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**An Inductive Inquiry into Managing Tutorial Provision
In Post-compulsory Education**

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Abstract

This research explores aspects affecting the management of tutorial provision in post-compulsory education. The inquiry has been designed to inductively explore tutorial provision using grounded theory methodology. The research participants were either students or tutors in post-compulsory education, as they were in a position to contribute their personal experiences and perceptions in relation to the research phenomena.

Three aspects of tutorial provision were explored during this study. Firstly, the nature and purpose of tutorial provision was explored to ascertain the participants' perceptions of tutorial needs and expectations. The rationale for this was to address the low profile tutorial provision suffers at national and institutional levels across the sector, and because the confusing range of definitions imply a need for the objectives of tutorial provision to be more clearly articulated. Secondly, the personal tutoring role was explored in order to understand what students' and tutors' perceived the key aspects of the role to be, and to understand the value placed upon it by the students, the tutors and the institution. The rationale behind this aspect was to address the lack of confidence and commitment many tutors demonstrate when undertaking the role, due in part, to arbitrary recruitment and insufficient personal tutor training. Finally, a third aspect emerged during the inductive inquiry, which led to the exploration of feelings and emotions at play within the tutoring relationship.

From this research, three contributions to knowledge have emerged. Firstly, a 'Heuristic Framework for Tutorial Provision' contributes to clarifying the nature and purpose of tutorial provision, whilst acknowledging its complexity and the need for flexible and differentiated provision. Secondly, an 'Archetype of the Personal Tutoring Role' acknowledges the various 'Functions' tutors believe they are undertaking as personal tutors, the attitudes that underpin their view of the personal tutoring role, and a description of tutors' skills, knowledge and personality the participants deem necessary to develop a successful tutoring relationship. Finally, a 'Theoretical Model of Tutoring Styles' has been developed, based on the inquiry's emergent themes in relation to the tutoring relationship. The model is presented as a tool to enable tutors to understand the impact of their tutoring practice by exploring their ideology of teaching and style of interaction.

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My deep felt thanks go to all those who have participated in this study, without whom this research would not have been possible. Specials thanks go to those who were brave and trusting enough to share their most personal thoughts and feelings. I hope that this thesis does justice to the genuine engagement and commitment of all those who have been involved.

I also thank all my friends and colleagues who have shared the highs and lows with me along the way, in particular to Helen Bellamy, my friend and mentor for many years with whom I have enjoyed many stimulating discussions, and also to Carol McArthur and Ruth Garrett for their special friendship and support.

My acknowledgements would not be complete without expressing the deep love and admiration I hold for my sons, Andrew and Stephen, for the selfless way they have shown genuine enthusiasm and been so understanding of my commitment to this venture over the last six years.

Finally, I dedicate this study with love to my husband, John, for his selfless support and steadfast belief in my endeavours. Without his encouragement, thoughtfulness and constant affection this work would never have been completed. Thank you does not seem enough for all that he has done and all that I am because of it.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis presents the findings of my inductive inquiry into managing tutorial provision in post-compulsory education. The research was undertaken in response to the tutoring community's concerns over the lack of clarity surrounding the purpose and nature of tutorial provision and the personal tutoring role. The findings have emerged out of an exploration of students' and tutors' tutorial experiences, perceptions and personal stories. The thesis captures the essence of what the participants collectively believe to be the nature and purpose of tutorial provision, and their interpretations of the personal tutoring role.

I undertook the research using a grounded theory methodology. It was not intended to prove or disprove a hypothesis, rather it was designed to facilitate participants' exploration of the research subject in order to portray their shared understanding and expectations. To this end, I began the research with two general areas of exploration in mind:

- The nature and purpose of tutorial provision in post-compulsory education
- The nature and purpose of the personal tutoring role.

You will find as you work through this thesis that grounded theory researchers begin the inquiry with an idea of where they are heading only to find that at some point in the process the research takes on a life of its own and from then on leads the way. With the inductive nature of this methodology it can transpire that unexpected themes emerge, directing the researcher to explore subjects they had not previously considered pursuing. The emergence of students' feelings and emotions in this research are a prime example of such an occurrence as this theme emerged from the inquiry into the purpose and nature of tutorial provision, a seemingly unrelated topic.

The emergent theory provides a framework for tutorial provision drawn from the participants' exploration intended to support managers in planning and designing tutorial provision and to enable tutors to understand the objectives of tutorial curriculum and pastoral care through using their current terminology. In addition the study provides a definition of the tutoring role based on tutors' and students' interpretations and expectations of the role, and has identified a range of attributes deemed by the participants to contribute to effective tutoring, which are presented as an archetype of the personal tutoring role. During the study it also emerged that the personal tutoring relationship was significant to students' learning experiences and that students seek a shared experience working in partnership with a tutor who is willing to engage in democratic dialogue. The findings from the exploration of the tutoring role and attributes, together with the newfound insight into the feelings and emotions at play within the tutoring relationship, were subsequently employed to create an exploratory

tool to aid tutors' reflections on their tutoring practice and identification of related professional development.

Because this research has been accomplished by connecting with others as they share their thoughts, feelings and experiences, I consider that it would be inconsistent to become dispassionate in the writing of this thesis. I have therefore chosen to adopt an informal style of reporting as proposed by Lincoln and Guba (cited by Cohen et al 2000:152) and present this thesis in the first person so that you may feel we are engaging in the final phase of this endeavour as the story is being told.

I will begin by presenting a brief overview of the thesis in order to give you a flavour of what is to come and to allow you to navigate towards any aspects of the study that may be of particular interest to you.

1.1 The Thesis Structure

As this has been an inductive inquiry, I was keen to present the thesis in a way that would enable you to gain a sense of how the research developed over time and to reflect the process of data collection and analysis so that you could visualise the theory emerging. That said, confusion and regression ensued during the research process as is the nature of grounded theory (see p45) therefore a choice had to be made between dogmatically reflecting the process with all its confusion, or modifying my idea to make sure that the investigative process, emergence of themes and the development of theory could be clearly followed and understood. Mindful that many people reading this report are being introduced to its content for the first time, I have chosen to address each research topic in turn and demonstrate how the research developed for that particular aspect of the study within each relevant chapter. Another feature of the grounded theory methodology is for the data to lead the way and for the research to explore emergent themes as they occur, only reviewing relevant literature once the theory has presented itself so as not to hinder the researcher's creativity (see p63). To acknowledge this requirement I have deliberately discussed my research findings in the light of relevant literature at the end of each chapter, as this is how it occurred in practice.

Chapter 1: This chapter provides an overview of the thesis and discusses the rationale for undertaking the study. The contribution that tutorial provision makes to student retention and achievement and the institution's financial stability are discussed and the lack of clarity and guidance to support the management of tutorial provision is described. I also give an account of my own personal and professional interests that led me to pursue this inquiry in order to give an insight into the driving force behind the study.

Chapter 2: This chapter describes the backdrop to tutorial provision. It identifies the influence that Government education policy such as the 14-19 Education and Skills white paper has on the nature and purpose of tutorial provision. The widening participation agenda has created an increasingly diverse student cohort and that the forthcoming implementation of the new specialised diplomas and the personalisation agenda indicate that tutorial provision continues to experience change and that one of the challenges for the management of tutorial provision will be to clearly articulate its nature and purpose and to support tutors in their preparation and professional development to meet the demands of their evolving role.

Chapter 3: In the methodology chapter, I explore the notion of truth and discuss this in the context of my chosen methodology. I consider the distinction between inductive and deductive research and present the justification for choosing a grounded theory methodology. I position myself as an interpretivist researcher holding to the notion that truth is a social construct therefore an inductive approach to explore participants' perceptions of the research topic is appropriate. Furthermore, grounded theory is used extensively in education research as it acknowledges practitioners' working theories arising from their experiences and working practice.

Chapter 4: Here the research methods and process is discussed in detail and a chronological overview of the empirical research is provided. A description of how the methods of data collection were used is given along with relevant justification. The methods for data collection discussed are questionnaire, focus groups, personal stories, visual exploration and Logo Visual Technology (LVT). The use of LVT software in the analysis is outlined and I have juxtaposed the grounded theory method of coding with the LVT process to illustrate where the research participants engaged in the data and collection and the open coding phase of the analysis. I discuss the method of analysis and theory building required by the grounded theory methodology and I explore the opposing views of Glaser and Strauss in relation to theoretical sensitivity in order to clarify my position on this issue.

Chapter 5: This is where I begin to report on the empirical research, starting with the exploration of the nature and purpose of tutorial provision. The data relating to this aspect of the study is presented in two parts, the students' exploration and the tutors' exploration. In each part the data is presented in the order in which the research activities occurred followed by analysis of the data and subsequent findings. I discuss the research findings in the light of relevant literature from which it is proposed that tutorial provision is complex with group tutorial and individual tutorial being viewed as two distinct aspects of provision. The chapter presents the participants' understanding and expectations of both aspects illustrated as a framework for tutorial provision.

Chapter 6: This chapter considers the nature of tutoring interaction, an unexpected theme arising from students' comments relating to their feelings and emotions experienced within the tutoring relationship emerges. This aspect was explored by examining individual personal stories for indications of the type of emotions experienced. It was concluded that poor tutoring relationships can negatively affect the potential for students to succeed and can be detrimental to their well-being, self-perception and perception of others. These conclusions led me to propose that it is beneficial for managers of tutorial provision to recruit carefully for the role of personal tutor and that in order to do so it would be helpful to explore what skills, qualities and attributes personal tutors require in order to engage in a positive tutoring relationship.

Chapter 7: An exploration of the personal tutoring role and attributes was originally intended to be part of this research. The emerging significance of a positive tutoring relationship for students' success and wellbeing confirms that this is an area worthy of investigation. Students' and tutors' perceptions were sought using visual exploration and discussion resulting in lists of skills, knowledge, attitudes and personality attributes. The tutors also identified functions, the role they perceived themselves to be undertaking which is presented as an archetype of the personal tutoring role and attributes. It was found that the boundaries of the personal tutoring role are unclear and that tensions exist where tutors are expected to be both advocate and disciplinarian. It was also found that teacher training neglects tutors' preparation for the role and furthermore the tutors share concerns over feelings of inadequacy where guidance and training is not provided by their institution.

Chapter 8: This is the final chapter to report on the empirical research and builds on the research findings in relation to personal tutor skills, attributes and interaction. In response to the lack of professional development associated with the personal tutoring role and the importance of the tutoring relationship, in particular tutor interaction, this chapter illustrates the developmental process I worked through to arrive at a theoretical model of tutoring styles. The model is presented as an exploratory tool to assist tutors in reflecting on their tutoring practice and interaction. Revealing my thought process as the model develops illustrates how, by continuously developing and testing good ideas, the grounded theoretical scheme emerges.

