digital data is kept securely in a password protected file and all paper (such as consent forms) is kept securely in a locked filing cabinet in my office at the university. The research ethics committee may be contacted at XXXX.

As some of the participants I will do research with are classified as children by the definition in the UK, I will require the permission of parents as well as the participants themselves. I will make it clear before I conduct the research with the pupils that there is no requirement to participate; it is completely voluntary. At any stage participants are free to withdraw from the research without fear of negative consequences.

There is no perceived risk of harm expected to participants from their participation in this project. I have a valid DBS check and significant experience of working with school groups. Pupils will, at all times, be accompanied by their teacher. If there is any concern about participation in this project, parents/carers have the right to deny consent or to withdraw their child from the research.

The main data collection will take place during the summer term 2017 over a single half day event. Once the thesis arising from this research has been completed, a brief summary of the findings will be made available by the researcher upon application. It is also possible that the results will be presented at academic conferences and journals. The data will be kept securely for seven years after the date of publication, before being destroyed.

If you have any questions about the research or my credentials, please contact me on XXXX.

You can also contact my research supervisor, Professor Monica McLean at XXXX.

Many thanks for your interest in this project.

Tara Webster-Deakin

EdD research student

Appendix 27 (Parent research letter and consent form)

Dear Parent or Carer,

Re- Taking part in research with the University of XXXX.

I am a research student at the University of XXXX and I am writing to ask for your consent to conduct some action research with your son/daughter at X school. Action research is designed to address a problem and find a solution through collaborative action, reflection and discussion.

This research will involve your son/daughter attending a half day of academic taster sessions to help university academic staff at the University of XXXX learn how to work more effectively with schools and colleges. Your son/daughter will attend the taster sessions and then give feedback directly to the academic staff about what they enjoyed or found challenging about the sessions. This will happen over a single half day event in the summer term 2017, during school hours, at the university and in the presence of a teacher from your son/daughter's school at all times.

The feedback your son/daughter provides will be audio recorded and written notes will be made. This will inform and influence some of my thinking and further research on the project and will also be used in my doctoral thesis and possible publications arising from the research. In my research I will use a pseudonym to protect the name of the school and also to protect the identity of individual participants. All data will be kept securely and no names or personal information will be used in the thesis or in any publications arising from the research.

Your son/daughter has been invited to be part of this research project as a pupil who would benefit from the interaction with the university researchers. However, your son/daughter is free to withdraw his/her participation from the project at any time without any negative consequences

Please sign the attached form and return it to the contact teacher at X school if you give your consent for your son/daughter to participate.

For any further questions, please contact me directly on XXXX

You can also contact my research supervisor, Professor Monica McLean at XXXX.

The research ethics committee may be contacted at XXX.

Yours sincerely,

Tara Webster-Deakin

EdD Research student

School of Education

Parental Consent Form for EdD research project

Participant details

Name _____

School/ college _____

Disabilities/special needs _____

Details of any additional support required _____

Please circle Yes or No for the following statements:

I have been informed of and understand the purpose of the research project **Yes/No**

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions **Yes/No**

I understand I can withdraw my son/daughter at any time without prejudice **Yes/No**

Any information which might potentially identify my son/daughter will not be used in published material **Yes/No**

I understand that all personal data will be kept securely and accessed only by the researcher **Yes/No**

I give permission for my son/daughter to participate in the research project as outlined **Yes/No**

Signature of parent/guardian

_____ Date _____

Name of parent/guardian _____

Please return to: The organising teacher at your child's school/directly to Tara Webster-Deakin

Appendix 28 (School pupil research letter and consent form)

University of XXXX

Re: Taking part in a research project to help academic university staff share their research with local school pupils

Dear X School student,

I am a research student at the University of XXXX and I am writing to invite you to take part in some research. The research is to help university academic staff learn how to work more effectively with schools and colleges and enable them to talk about their research to you in a way which makes sense to you.

If you take part, you will attend a half day of taster sessions taught by academic staff at the University of XXXX. After the sessions you will be asked to give feedback directly to the academic staff about what you enjoyed or found challenging about the sessions. This will happen within school hours, at the University of XXXX and your teacher will be there at all times.

The feedback you provide will be audio recorded and written notes will be taken. This will help me with my thinking and further research on the project and will also be used in my doctoral thesis (the work I submit to gain a Doctorate in Education) and any possible publications in journals or conference presentations arising from this research.

In my research I will use a pseudonym (a letter or a number) to protect your name and identity. No names or personal information will be used in the research or any publications arising from the research. All your personal information will be kept either in a password protected file or a locked filing cabinet in my office at the university.

I am keen to have your opinions, but do not feel that you HAVE to take part on the research. If you do take part, you are free to stop at any time without any negative consequences.

Please sign the attached form and return it to your teacher if you give your consent to participating in this research project.

For any further questions, please contact me directly on XXXX

You may also contact my university research teacher, Professor Monica McLean, School of Education at XXXX.

The research ethics committee may be contacted at XXXX.

Many thanks

Tara Webster-Deakin

Edd research student

School of Education

Participant Consent Form for EdD research project

Participant details

Name _____

School/ college _____

Disabilities/special needs _____

Details of any additional support required _____

Please circle Yes or No for the following statements:

I have been told about and understand the purpose of the research project **Yes/No**

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions **Yes/No**

I understand I can leave the project at any time without any negative consequences **Yes/No**

Any information which might potentially identify me will not be used in published material **Yes/No**

I understand that all research data will be kept securely and accessed only by the researcher **Yes/No**

I am happy to participate in the research project as outlined **Yes/No**

Signature of participant _____ Date _____

Please return to: The organising teacher at your school/directly to Tara Webster-Deakin