Chapter 9: This chapter summarises the research findings and the contribution made to the theoretical body of knowledge associated with managing tutorial provision. The implications of the research for tutorial management and practice are presented, as are the limitations of the study and suggested further research.

1.2 Rationale for Undertaking the Research

Post Compulsory Education has become increasingly market sensitive since the introduction of the current funding regime. In order to respond to this competitive environment institutions determine their educational character through mission statements and market their curriculum offer through the annual prospectus and direct links with schools, employers and other partnerships. The institution's financial stability is dependant on the level of student recruitment, retention and achievement as funding is received according to these stages throughout the students' course of study. Where students do not complete or are unsuccessful in obtaining an accredited qualification a percentage of funding attached to that student is lost. Thus, education management teams seek to continuously develop institutional strategies to improve recruitment, retention and achievement.

There is an implicit acceptance that tutorial support within the Further and Higher Education sectors positively impacts on retention and achievement therefore institutions look to this area of provision to reduce levels of student disengagement and raise levels of achievement. Cantor et al (1995:19) acknowledge a growing recognition for the importance of student support services in improving retention and achievement. They also highlight the need for support services to take account of the diverse groups of students engaged in post compulsory education. Tutorial support as a key to retention, achievement and progression was also emphasised in the UCAS 'Paving the Way' project report (May 2002) highlighting *'More robust structures for individual support are needed'* The report also noted that *'It was identified that support for non-traditional learners entering Higher Education was considered deficient and deteriorating'*. Sir Geoffrey Holland, speaking at the 2002 Education Conference, whilst giving emphasis to the importance of students having a one-to-one relationship with a tutor, also noted that these were in decline in Higher Education. Martinez and Munday (1998:99-102) reporting on research into student persistence and drop-out in Further Education, claim that student help and guidance will increase the potential to retain students facing personal difficulties and suggest strategies such as specialist advice or counselling and opportunities for alternative modes of study when attendance is difficult. They recognised that many colleges currently provide services to students such as counselling and advice on careers, finance, benefits, accommodation and healthcare issues however it was found that not all students were aware of how these services could be accessed. The responsibility for ensuring that students receive the support they require sits predominantly with the personal tutor who acts as the first point of contact for students experiencing difficulties. Where students may benefit from support services provided centrally by the institution such as counselling or welfare advice, the personal tutor will either advise the student how this support can be

accessed or make arrangements on the student's behalf. This particular aspect of tutorial provision appears to be generally understood by tutors, however discussion about the personal tutoring role and the purpose of tutorial provision beyond this becomes complicated. Therefore, as Earwaker (1992:41) suggests *'The role of the tutor needs urgent reconsideration'*.

Bramley (1977:129) also implies a need for investigation into the field of personal tutoring. She refers to personal tutoring as being in its infancy and proposes that the lack of personal tutoring theory leaves understanding and development of the role relying on practitioners. Ribbins & Best contributing to Lang and Marland (1985:49) conclude that the development of pastoral care is largely dependant on practitioners' own experiences. Although they accept this as a reasonable contribution to pastoral development, they also see a need for further research. Lang (1985:199-203) points out that little research was undertaken to look at pastoral care in education until the 1980's therefore a lack of knowledge exits in this area. The literature review for this inquiry has shown that not a great deal has changed since the late 1970's, particularly in relation to understanding and developing tutorial (which includes pastoral care) in Further Education. Lang (1985:199-203) outlines the need for further research to:

- see how far pastoral care in educational institutions is restricted by inappropriate administrative structures
- help to develop general support services for pastoral care staff
- resolve conflicts of value, attitude and perception over pastoral care and its role in a multicultural society
- explore the contribution of pastoral care to the integration of students with special educational needs and/or sensory disabilities
- consider provision, practice and effectiveness and training aimed at helping pastoral care staff to develop their principles and practice.

One of the problems resulting from a lack of research in this area is the current difficulty found in discussing the development of tutorial provision. This stems partly from the confusing range of terminology adopted by various institutions and the apparent divide between approaches in Further and Higher Education. For example, in Further Education 'tutorial' has two meanings and generally refers to regular meetings of a group of students on the same course (group tutorial) and also individual meetings between student and personal tutor (individual tutorial). The general notion is that the purpose of group tutorial is to offer a forum to provide information about the college and course activities and where students can raise issues about the course as a group. Some however, such as Earwaker (1992) and Bentley (1998) believe tutorial development should broaden the remit to incorporate activities that promote personal, academic and employability development however the implementation of this so far is inconsistent across the sector. A number of Further Education institutions refer to the individual meetings as 'individual review' or 'individual learning planning'. Although the

terminology differs these meetings share the same purpose in tracking student progress, addressing individuals' problems and planning development and progression. In essence both group and individual tutorials are a formal, integrated part of each full-time programme of study in Further Education. In practice, experience tells me that the delivery of this provision is sporadic across the sector and can also be disparate across individual institutions. In Higher Education the term tutorial does not tend to be used for the same purpose as in Further Education. A tutorial in Higher Education is more commonly described as a small group meeting to discuss subject related matters following a formal lecture. Instead they refer to 'tutoring' rather than 'tutorial' for individual meetings between the student and personal tutor. It was interesting to note that when recently contributing a chapter to a book about personal tutoring in Higher Education I was asked to replace all references to 'tutorial' with the word 'tutoring'. The group tutorial found in Further Education does not appear to exist in the same format. In Higher Education however students are required to address personal and professional development planning, either through an accredited unit of study or an institutionally designed reflective portfolio.

Calvert and Henderson (1998:113) also refer to the difficulties inherent in a lack of definition by quoting Best (1995) saying *'twenty years of discussion, writing and theorising have failed to achieve much more that a working consensus'*. Megahy (contributing to Calvert and Henderson 1998:26-29) re-iterates the problems and complexities in managing pastoral care as:

- A lack of shared understanding of the nature and purpose
- An obvious pastoral/academic divide with pastoral care emerging the inferior
- Lack of confidence and commitment of teachers in a pastoral role
- Inadequate support for pastoral care at a national level.

Furthermore, due to the confusing range of terminology associated with tutorial provision and the inconsistent manner in which tutorial provision is developed, it is often difficult for the tutoring community to debate tutorial issues across the post-compulsory education sector. These are some of the concerns at the heart of this study. To begin to overcome the lack of shared understanding about the nature of tutorial, both pastoral and developmental, and the lack of confidence and commitment to the role, this study draws on the terminology used by students and tutors as a basis from which shared understandings can emerge.

It can be argued that understandings are subjective and that our *a priori* colours our perceptions (see p34). Also, I have learned that you cannot separate the research from the researcher. It is appropriate therefore for me to examine my relationship to the research in order to be aware of the pre-conceptions I hold. I use the term 'relationship' in acknowledgement of the interplay between the research and the researcher,

highlighted by Cohen et al (1998:42). By 'setting my stall out' in this manner you will see a glimpse of the world through my lenses. As a consequence, you should be able to consider the data analysis and subsequent conclusions in the light of my acknowledged assumptions and be assured that appropriate objectivity has been achieved. I qualify 'appropriate' for as Cohen et al (1998:42) point out: '...*researchers have learned that a state of complete objectivity is impossible and that in every piece of research – quantitative or qualitative – there is an element of subjectivity'.* There are two reasons why I initially embarked on this exploration. I pondered for a while over which should come first, the personal or professional perspective, and came to the conclusion that they do not sit in any order of importance, they both arise from experience and tacit knowledge and both contribute to the whole story. I will begin with a professional perspective, looking at how my experiences and knowledge developed through work shaped my thinking. I will then move on to reveal a more personal perspective through you will see the transparency of prior assumptions I brought to this study. It is important for me to offer this insight and openly acknowledge my *a priori* in order to foster a spirit of honesty, openness and credibility.

A Professional Perspective

My professional interest in this area of research rose out of a sense that current tutorial practice could be improved to benefit both students and tutors. I have observed that the quality of tutorial provision often varies across individual institutions leading to inconsistent provision and differing levels of satisfaction in the student experience. I also observed that a number of personal tutors across any one institution could display varying degrees of support for tutorial provision, that is to say some perceiving it to be a worthwhile exercise that benefits the students, whilst others did not perceive it to have any bearing on learning. Where tutors considered tutorial to be a useful activity many would raise concerns that they did not understand the role well or have access to the guidance, support or training they required to help them in the role. I had seen evidence in some institutions that good tutorial provision was beneficial to students' success and wellbeing. I had also noted, through my involvement as a mediator where tutor/student relationships had broken down, that poor tutoring could negatively affect students' wellbeing and desire to achieve to the point of disengagement. All of these experiences kindled a desire to contribute to the development of tutorial provision, the improvement of tutorial practice and support for personal tutors.

When this research project first began, I was a lecturer in Hospitality Management. The role included course co-ordination and personal tutoring for 1st and 2nd year HND/C Hospitality Management programmes. I was later engaged in cross-college tutorial co-ordination for the Faculty of Higher Education and Arts. Towards the end of this study I

moved institutions to take up the post of Tutorial Manager, and my focus changed from Further Education to Higher Education, hence the opportunity to draw on the perceptions of provision in both Further Education and Higher Education. My professional progression has been fuelled by a desire to raise the profile of tutorial provision and to contribute to changing practice. It has enabled me to develop my knowledge and expertise through application, research and reflection in positions of varying responsibility (and constraint). Allied to this is a desire to challenge my tacit knowledge by developing a deeper understanding of the theories and concepts related to the management of tutorial provision.

My sense of a need for improved practice emerged from reflections on my experiences as a teacher, a personal tutor and a student. On entering the teaching profession I was soon engaged in personal tutoring and was anxious to understand the students' and the institution's expectations in relation to this role. With no policy or guidelines in place, it became clear that personal tutors were generally left to their own devices when it came to planning and delivering tutorial curriculum. Concern that there was no clear direction in terms of purpose, content or professional standards for tutoring became evident as colleagues bemoaned the lack of training and support. They acknowledged that individual practice differed considerably as tutors were left to rely on their own interpretations in relation to the purpose of tutorial curriculum and how best to support individual learners.

Through my teaching activities I had become increasingly aware of the considerable variation in the level of academic skills students possess within any one group. It seemed appropriate to me to assist students struggling to meet the academic rigour of the course by addressing their specific issues, and saw tutorial provision as a vehicle through which this could be achieved. As a consequence of these reflections I was drawn to consider the nature and purpose of tutorial from the perspective of curriculum design and the needs and expectations of those involved. I also learned of the vast array of personal anxieties faced by students and how these could affect their potential to achieve. Some face the inevitable anxieties we all experience during periods of transition such as leaving home and facing the responsibilities that independent living brings. Others experience financial or welfare problems; relationship difficulties with parents, siblings, partners or friends, social exclusion based on race or sexual orientation for example. There are also those struggling to cope with their own or close family mental health issues or suffering mental, physical or sexual abuse at the hands of others. Personal tutors can be faced with any number of these concerns during their daily work and are expected by the institution to 'deal' with them. I have heard many tutors express their distress at having to undertake a personal tutoring role as they feel

ill-equipped to deal with such matters particularly where they do not receive training or guidance from the institution.

A Personal Perspective

The spirit behind why I was drawn to this study and why I remain so passionate about improving tutorial provision and the environment in which it occurs is beautifully encapsulated in the film 'The Dead Poets' Society'. The film illustrates the story of a young, enthusiastic teacher who attempts to breathe new life into what he considered to be a staid learning environment in a traditional boarding school. His attempts are met by stoical condemnation from his colleagues that persists throughout the film, culminating in his eventual dismissal. It is interesting to note that in the first instance the students' reaction to this new teacher was one of intimidated resistance. However, this barrier is subsequently broken down as trust develops between the teacher and his students. This story touches on what I believe to be at the heart of learning - your own and others' desire for you to grow in all aspects of your being, and the belief that this can be achieved by engaging on a human level with trust, respect and integrity. Here is a man who does not adopt wholly didactic teaching methods or relies on a distant autocratic manner to 'deliver knowledge'. Throughout the story he reaches out to his students by sharing his own thoughts and feelings, giving of himself in order for others to learn. He stretches the boundaries of what is considered to be 'acceptable behaviour' within the educational environment in which he works in an attempt to create innovative and daring thinking. He challenges his students, encouraging them to acknowledge and realise who they are, the breadth of their abilities and where their hidden talents lie. He encourages them not to simply accept what is given to them as truth but to inquire, debate and challenge. This story is not without its pain, nor should it be for learning can elicit a troubling and painful process of self-revelation. The film reveals how the awakening of thoughts and feelings about ourselves and about the direction our life is taking can create tensions within us as change occurs. This demonstrates the personal responsibility that comes with the desire, ability and freedom to make choices and take ownership of our life decisions. It also demonstrates the potential we have as personal tutors to influence those in our care.

The film also subtly demonstrates two opposing educational views. Firstly there is the view that learning is about the acquisition of knowledge achieved through a rigid, goal driven process of delivery controlled by tutors' unquestionable authority and students' unquestioning conformity. Secondly there is the notion that learning can be achieved through freedom to explore, reflect and grow in an environment where the rules, methods and objectives are owned by the learner and the tutor in partnership. We see conflict ensue and the distress experienced by students and teachers alike as the two

paradigms are set against one another as the battle becomes a choice between one ideology over another. It is also interesting to note the resistance displayed by those comfortable with the old way of doing things, the safe and known way, against new and challenging ideas. Many of the aspects outlined in this story resonate with my own experiences either in my student or working life and I refer later in this thesis to events in my middle school years as a contribution to the exploration of emotions and feelings (see pp58-59).

As a teacher, I had a desire to adopt a negotiated approach to lessons to encourage students to take ownership of their own learning and to ensure that what we did was of value to them. This often highlighted the tensions between my own ideological perspectives and the demands of what I have found to be a bureaucratic environment in which post-compulsory education exists. For example, to fulfil the needs for prescriptive lesson plans, required for inspection purposes, I would often find myself completing these retrospectively once the lesson had taken place. This approach enabled the flexibility I felt was required to negotiate a relevant agenda for personal and professional development with the students. I justified this approach as I was placing the needs of the student above the needs to service the system whilst maintaining the documents required by the organisation.

My personal tutoring made me aware of the vast range of difficulties and anxieties students face and approaches I found worked best with different students in various situations. I also learned that where a student's support needs were not met this had a negative effective on their learning experience and potential to succeed. In my current post as a tutorial manager, I have faced the confrontation of new practice versus old and have been met with varying degrees of resistance at all levels of the institution whilst attempting to influence practice and challenge the status quo. Furthermore, as a student undertaking this study I have faced the anxiety of asking who I am, what I stand for and challenging my attitudes and approaches in various aspects of my personal and work life. I have found that I cannot separate myself as student, tutor or manager from my personhood. Through this research process therefore, I have faced many hidden demons, reconciled personal ontological tensions and come to know myself better.

Now that I have presented my rationale for undertaking this research and illustrated the roots of my *a priori*, I will move from these personal perspectives to address the research topic. In the following chapter, I will discuss the policies and regulations affecting the management of tutorial provision and the nature of their impact.

Chapter 2: Backdrop to Tutorial Provision in Post-Compulsory Education

This chapter gives an overview of Government policy and regulation. I will discuss how these impact on the management of tutorial provision in post-compulsory education and the responsibility some of these policies place on tutorial provision to achieve the Government's objectives for education reform. The purpose of Further Education is shaped by these policies and the regulations dictate the methods used to assess how well the policy objectives are met. By understanding the context and constraints in which tutorial provision is managed, it can be recognised for the evolving entity that it is, and we can be aware of the direction these policies will take it in the not too distant future. The main themes considered in this chapter include the widening participation agenda, personalisation and the learner voice initiatives, the 14-19 Education and Skills White paper and the quality regulation and inspection regime, as these directly impact on design, delivery and monitoring of tutorial provision.

When this research began in 2000, the education system had experienced thirty years of intensified centralisation. During this period the Labour party, while in opposition, had strongly opposed the increased powers gained by the Secretary of State for Education as a result of the 1988 Education Reform Act (Bottery, 2000:55). The succeeding 1993 Education Act was implemented in order to create a *'differentiated and hierarchical system which will more closely aid social reproduction'* despite it being couched as a bid to *'build a more fair and generous education system'* (Walford; cited by Olssen et al, 2004:200). Since Tony Blair took office as Labour Prime Minister in 1997, making election promises that the major priorities were *'Education, Education, Education'* we have not seen a decline in the centralisation Labour previously criticised. Instead, we have experienced detailed and prescribed policies the outcomes of which are controlled by measuring standards and benchmarking (Bottery, 2000:57). Tony Blair's legacy to Further Education when leaving office in June 2007 was an emphasis on training rather than education, on a practical rather than reflective approach, for preparing for a skill-based occupation rather than for the development of personal qualities (Wright; cited by Bottery, 2000:76). At the end of Blair's term in office he leaves us with a Further Education system driven by what practitioners fondly refer to as 'bums on seats', where education has become a business about balancing the books rather than serving the educational needs of the individual. This can be seen played out in the internal distribution of funds where, for example, tutorial provision is refused additional resources to support students based on the fact that the institution has hit the target number of students set by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and will not receive further funding for retaining above that student number. This suggests

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that students are not only 'consumers' but they are also a dispensable commodity to be supported simply when it serves the financial needs of the institution. This does not, in my estimation, sit well with the Government's aspirations of 'Success for All', the title of its Further Education reform programme launched in 2002. Nor does it reflect the intended outcomes of tutorial provision as a strategy to improve retention and achievement (see p7).

The increasing degree of assessment in education levelled at individuals during childhood and beyond concerns me greatly as I have found that many students in Higher Education are unsure of their abilities and potential to achieve and express feelings of inadequacy. These students progress to Higher Education through a system where you pass or fail and are effectually labelled achievers or failures (Wootton, 2002:355). The system has become *'anti-humanitarian for both teachers and pupils...where targets are set beyond the reachable...by those who do not have to reach them'*, and where teachers and children trying to achieve unattainable targets found the experience *'equally stressful and anti-educational'*. This is the effect of *'managerialism'* [creating a] *'stifling and de-motivating educational bureaucratic system'* when paradoxically the political intent was said to be to develop a creative and flexible workforce (Bottery, 2000:78). Discussions with practitioners regarding the nature of tutorial provision found that many tutors describe the tutorial curriculum as an opportunity to broaden students' holistic development for which they extol the virtues of experiential learning. They do express concern however that in practice there is some anxiety connected with moving away from a didactic approach in case 'things go wrong' or because the session is left open to the criticism that the 'learning' is not directly measurable. This in turn suppresses tutors' creativity and is evidence of an education system that *'deprofessionalises the classroom teacher, for it focuses their minds on the short-term, the practical and immediate, and distracts or turns their minds away from the long-term...and from the ethical purposes of their profession'* (Bottery, 2000:79). The managerialist approach has also led to policy makers establishing requirements and therefore expectations of the tutorial role by removing the value of professional judgement from the tutor and placing that judgement in the hands of the students as 'consumers'. As Fertig (2003:7) explains, *'Professional claims to cognitive superiority, grounded in a background of training and experience within the job, have been severely circumscribed within a consumer-driven atmosphere. The relationship between tutor and student within a Further Education context illustrates the issues raised here well, in that the tutor is not necessarily the sole, or even the major, arbiter of the decisions taken during this relationship'*. The emphasis on students as consumers has led to the requirement to formally capture the 'Learner Voice', engaging students as 'stakeholders' in the development of the provision they receive.

During the early part of this research my key responsibilities transferred from a focus on tutorial provision in Higher Education to one that is now heavily embedded in tutorial provision in Further Education (see p11). However, the widening participation agenda has remained inherent in my work as the emphasis on addressing social inequalities surrounding access to education, training and subsequent life chances is said to affect the whole of the education system (HMT, 2006:1). To this end, I will discuss the effects of widening participation on tutorial provision across the post-compulsory education sector, but will thereafter restrict all other government policy discussions to the impacts and influences on managing tutorial provision in Further Education, as this is where the research is predominantly positioned.

2.1 The Widening Participation Agenda

In 1997, Professor Bob Fryer of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) voiced the Government's concern at the lack of learning ambition and limited aspirations of young people. In order to address these concerns New Labour pledged to widen participation in learning beyond school and to invest in achieving a target of 50 per cent of 19 to 30 year olds experiencing Higher Education by the year 2010. In 1998 the European Access Network commissioned a project at the University of Westminster in partnership with the Council for Industry and Higher Education, the Funding Councils for England, Scotland and Wales, the Committee of Scottish Higher Education Principals and the Standing Conference of Principals. The purpose of the project was to collate examples and raise awareness of good practice in widening participation and increasing access to Higher Education for young people from disadvantaged socio-economic groups. The project report 'From Elitism to Inclusion' (CVCP, 1998:19) led by Maggie Woodrow gave an account of fourteen case studies covering a broad range of widening participation initiatives that included:

- Pre-university summer schools
- Access summer schools
- Local progression agreements
- Outreach projects to access the 'Hard to Reach' groups
- Day university visits and activities to raise aspirations for young people from the age of 13 years of age.

The report recognised that Higher Education institutions were adapting to provide a more inclusive learning environment to meet the needs of a greater social and culturally diverse cohort, however, causes such as lack of aspiration and poor achievement of school leavers remained a concern that needed to be addressed. Recommendations from the report included necessary changes to the student support arrangements specifically aimed at young people from low socio-economic groups and provision of access funding to ensure that all institutions delivering Higher Education were encouraged to widen the social base of their intake. It is interesting to note

however that the 'Social Class and Participation' report (Universities UK, 2002:167) found that *'There is a broad swathe of opinion that changes in the system of student support have been regressive and a disincentive to participation'* and that *'the likelihood is that the existing money allocated for this purpose will be re-targeted rather than increased',* which suggests that not all the recommendations from the 'From Elitism to Inclusion' (CVCP, 1998) report have not been put into force.

The 'From Elitism to Inclusion' report also recommended that institutions delivering Higher Education should implement institutional changes in order to address issues such as attitudinal shifts, particularly in relation to targeting young people from disadvantaged socio-economic groups. The report found that barriers to widening participation included a lack of internal awareness, poor staff attitudes, lack of staff time, and poor resourcing. In order for widening participation to be effective, it was felt that institutions would need to integrate the concept into student support and tutorial systems. It was proposed that the changes should include re-assessing admissions policies to ensure equality of opportunity and building partnerships to support progression into Higher Education. It was also suggested that widening participation would more likely be successful if it was adopted as a core concept rather that an additional objective (CVCP, 1998:140). Strategies to support progression into Higher Education were implemented under the 'Partnerships for Progression' (P4P) initiative. It was envisaged that through the project local partnerships would be created between schools, Further Education and Higher Education institutions to facilitate the widening participation agenda. The partnerships were intended to raise the aspirations of young people by engaging in a variety of activities such as those highlighted in the 'From Elitism to Inclusion' report (CVCP, 1998:123-124) plus a range of mentoring interventions to support transition and students at risk of disengaging. Within the objectives of the project there was also an emphasis on the need to develop a range of pathways that would reduce some of the practical barriers to entering Higher Education by, for example, enabling students to matriculate with vocational qualifications as well as through the traditional 'A' level entry route. A National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was commissioned to support the identification and planning of appropriate access routes via both academic and vocational qualifications. However, the NQF was to be viewed only as a guide to planning, the intention being that this would be used by local schools, Further Education colleges and Higher Education institutions working in collaboration to develop a number of routes that would be made available on a local level. The widening participation review document makes reference to *'the genuine WP* [Widening Participation] *challenge of getting more people to the matriculation starting gate'* (Watson; cited by HEFCE, 2006:72), indicating that the objective to create

appropriate access routes has not been wholly effective. Government policy is now looking to the new Specialised Diplomas to address this concern (HEFCE, 2006:72).

In 2006 HEFCE produced the 'Widening Participation: a review' report in response to concerns that the widening participation in Higher Education agenda had '*stalled*' and to provide an estimate of the '*state of play*' for widening participation across the partnerships (HEFCE, 2006:3). The report summarised widening participation activities as:

- all activities undertaken by Higher Education and Further Education institutions to widen access to Higher Education for those from under-represented and disadvantaged groups, including those on vocational programmes
- measures to support learners when in Higher Education.

The report found that there is evidence of progress and noted that the investment since 1997 to the time of the report had been £386 million for Aimhigher to widen access, improve retention and meet the needs of disabled students. The breakdown for this sum is £153 million to widening access, £221 million to improving retention and £12 million for mainstream disability allocation. Aimhigher is the branded Government initiative that brought together P4P and Excellence Challenge funding (Excellence Challenge was a funding strand introduced to offer widening participation funds to support young people from disadvantaged areas). Aimhigher acts as an agency to provide networking and brokerage at local, regional and national level. The purpose of Aimhigher is to promote national strategies to increase learner access to aspiration and attainment raising activities and to support transition arrangements across the education sector as a whole. The report found that evidence of raising aspirations is '*overwhelming, and overwhelmingly positive*', however the evidence on raising attainment is '*weak*' (HEFCE, 2006:6). The report blames uneven practice across the sector for not achieving year on year improvement in retention but does highlight that where funding has been used in part to improve central student support services, retention has improved, suggesting that they found student support to have a direct impact on retention. The survey undertaken on behalf of the widening participation review found that learners and teachers believed summer schools had the most impact on widening participation objectives and that other effective interventions included single day university visits, master classes, mentoring (tutor and peer), student ambassadors and information, advice and guidance activities. It is suggested however that these activities are effective in the short and medium term and that plans should be made to make these activities '*progressive, sequential and differentiated*' to reflect the needs of individual learners and to be '*reinforced with further activity to reflect the maturity and changing needs of learners*' (HEFCE, 2006:7). When considering the evidence to support improvement in aspirations, attainment and access the report refers to the findings of JM Consulting (in HEFCE, 2006:7) that suggest implementing a

range of study skills initiatives is *'highly effective'*. Other particularly effective activities included increased tutor support, provision of personal planners and summer schools for at-risk students at the end of the first year. Strategies for identifying at-risk students were based on tracking student attendance and performance. The 'Widening Participation: a review' report also suggests that student services departments have much to contribute to the retention and achievement of students (HEFCE, 2006:7) however better collaboration between academic and support staff is needed to prevent at-risk students from 'slipping through the net' (HEFCE, 2006:66). There are implications here for tutors to be skilled at identifying students' support needs together with knowledge of internal and external agencies for referring students' for specialist support where necessary.

Finally, the report refers to the contribution curriculum development makes to progression, confirming that a number of curriculum related barriers have been identified. It is suggested that new curricula such as bridging programmes may improve this situation but conclude that better aligned curricula would be more advantageous (HEFCE, 2006:74). It is also acknowledged that the interface between Further and Higher Education is not sufficiently developed in England meaning that some barriers still exist in the transition from Further Education to Higher Education. It is proposed that the development of the new General and Specialised Diplomas, designed by the Diploma Development Partnerships and led by the Sector Skills Council, will include representation from Higher Education to help to address this problem. The White paper 'Further Education: raising skills, improving life chances' (DfES, 2006) considers the effectiveness of Higher Education delivered in Further Education institutions and the current Higher Education financing arrangements. This has led to the development of proposals for further strategic development in relation to Higher Education in Further Education institutions, centres for Higher Education excellence and funding. As Further Education colleges currently offer some Higher Education courses it is usual for these institutions to put tutorial provision in place for Higher Education students, however it is not clear whether Further Education and Higher Education students share the same expectations of tutorial provision therefore the issue is explored in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

2.2   The 14-19 Education and Skills Agenda

The 14-19 Education and Skills White Paper (DfES, 2005), written in response to the Tomlinson Report (2004), puts forward proposals for *'an education system focused on high standards and much more tailored to the talents and aspirations of individual young people, with greater flexibility about what and where to study and when to take qualifications'* (DfES, 2005:1). The implementation plan undertakes to increase the

capacity of the education system to offer vocational courses and states that the system is designed to meet the needs of learners and employers. Within the proposed framework current Key Skills and Adult Basic Skills are to be brought together and re-branded 'Functional Skills'. GCSE's and 'A' levels will be retained and it will also be possible for young people to attain a General Diploma by achieving the equivalent of 5 grade A*-C GCSEs including English and Maths. Alternatively young people at 14 years of age could choose to undertake a 'Specialised Diploma' combining general and applied subjects. The White Paper on 14-19 Education Skills (DfES, 2005) appears to reinforce the long criticised academic/vocational divide as it includes a route-based approach, that is to say 'A' level or Diploma, however the paper argues that the new Diplomas will combine academic and work-related elements and will be designed to enable entry into either Higher Education or employment and therefore offer the widest progression opportunities. It is suggested that the variety and choice provided by the new Diplomas and their emphasis on improving 'Functional Skills' development in schools will encourage more young people to participate in post-16 education, lead to participation of at least 90% of 17 year olds by 2015 compared to the current 75%.

The Specialised Diplomas will be phased in from 2008 with full entitlement available by 2013. They are described as an opportunity to learn a range of widely applicable skills and knowledge, set within a specialised context, i.e. a specified group of employment sectors (QCA, 2007:2). The Diploma will be available at levels 1,2 and 3 and across 14 lines of learning (lines of learning refer to vocational subject areas). There are three components to the Specialised Diploma, principal learning, generic learning and additional specialist learning. The generic learning has significance for tutorial provision as it is concerned with developing and applying broad skills and knowledge necessary for learning, employment and personal development. The generic skills are identified as functional skills (the merged key skills and adult basic skills qualifications), personal, learning and thinking skills. It is said that these generic skills should include opportunities for learners to carry out independent enquiry, reflect on own learning and be creative in problem solving and that they should also be integrated into the principal learning. It does not however make clear what vehicle is to be used to support students in understanding these concepts and developing the learning skills so that they may then be utilised in the context of their principal learning goals. The personal, learning and thinking skills are categorised as:

- Independent inquiry
- Creative thinking
- Reflective thinking
- Team working
- Self-management
- Effective participation

There is no intention for these generic skills to be separately assessed as it is intended that they will be applied and assessed within the learner's principal learning, work experience and project work and will be recorded in the Diploma transcript.

The Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) report 'Pursuing Excellence: The National Improvement Strategy for the Further Education system' (QIA, 2007:9-11) outlines plans for supporting the Further Education Sector in delivering the recommendations drawn from the Leitch Report 'Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills' (HMSO, 2006) and identifies three aims:

Aim 1: 'All learners in the Further Education system are equally able to access high quality education and training that equips them with the skills, knowledge and qualifications they need for work and personal fulfilment'. The ability for all learners to be able to access effective information, advice, guidance and pastoral support have been identified by the paper as key to this objective. There is also an emphasis on learning being tailored to meet the learners' needs and for them to be actively engaged in the learning process.

Aim 2: 'Training provision meets employers' business needs and employers can recruit people with the vocational and employability skills needed to increase productivity'. The objectives to meet this aim include increased employer engagement as strategic partners to colleges and for 'employers to be able to choose provision that suits their needs'. There is also emphasis on raising the profile of skills and training and 'their value to the economy and society as a whole'.

Aim 3: 'The Further Education system continuously improves so that colleges and providers aspire to achieve excellence, and no provision is unsatisfactory'. It is suggested here that there is a wide variation in success rates across sector subject areas and amongst different groups of providers. It was also stated that not all colleges improved their overall provision in 2005/06, largely due to poor achievement on foundation and intermediate courses. It is suggested that improving initial teacher training and continuous professional development will contribute to this aim. The National Improvement Strategy identifies a number of priority actions. Identifying the needs to support various levels of learning, embedding personalisation and increasing the learner voice are clearly stated objectives that hold relevance for the management of tutorial provision.

2.3 Personalisation and the Learner Voice

The 'Teaching and Learning in 2020' report suggests that *'personalising learning and teaching must play a central role in transforming England's education service'* (DfES, 2006:5). The review group propose that personalisation will contribute to the aims highlighted in the Leitch report (HMSO, 2006) for a society in which:

- A child's chances of success are not related to his or her socio-economic background, gender or ethnicity
- Education services are designed around the needs of each child, with the expectation that all learners achieve high standards
- All children and young people leave school with functional skills in English and mathematics, understanding how to learn, think creatively, take risks and handle change.
- Teachers use their skills and knowledge to engage children and young people as partners in learning, acting quickly to adjust their teaching in response to pupils' learning
- Schools draw in parents as their child's co-educators, engaging them and increasing their capacity to support their child's learning.

The notion of personalising learning through a flexible curriculum is reflected in the new Diplomas however this report also refers to the need for a sharp focus on essential knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes that children and young people need in order to cope in a changing world (DfES, 2006/Cm 6768:8). These 'soft skills' as the paper calls them include:

- Being able to communicate orally at a high level
- Reliability, punctuality and perseverance
- Knowing how to work with others in a team
- Knowing how to evaluate information critically
- Taking responsibility for and being able to manage one's own learning and developing habits of effective learning
- Knowing how to work independently without close supervision
- Being confident and able to investigate problems and find solutions
- Being resilient in the face of difficulties
- Being creative, inventive, enterprising and entrepreneurial

The emphasis on the development of these so called 'soft skills' raises questions about where in the curriculum these aspects naturally occur and who is best equipped to support learners in developing these skills. The report recommends that new professional standards for teachers and Initial Teacher Training (ITT) should take account of the skills for personalising learning. The report suggests that little weight is given to these in the curriculum and that they are measured, recorded and reported inadequately. The report concludes that these aspects are in danger of neglect by teachers and undervalued by pupils and parents in schools and that these aspects are equally important in Further and Higher Education.

The consultation on personalisation in Further Education was launched in November 2006. The consultation paper 'Personalising Further Education: Developing a vision' describes personalisation as *'not an end in itself* [and that] *it has the potential to be a*

powerful driver for achieving our [the Government's] *main targets and strategies: 14-19 reform; Skills; and a reformed FE sector with a strong economic mission'.* The paper states that *'personalising learning has an integral role in improving quality'* and defends the rationale for personalised learning as a means to' *every learner getting the best possible learning experience'* (DfES, 2007/Pers01:1-3). The paper suggests that there have been improvements in responding to the needs of employers and learners but also acknowledges that work is needed in some key areas to address specific issues for example:

- Black learners have a 67% chance of success compared to 74% average overall
- 59% of care leavers are in education, employment or training compared to 87% of all young people at 18 to 19
- only 67% of learners are very or extremely satisfied with their learning experience
- only 40% of learners gave a high rating when asked whether their teachers know how they like to learn
- 1 in 8 learners said that more than a quarter of their lesson time was wasted
- across the system it is unusual for learners' views to be sought routinely to help individual teachers/trainers improve their methods
- quality assurance systems rarely follow a learner's journey from point of enrolment to progression, or a week in the life of a learner to really understand the learner's experience so that improvements can be made.

The paper also refers to the growing diversity in the range of learners including the 14-16 cohorts studying vocational subjects in Further Education colleges and offender learners now integrated into the mainstream Further Education system. Tutorial sessions are increasingly seen as a vehicle for discussing and addressing some of the issues raised here. My concern is however that as the need for student feedback on a range of issues increases, the nature of tutorial sessions is in danger of becoming heavily weighted towards collecting student feedback at the expense of time for responding to students' needs and providing a holistic personal development curriculum.

The consultation paper also sets out what personalisation in Further Education will look like and proposes a common language to enable discussion and debate. It is claimed that those consulted broadly agreed that personalisation in Further Education is *'Working in partnership with the learner – to tailor their learning experience and pathways, according to their needs and personal objectives – in a way which delivers success'.* (DfES, 2007/Pers01:8). The paper proposes that this will include *'Responding to the needs of the whole person'* by anticipating, identifying and addressing each and every learner's needs and by responding with personalised support to remove barriers to success. The paper also outlines requirement to:

- Seek and respond to the views of the learner:
- Responding to the needs of the local community and employers

- Raising the ambitions of learners
- Supporting every learner to become expert
- Encouraging individuals to take responsibility
- Fostering openness and trust

Underpinning much of these expectations is the notion that time is available to pursue these individual conversations and negotiations around the individual learner's programmes of study and that all teachers/trainers have the skills and abilities to anticipate, identify and fulfil the individual learners' needs. Emphasis is also placed on a curriculum that addresses personal development, employability skills and a social learning experience. Current tutorial provision attempts to address many of these aspects therefore it is fair to assume from these explicit objectives that tutorial will be central to much of the personalisation agenda. This assumption is supported by actions of the QIA who have commissioned the LSN to run a number of personalisation pastoral support projects. An initial literature review was undertaken by LSN to:

- Develop and disseminate resources based on existing effective practice models, to help providers ensure an effective and robust assessment of all learners' needs
- Develop a sound definition and understanding of the characteristics of an 'expert learner'
- Develop and issue guidance on effective pastoral support systems.

Following this, a number of pilots were subsequently initiated to explore current practice in person-centred learning and pastoral support to address some of the issues arising from the literature review. The pilots will conclude in October 2007 and reported on thereafter. The consultation paper confirms that guidance emerging from the pastoral pilots will be provided by April 2008. Initial findings suggest that there are three main components to pastoral support:

- To undo barriers to learning
- To boost learning and achievement
- To motivate and spur ambition and broaden horizons.

These are certainly some of the objectives pastoral support aims to achieve however the components identified here are outcome led and have no mention of the soft skills implicit in personal and social development and do not reflect the full nature of tutorial provision (Chapter 5) or the complexity of tutoring role (Chapter 6).

The consultation paper (DfES, 2007/Pers01:11-12) proposes that the benefits of personalisation are improved retention and achievement; a more responsive, better-skilled and informed workforce; more expert and independent learners; greater social inclusion and better economic productivity. It is suggested that the success of these potential benefits can be measured using:

- Completion and achievement rates
- Value added and distance travelled measures
- Increased participation amongst under-represented groups

- Increased progression into further skills development or sustainable employment
- Learner satisfaction measures
- Equality and diversity impact measures
- Employer satisfaction and their recognition of increased skills
- Inspection findings about the value and impact of more personalised services

Two key strategies have been identified to strengthen personalisation in Further Education. Firstly, improving teaching and learning and responsiveness to individual need. To support this strategy there is an emphasis on effective assessment of needs at the start of the learner's programme of study and an opportunity for them to develop skills that allow them to take responsibility for their learning experience and become 'expert learners'. A definition of an 'expert learner' is being explored under the QIA pastoral pilot project and has not yet been made explicit.

The second key strategy is to create stronger learner representation. Work to strengthen learner representation is already in existence through the promotion of the 'Learner Voice' initiative. Guidance has been developed and disseminated by the LSN on strategies that institutions may adopt to encourage and capture learner's views, and how those views may then inform future developments. A National Learner Panel has recently been established to ensure that Ministers and policy makers hear the learner voice at National level. The membership is drawn from different learning settings and represents learners from the age of 16 to 75. The LSC is also establishing a panel to represent the views of learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. Interestingly no mention is made of the potential to develop a partnership with the National Union of Students despite the union being well placed to access and disseminate the views of the student population.

The personalisation consultation also takes note of Government proposals for a qualifications and credit framework to enable a flexible curriculum allowing individuals and employers to access smaller, individualised packages of learning tailored to meet individual's needs. The implications of this approach on the current funding mechanism is not yet clear but it would suggest that a move to unitary funding rather than the current full course funding may be required.

2.4 Quality Regulation and Inspection

Further and Higher Education both operate under rigid quality assurance regimes undertaken by external regulatory bodies, OFSTED for Further Education and QAA for Higher Education. The 'From Elitism to Inclusion' report recommended that the government should develop outcome-based performance indicators jointly with Higher Education institutions to measure progression, retention and achievement of targeted groups (CVCP, 1998:136). As a consequence these aspects now form part of the

inspection agenda across post-compulsory education. One purpose of inspection described in the 'Handbook for inspecting colleges' is to *'help bring about improvement by identifying strengths and areas for improvement, highlighting good practice and judging what steps need to be taken to improve provision further'* (Ofsted 2006/HMI 2651:3). Interestingly, although it is implied here that there is some contribution to improvement, in practice the inspectors remit is not to advise, merely to observe and report. This appears to be a wasted opportunity where inspectors who are in a position to identify good practice in a host of institutions are not in a position to use this information to support the development of others. It may be argued that this contributes to the expressed notion that the inspection process is no more than a policing activity as no contribution is made to improving quality during the process. Furthermore, one of the stated principles of inspection is to *'enable themes of national significance to be pursued and reported'* (Ofsted, 2006:5) again signifying a monitoring rather than enhancing role.

The inspection process in colleges reflects the measurement of outcomes and benchmarking previously referred to in this thesis (see p14). Five key questions are evaluated in part on the learners' success, retention, attainment, attendance and progression data. The overall effectiveness of provision is judged amongst other things on *'whether the provision is well matched to the needs and interests of learners, and is responsive to local circumstances and the needs of employers'* (Ofsted, 2006/HMI 2651:33). Once again we see an emphasis on economic skills and the curriculum offer being designed to meet employers' needs on a local level, which could result in restricted choice for potential students wishing to follow more specialised study. It is also worth noting that an emphasis on quantifiable evidence demanded by the LSC and OFSTED creates a tension for institutions where a wealth of qualitative evidence is readily available to demonstrate the impact of tutorial support on the learner. Despite guidance on acceptable evidence cited in the inspection handbook being *'any other evidence, whether or not quantifiable, that indicates learner's progess, their spiritual, moral, social, or cultural development, or their contribution to the community'* (Ofsted 2006/HMI 2651:45) statistical data are generally favoured.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development form an integral part of the tutorial curriculum, however, they are considered as evidence under key question 1, whereas tutorial provision is evaluated under key question 4. The inspectorate map the five key questions evaluated during the inspection against the 'Every Child Matters' (ECM) themes as shown in Figure 1 overleaf.

Figure 1: OFSTED Inspection Key Questions Mapped Against Every Child Matters Themes

Outcomes for Children (ECM)	Key Question
1. Being Healthy	**KQ4**. How well are learners guided and supported?
2. Staying Safe	**KQ5**. How effective are leadership and management?
3. Enjoying and Achieving	**KQ2**. How effective are teaching and learning? **KQ3**. How well do learners achieve?
4. Making a positive contribution	**KQ3**. How well do programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of learners?
5. Achieving economic well-being	**KQ4**. How well are learners guided and supported

During inspection managers responsible for student services, additional learning support and tutorial provision will be the main providers of evidence for key question 4. But tutorial cannot be separated out in such a simple manner. For example, tutorial has a curriculum element and is therefore relevant to key questions 2 and 3. It also includes a pastoral element that contributes to learner's achievement and is therefore also relevant to key question 1. A number of managers responsible for tutorial provision have emphasised their concerns during Further Education Tutorial Network (FETN) meetings about perceptions of how tutorial provision contributes to the whole curriculum offer. The tendency during inspection is for tutorial to be considered as a contribution to student retention and as a vehicle for identifying additional learning support needs. Responsibility is placed on tutorial for developing Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) and monitoring student progress. It has also been noted that despite these responsibilities little direct mention is made of tutorial in inspection reports and when this does occur the remarks tend to be generalised for example *'Significant improvements have been made to the tutorial system'.* This may well be one of the contributing factors to the low priority it receives in funding, planning, staffing and timetabling.

The 'Developing a Coherent 14-19 phase of Education' report (Ofsted, 2005) draws on the outcomes of the programme of area wide inspections including Ofsted inspection of colleges between summer 2003 and spring 2005. The purpose of the report was to evaluate the progress made in developing a coherent phase of education and training for the 14-19 cohort. For the purpose of this research we are concerned in particular with their findings relating to support and guidance under which the quality of tutorial provision is assessed. The quality of support and guidance overall was found to be satisfactory with most schools, colleges and work-based learning providers having well-established and effective approaches to personal support for learners, however it was found that *'Support and guidance provided for learners moving between institutions has assumed greater importance* [and that] *much remains to be done in supporting students who learn outside their home institution'* (Ofsted, 2005/HMI 2442:21).

Assessment of the support for students in greatest need is not positive. One of the main criticisms is insufficient sharing of key information between learning providers during periods of transition. This is said to negatively impact on negotiating appropriate learning programmes and providing timely additional support. It was also found that some tutors did not know their students well enough to support them appropriately or have realistic expectations of students' potential to achieve. To support institutions in addressing these requirements the DfES reports 'Why colleges Succeed' (Ofsted, 2004/HMI 2049) and 'Why Colleges Fail' (Ofsted, 2004/HMI 2048) provide guidance. Key points relevant to tutorial provision drawn from these two documents are:

- Tutorial systems should be consistently applied across the institution
- Support and guidance for part-time students should be as effective as that for full-time students
- Tutorials should be formally recorded
- Early identification of students experiencing difficulties improves motivation
- Student support needs should be identified and provided during induction and monitored regularly
- Regular progress reviews should be carried out and both long and short term strategies should be set
- Target setting should be approached sensitively, should identify students' needs and be effectively monitored
- Support for transition to next destination should be well supported
- Good support systems should be in place

There is an emphasis on consistency and effectiveness in provision and formal systems of recording. The reports also emphasise early identification of students' needs and regular monitoring. This has implications for the provision of regular 1-1 reviews to retain momentum in motivation and identify potential problems before the student feels they can no longer cope. In practice however many students do not receive timely one-to-one tutoring, other than to engage in the required action planning process, until they are in their second term. The situation is often due to poor distribution of tutoring hours across the academic year and an imbalance in tutor group sizes leading to some tutors with inadequate time to support large numbers of students.

2.5   Summary

It is difficult to avoid getting drawn into a debate as to whether my ideology of the purpose of Further Education marries with the route the Government is taking. However, this chapter is not so much about whether or not I agree with Government policy on this issue but how current policy and regulation affects the management of tutorial provision at this time and so I will restrict my discussion to this issue.

The managerialism of the education system has introduced detailed and prescribed policies driven by measured standards and outcomes (Bottery, 2000:57). The result of this is a 'differentiated and hierarchical system, which will more closely aid social

reproduction,' (Walford; cited by Olssen et al, 2004:200) and one that has become a *'stifling and de-motivating educational bureaucratic system'* (Bottery, 2000:78). It is intended through the inspection process to seek out evidence of a diversified provision aimed at meeting all students' learning needs, and information on which to base the assessment of students' enjoyment of the learning experience. There is also an emphasis on the promotion of personal development and development of employability skills. All these aspects impact on the design of tutorial provision, approaches to group tutorial activity and content of one to one individual reviews. Quality and accessibility of student information, guidance and support together with expectations for individual personal development imply regular and effective individual student reviews. Students have become consumers and the tutor role has become *'deprofessionalised'* (Bottery, 2000:79) as tutors are no longer necessarily *'the sole, or even main arbiter of the decisions taken during this relationship'* (Fertig, 2003:7). The consumer-led approach assumes that the student is a stakeholder in tutorial provision therefore policy makers seek to gather their views, driven by the Government's 'Learner Voice' initiative. The occassion for gathering students' views is often during group tutorial sessions which adds to the complexity of the tutorial curriculum and erodes the time allocated to student led activity in favour of serving the needs of the regulatory system.

Alongside attempts to measure and improve the quality of provision in education through targets and benchmarking sits the Government's targets to increase access and widen participation. Although the widening participation target is set ultimately at participation in Higher Education, implications for schools and Further Education colleges can be seen in the partnership initiatives working to smooth progression routes and support transition on the path to Higher Education. The Government proposes that the new General and Specialised Diplomas will contribute to this aim by offering broader choice and more personalised routes than are currently available (HEFCE, 2006:72). The Diplomas have been designed to combine academic and work-related elements to enable entry into either Higher Education or employment. They are to be phased in from 2008 and will offer 14 'lines of learning' related to vocational subject areas. The Diplomas will incorporate generic skills, functional skills, personal, learning and thinking skills. Although it is said that these skills will be applied and assessed within the learners principle learning it is fair to assume that the vehicle for developing personal, learning and thinking skills is more likely to be explored within the tutorial curriculum so that students are then able to transfer these skills into the context of their principle learning. It is claimed that other widening participation activities highlighted in the 'From Elitism to Inclusion' report have impacted positively on raising aspirations however the effect on raising attainment was found to be weak (HEFCE, 2006:6). It was also found that where student support was increased as part of the

institutions' widening participation strategy retention improved and it was suggested that this, along with summer schools, master classes, mentoring and good information, advice and guidance should be made *'progressive, sequential and differentiated'* (HEFCE, 2006:7). These findings emphasise the centrality of tutorial provision in the widening participation strategy as the pastoral that support students receive acts as the foundation for accessing additional support, advice and guidance. Although widening participation may be considered an antidote to social exclusion in education, it is not without its impact on tutorial provision. Whilst contributing to Thomas and Hixenbaugh, (2006:116-117) I found that widening participation has encouraged an increase in new learners who may for example be the first in their family to attend college or university. Such students often bring a range of anxieties relating to family attitude, lack of personal support, low self-esteem or self-belief and peer pressure. They may also have to contend with any number of additional worries such as financial, welfare or academic difficulties. Having successfully recruited learners (traditional or otherwise) into post-compulsory education, a duty is placed on the institution to ensure adequate measures to support the learners in their endeavours towards academic achievement, professional development and personal growth. Some examples of minority groups entering as a result of widening participation activities include:

- Early College Transfer students (14 to 16 years old) who opt out of their final year at school and undertake vocational study in a Post Compulsory institution. These students have often displayed behaviours or attitudes that schools have found difficult to manage.
- Care Leavers who face a variety of personal circumstances that may impact on their abilities to engage in or maintain Post Compulsory Education. Some may for example have missed much of their compulsory education through moves to different foster homes and require additional learning support to help with their studies.
- Asylum Seekers and Refugees who experience a broad range of deep personal and welfare barriers to study. Difficulties can range from no known date of birth restricting their ability to enrol for study to a fear of institutions and the giving of confidential information.
- Students entering Higher Education through non-traditional routes such as vocational or apprenticeship routes.

This list is by no means exhaustive and simply aims to illustrate some of the diversity that currently exists as a result of widening participation and aims to highlight the changing nature of tutorial provision as a result. This impact has been picked up by the QIA and their interest is demonstrated in the Personalisation Pilots currently exploring the role of pastoral support in reducing barriers to learning. The 'Every Child Matters' programme focuses on breaking down barriers to achievement and makes particular mention of a *new route* incorporating *'provision of a tailored programme for each young person and intensive guidance and support'*. This brings with it implications for adaptations to tutorial provision to specifically meet the needs of 14-16 learners with *'intensive'* guidance and support, provided through personal tutor review and/or mentor

support. This labour intensive support holds immense implications for staffing as questions relating to who should deliver this support and what level of support should be provided are considered. Quality of support for young people in their personal development and help in overcoming barriers to learning is also emphasised. The strategy targets the need to raise aspirations towards Higher Education and to *'bear down'* on non-completion rates. In relation to tutorial provision, this implies a need for an explicit personal development programme differentiated to meet needs at each level of learning. There is also an expectation that tutorial provision will support students in acknowledging and reaching their full potential and ensure that mechanisms are in place to identify and address barriers to learning where students may be at risk of disengaging.

The themes running through the various education policies referred to in this chapter are centred on increasing the extent to which students can choose their own routes through the education system and into employment. The widening participation agenda is continuing and there are attempts to draw together the element of choice and improved progression routes so that vocational access to Higher Education becomes less of a barrier than it is at present. Central to supporting students to follow their aspirations and allied to the consumer-led culture is the emphasis on good advice, support and guidance. Personalised learning implies greater responsibility on personal tutors to enter into a learning alliance with students, where negotiation and flexibility will become the norm. This approach also has responsibilities for the student to take ownership of their learning and for institutions to support them in becoming autonomous decision makers able to reflect on and develop their generic, personal and social skills. The emerging challenges for managing tutorial provision are to provide an appropriate, flexible curriculum to enable students to become self-sufficient learners, and to support them in understanding their individual development needed to achieve their aspirations. And, to ensure that tutors understand the nature and purpose of the tutorial curriculum to enable them to take ownership of the design and delivery of tutorial that meets students generic, personal and social developmental needs. The management of tutorial provision will also be challenged with articulating the nature of the personal tutoring role, ensuring that personal tutors are adequately supported and that they possess the skills, knowledge and expertise to engage in this evolving role.

As the managers of tutorial provision are charged with the responsibility for fulfilling these Government requirements and for providing evidence of continuous quality improvement, this chapter is essential to understanding the direction in which tutorial provision is moving. But there is another to quality for as well as having a need to satisfy Government agendas, we have a commitment to satisfy the needs of our

students. The current directives on personalisation and the learner voice imply that the Government and the tutoring community share the same aspirations in providing holistic and personalised education. However it cannot be denied that the tutoring community has yet to see how these will transfer into our current models of provision and how well they will, in practice, fulfil our students' expectations.

Rather than waiting to see what transpires from these forthcoming implementations we can prepare for the impending changes. The exploration of the nature and purpose of tutorial provision will give tutors an understanding of students' perceived expectations and colleagues shared perceptions of provision, which they can refer to for guidance in relation to the design and delivery of the tutorial curriculum. Furthermore, the exploration of the personal tutoring role will contribute to articulating the nature of the personal tutoring role and offer an insight into how tutors' potential to be effective personal tutors can be identified, which will support the recruitment of appropriate staff to the role. Before moving to discuss the empirical research findings, I will discuss the methodology I employed to arrive the conclusions this study provides.

Chapter 3:   Research Methodology

In this chapter, I explore the age-old question 'What is Truth?' I understand that it is important for me to know what truth is, or at least my sense of truth, if I am to competently justify my empirical research methods. This was no easy task. Getting my head around the concepts of positivist and interpretivist ideologies was fine, until I started to question my own position on the matter. What appears as a couple of lines referring to the tensions this question created within me represents weeks of vexation. I was more comfortable with considering the notion of inductive and deductive research, having been clear from the outset that I was interested in the participants' perceptions and wanted them to tell me what they felt and thought as I was not out to prove or disprove a hypothesis I was on a quest for understanding. Having worked my way through these issues and assumed the position of an interpretivist researcher I was free to consider which interpretivist paradigm to adopt for this inquiry and decided on a grounded theory methodology. Consequently, I discuss the grounded theory methodology in the context of my research aims, but first I will address the notion of truth.

3.1   In Search of Truth

Much philosophising has taken place over the centuries in relation to what truth is and how truth may be found. The position a researcher takes as to whether truth can be deduced by a logical examination of 'the facts' or is created through social discourse and sense making is the cornerstone to choosing the type of research they choose to undertake. In essence, what we are considering here is whether the researcher subscribes to a positivist or interpretivist ideology. The tension this particular exploration held for me was in seeing myself on the one hand as very pragmatic, quite task focussed and logically ordered in my approach to work, suggesting a positivist position. On the other hand, I knew my world to be implicitly understood through my experiences, relationships and social interaction, drawing me towards an interpretivist position. In deciding which of these two opposing paradigms we identify with, we are clarifying our notion of how truth and reality is created. Based on my perspective that truth is constructed through social interaction I recognise the existence of multiple realities and relate to a subjectivist epistemology of co-creating understandings (Denzin and Lincoln 2003:35) and thereby subscribe to an interpretivist ideology. As interpretive research engages in a multiple of realities it would not be appropriate to claim I am presenting one truth. What I would propose however is that I am presenting a 'shared' truth developed through a social construction of meaning arrived at and verified by the participants. Burns (2000:12) writes *qualitative research has made educators and other social scientists realise that reality should never be taken for granted, given that*

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attention must be paid to the multiple realities and socially constructed meanings that exist in every social context e.g. classroom, hospital ward, workplace'. Here Burns is confirming the appropriateness of undertaking qualitative interpretive research in the field of education and also draws attention to the complexity of meaning and understandings to be found in various social settings, including the classroom.

In identifying myself as an interpretivist researcher, I am choosing to reject the positivist tradition on the grounds that I do not accept the notion of one objectively knowable truth. To understand more clearly my methodological perspective as an interpretivist researcher I have juxtaposed a number of elements that constitute positivism and interpretivism as identified by Walliman (2006:19) and Morrison (in Coleman and Briggs 2002:15) that help to demonstrate a distinction between the two traditions. The interpretivist philosophy is idealism, that is to say people know the world in different ways. The opposing philosophical basis of positivism is realism where the truth is said to be 'out there' and can be revealed by scientifically observing 'the facts'. Another distinct difference lies in the claim for generalisability. Interpretivist researchers present the perceptions, interpretations and sense making of the research participants and do not claim that these represent the wider population. The participants' subjective world-view and life experiences of the phenomena are valued as rich data. The positivist tradition however seeks generalisability using various methods of sampling that is believed to be representative of the wider population. The role of the researcher is also viewed differently by the two traditions. An interpretivist researcher is considered to be part of the situation in which the research takes place and the phenomena being explored. They bring with them their implicit understandings derived from their own experiences acknowledging the existence of their *a priori* and rejecting the notion of a value neutral observer. The role of the positivist researcher is to stand outside the research and remain wholly objective so that their pre-conceptions do not contaminate the data, which would reduce the validity of the research. They suggest that this enables any researcher following the same process to arrive at the same conclusions. Respondents in positivist research are considered to be 'objects' of research rather than part of it. Human characteristics and attributes may be used as variables so long as they are observable, therefore opinions, feelings and emotions are not considered to be acceptable data. In positivist research therefore we avoid subjective data whereas in interpretivist research subjective data are valued.

By deciding whether to adopt an interpretivist or positivist approach, we are also deciding between inductive or deductive reasoning. Inductive reasoning is allied to the process of interpretation and has been adopted in this study. Inductive research is concerned with the *'construction of explanations and theories about what is observed'*

and the emergence of theory, unlike deduction where a hypothesis (theory) is tested out (Gill and Johnson 2002:168). The social construction of meaning acknowledges the role of reasoning and allows us to accept the meanings each person attaches to their stories and experiences as being true for them. Individuals' subjective reasoning or knowing is therefore considered to be a valid contribution to the whole story being told. This supports the collection of participants' perceptions and experiences as data. Palmer (1969:107) refers to Dilthey's proposal that to learn from life is to learn from *human experience known from within'*. He quotes Dilthey's life philosophy thus: *'That which in the stream of time forms a unity in the present because it has a unitary meaning is the smallest entity which we can designate as an experience. Going further, one may call each encompassing unity of parts of life bound together through a common meaning for the course of life an "experience" – even when several parts are separated from each other by interrupting events'*. This statement illustrates how we can capture the myriad of *'unitary meanings'* drawn from people's experiences and, from these smaller pieces, build a picture of a larger shared experience from which socially constructed meaning and collective understanding can emerge. Valuing inductive reasoning in this study allows shared understanding to emerge through socially constructed meaning thereby supporting the purpose of the inquiry.

Socially constructed truth means that each person reads situations and happenings in different ways, their perceptions being influenced by previous experience. We refer here to our ontology, how we see the world through the lenses of our *a priori*. Thompson (1999:86) referring to Kant (1781) suggests that we cannot know truths about the world *'as it is in itself'* as we are restricted to seeing the world *'as it appears to us'* using space, time and causality to organise information and make sense of our world. Consider this for a moment in the context of the personal tutor relationship. Two people sharing the same personal tutor may have very different interaction based on their previous learning experience. Where a previous learning relationship has been a positive experience, they are more likely to enter into a similar relationship in a positive frame of mind. Likewise, a previously unhappy relationship may render that student anxious and reluctant. This example illustrates the effect of our *a priori* at play and demonstrates why, as interpretivist researchers, we do not claim to neutrally observe. As the social constructionist view of knowledge is that our own truth is created by interaction, society and culture it raises questions not only about how we see the world but also about control over what we believe or construct for ourselves and about whose construction of reality we are engaging in. This point provokes thoughts about 'self' and 'self-perception' in a socially constructed world. Meighan (1986:321-323) explored the works of Becker, Douglas, Rist and Hargreaves, and found that teachers' subjective judgements informed their perceptions of pupils and how their perceptions were played

out in their treatment of those pupils. For example subjective evaluation and labelling (based on social class distinctions) by a teacher in the first year of kindergarten was then perpetuated year on year. Meighan also notes Hargreaves' observations of comprehensive schools where teachers based their judgement of 'successful' as being middle class with working class pupils being labelled failures. These findings illustrate that interpretations of the truth can directly affect self-perception and the perception held by others and also imply that these perceptions may impact on a person's life chances.

The interpretive nature of social science research and the potential for the researcher's pre-conceptions to influence the research are held up as criticisms against it by researchers of the positivist tradition. These critics argue that because of these elements social science researchers cannot present themselves or their work as objective. Being aware of the tensions around what may or may not be accepted as 'scientific' research Norris (1990:169) refers to Baudrillard's defence that: '*We have now moved into an epoch...where truth is entirely a product of consensus values, and where 'science' itself is just the name we attach to certain modes of explanation*'. This statement argues that interpretive research is a 'scientifically' acceptable approach to creating truth and knowledge, despite the rejection of an objective, value neutral researcher. By rejecting a claim for objectivity, we can allow our *a priori* to contribute through a process of reflection bringing a rich and personal contribution to both the data and its subsequent analysis. Accepting that the employment of experience and reasoning is a successful approach to discovering truth, particularly in the realms of social science (Cohen and Manion, 1989:5) and taking account of the co-creation of understandings (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003:52) the researcher's experience in the context of the field of study is as valuable as the participants' in making a useful contribution to understanding and making sense of the data. The 'scientific' nature of interpretive, educational research is further supported by Cohen and Manion (1989:43) who explain, '*...when we speak of social research, we have in mind the systematic and scholarly application of the principles of a science of behaviour to the problems of man within his social context; and when we use the term educational research, we likewise have in mind the application of these selfsame principles to the problems of teaching and learning within the formal educational framework and to the clarification of issues having direct and indirect bearing on these concepts*'. To this end the interpretive nature of social science research, its acceptance of *a priori* as a contributory factor to knowing and understanding, and the value placed on the lived experiences of the individual makes it an appropriate paradigm in which to undertake an exploration of participants' perceptions and understandings of tutorial in the post-compulsory education sector.

A further consideration when attempting to draw together individual truths, perceptions and understandings within a given context is complexity, an aspect previously touched on in this chapter. When I use the terms context and complexity I am referring in general to the context of the study (i.e. tutorial provision in post-compulsory education) and the complexity therein. That is not to ignore however the complexity of truth as we have previously discussed for, as we have surmised, when engaging in interpretive inquiry complexity exists in the claim for truth. Sekiguchi (1999:1) illustrates this by saying *'The pursuit of truth becomes deeply problematic as a social science because what counts as truth is not fixed, but derives in part from social conventions that differ among contexts and language games'.* Sekiguchi's assertion that social conventions differ among contexts supports earlier proposals by Sapford and Jupp (1996:300) that discourse is of particular value when both parties share an understanding the subject matter.

Interpretive research therefore benefits from participants understanding the problem which is achieved by involving those who can share experience of the phenomena central to the inquiry. Consider for a moment the context in which this study takes place, i.e. colleges of Further Education as providers of post-compulsory education. These institutions house a range of social groupings that create their own identities. Broadly speaking, there are students and staff but these can be broken down into further sub-groups. Students for example may identify themselves as a Further Education or Higher Education student. They may also identify themselves as 1st, 2nd or 3rd year students and also by the academic or vocational studies they are undertaking. In the same vein, staff may see themselves as academic or support, their group identity, in part, being dictated by the organisational structure their institution adopts. Academic staff may consider themselves in relation to the school or faculty in which they work or the course team(s) in which they teach. Support staff likewise may consider themselves to be part of a specialist team such as counselling or careers guidance.

These are examples of how *'Social order exists only as a product of human activity'* and therefore *'social order is the result of past human activity'* (Berger and Luckmann 1966:51-55). During their exploration of ways in which we discover how social reality and social phenomena are constructed Berger and Luckmann identified actions and processes from which shared realities or truths emerge and proposed that social order is not part of the *'nature of things'* and it cannot be derived from the *'laws of nature'.* We can see this played out in organisational behaviour where, as Mullins (1990:485) describes *'The culture of an organisation includes prevailing patterns of behaviour, values, attitudes, beliefs, norms, sentiments and technology. These characteristics*

enable the differentiation among organisations'. The point being made here is that an individual's interaction with others in the organisation will be influenced to some extent by the identity adopted by the social groups they belong to and the shared values and belief systems within those groups. The complex nature of colleges as described here creates challenges for the implementation of institution-wide policy and procedures and the 'parity' of provision sought by the inspectorate as an indication of quality. Garvey and Alred (2002), in referring to three types of systems: stable, unstable and complex, describe a complex system as both stable and unstable and point out that although there are rules these can be either local or found elsewhere in the organisation. This explanation relates well to personal tutoring when considering for example general rules in terms of frequency of meetings and topics for discussion and how the institution suggests support should be administered. These may appear as clear rules or guidelines however, the rules of social interaction paired with, for example, differences in tutors' attitude towards learning as highlighted by Barnes and Shemilt (1992:144), will make for a variety of different outcomes. As Byrne (1998:14) referring to Nicolis suggests inter-relationships in particular between the social and the natural *'may change in ways which do not involve just one possible outcome'.* The same may be said of the tutorial curriculum. For example, where an institutional framework is provided, the curriculum will nevertheless differ across the institution as each programme area will interpret that framework in relation to the needs of their student group. This has implications for flexibility in design and implementation of the tutorial curriculum, modes of delivery and methods for measuring the quality of provision required by the regulatory bodies. As Garvey and Alred (2000) point out, in a complex system there needs to be a readiness and ability *'to compromise, to be resilient and accept that there may not be a 'right' answer'.* In order to afford flexibility however we return to the question of general rules and consider how explicit these may be and how well they might be understood. To explore this in the context of this study means generating an understanding of the general rules in relation to what students and tutors perceive the purpose of the tutorial curriculum to be and the expectations surrounding the personal tutoring relationship.

Recognising the value of a theory derived from practitioners' implicit knowledge of working practices contributes to the potential for interpretivist research to create theory to inform practice. This is a particularly important aspect for me in this study because in my job role the question personal tutors ask most frequently is 'How?' They want to know how they begin to design tutorial curriculum, how they can work best to help individual students, how they can know they are doing a good job and how they can improve their practice. Gill & Johnson (2002:168) propose *'human beings are able to attach meaning to the events and phenomena that surround them, and from these*

interpretations and perceptions elect courses of meaningful action which they are able to reflect upon and monitor', confirming that as well as offering description and meaning interpretivist research can hold practical purpose and application. Being able to contribute to the understanding of tutorial practice by informing the decision making process, as well as contributing to the general body of knowledge relating to tutorial development, serves the purpose of this study.

Within the interpretivist tradition there are a number of methods or techniques that may be employed all of which acknowledge individual subjectivity and the social construction of meaning. Pure interpretivism, that which totally rejects objectivity in terms of cause and effect, includes phenomenology, ethnography, ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism (Walliman 2006:24-25). Morrison (in Coleman and Briggs 2002:15) offers the following brief descriptions of interpretivist paradigms:

- *Phenomenology*, an attempt to see things from the point of view of others, exploring the meanings of events and phenomena from the subjects' perspectives
- *Ethnomethodology,* drawing on participant observation, unstructured interviews and more recently discourse analysis
- *Naturalism*, which avoids artificially interfering with the participants' world to be able to capture their view of the world as they see it
- *Ethnogenics*, as a framework for understanding structure and order in the analysis of social action and the understanding of 'episodes' in social life
- *Symbolic interactionism*, a process of interpretation and sense making based on the premise that people react to things on the basis of the meaning those things hold for them and that meaning is derived through social interaction with others.

These brief but helpful descriptions give a flavour of the various interpretivist approaches that can be taken in the search for understanding and meaning. It appears however, that grounded theory has been neglected in Walliman's (2006:24-25) and Morrison's (in Coleman and Briggs 2002:15) considerations of interpretive methodologies. Walliman (2006:48) however later refers to grounded theory as a strategy as does Robson (2002:191) who describes it as a strategy for doing research and a particular style of analysing data appropriate for qualitative studies. Strauss and Corbin (1998:4) and Denscombe (2003:109) however refer to grounded theory as a methodology adopted by those engaged in the study of human interaction and exploratory research focussed on particular settings. Grounded theory is noted to be a particularly useful methodology in the field of education (Strauss and Corbin, 1998:4) as it acknowledges practitioners' contribution to developing conceptual models and theories from experience in their working practices (McKernan 2000:52).

I have spoken of the inductive nature of this inquiry and the social construction of meaning within the context of this study. I have also made reference to the value of individuals' experience and perceptions and a desire to derive practical application

from the theory created. These are the elements that have drawn me towards interpretive inquiry. I will now move to discuss my reasons for adopting a grounded theory approach from a methodological perspective. Grounded theory as a process of data collection and analysis is addressed in Chapter 4 under research methods.

3.2   Grounded Theory Methodology

The pragmatist within me (see p33) compels me to achieve a practical as well as theoretical contribution to benefit the tutoring community. Grounded theory offers such an opportunity for, as Denscombe (2003:112) quoting Locke points out, '*Grounded theory acknowledges its pragmatist philosophical heritage in insisting that a good theory is one that will be practically useful in the course of daily events, not only to the social scientists, but also to laymen. In a sense, a test of good grounded theory is whether it works on the ground'.* In acknowledging links to pragmatism however, grounded theory has been open to the charge that it suffers epistemic-dualism, particularly when consideration is given to the methods of coding and categorisation which appear to be indicative of a pragmatic, positivist approach. In response to this accusation, Glaser and Strauss (1967) draw attention to how the practical benefits derived from grounded theory are in effect due to its pragmatic approach. I would support this defence with a reminder that grounded theory makes use of qualitative data including interviews and text, lending itself to postmodernist interpretive inquiry. I would also propose that engaging in the narrative, the perceptions and socially constructed meanings to build theory is what makes grounded theory appropriate to social science research. The coding performed as part of the grounded theory process is a method of analysing and organising the emergent themes from the participants' original sense making but does not in itself create meaning. The participants are co-creating meaning through their social interaction and shared experiences (see p53). Furthermore, grounded theory requires that the creation of theory moves beyond simply identifying emergent themes. This is why systematic analysis is required (Denscombe 2003:109) rather than '*simply allowing the data to speak for itself* (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Systematic analysis saves the research from remaining a description of ideas and moves it towards a theoretical contribution to understanding. In order for the researcher to undertake effective analysis in can be argued that their previous experience in the field, their observations within the social setting, and interaction with the research participants together offer a theoretical basis from which analysis can begin. As Walliman (2006:24-25) suggests, developing theoretical ideas without some prior theoretical standpoint is hard to achieve.

The grounded theory approach in this study creates theory through the exploration of participants' perceptions of tutorial provision within the context of post-compulsory

education. The participants were drawn from two broad categories i.e. groups of students and groups of personal tutors. This was in order to obtain shared perceptions from the 'receiver' groups and the 'deliverer' groups based on their prior experience and understanding of the phenomena. As I was seeking a collectively constructed understanding from each of these two broad communities rather than a deconstruction of the groups' individual perceptions, further stratified sampling would not serve any additional purpose. As Denscombe (2003:110) suggests, there is no need for representative sampling (referring here to a representative population sample of respondents traditionally found in quantitative research) in order to support the claim for generalisability. Instead, grounded theory calls for theoretical sampling as described by Strauss and Corbin (1998:214) who propose *'When building theory inductively, the concern is with representativeness of concepts and how concepts vary dimensionally'.* They go on to say *'We are looking for events and incidents that are indicative of the phenomena and are not counting individuals or sites per se, each observation, interview or document may refer to multiple examples of these events'.* To this end, the sampling concentrates on engaging both groups (students and tutors) in exploring the emergent themes as the research progressed to achieve representation from both parties on concepts relevant to the inquiry.

The inductive nature of this methodology follows the principle of grounding the emergent theory in empirical data (Denscombe, 2003:110) and allows the research to lead the way by ensuring that *'the theory is developed and refined as data collection proceeds'* in a *'continuous data collection process interlaced with periodic pauses for analysis.'* (Walliman, 2006:47-130). During this study I found that through a continuous cycle of data collection, analysis and refinement any preconceived notions I may have held about how the research might develop were superseded by unexpected themes emerging as the study developed its own identity. For example, since the question of interaction within the tutoring relationship unexpectedly arose out of the data initially gathered to explore the purpose of the tutorial curriculum, it became part of the participants' story and was therefore explored as an additional strand to the study. This demonstrates how, as the researcher, I undertook to stay true to what the data illustrated and to create theory on that basis. Staying true to the data brings into play a further grounded theory principle outlined by Denscombe (2003:109), the researcher's capacity to start out with an open mind. I hasten to add that this does not imply that the researcher would be void of any prior assumptions or understandings. As Denscombe (2003:110) qualifies quoting Glaser and Strauss (1967:33) *'To be sure, one goes out and studies an area with a particular...perspective, and with a focus, a general question or problem in mind. But the researcher can (and we believe should) also study an area without any preconceived theory that dictates, prior to the research, 'relevancies' in*

concepts and hypothesis'. This statement acknowledges a researcher's pre-understandings but warns against allowing one's *a priori* to interfere with how the data is interpreted. Strauss and Corbin (1998:34) also propose that it is not appropriate to enter the research with preconceived concepts as both concepts and design should be emergent. Tolerance for ambiguity, flexibility in design and '*a large dose of creativity*' all contribute to arriving at theory grounded in the data. Being aware of the potential pitfalls prepared me to manage the situation and to consider carefully how I might confirm that the meaning I was making of participants comments were what they collectively wanted to say. Strauss and Corbin (1998:58) refer to the microanalysis in grounded theory, the taking apart, examination and interpretation of data, working with pictures, words, sentences and so on. They point out the range of interpretations that can be given to a word or sentence and gives warning to the researcher that they must be aware of jumping to their own theoretical conclusions by considering all plausible assumptions. My strategy for addressing these issues was to present my analysis to the participating groups where they were encouraged to critique the findings in the light of their understanding. This activity also allowed me the opportunity to build on the findings and to draw a line under them when we had reached a point where '*theoretical saturation*' (Strauss and Corbin1998:292) had taken place. In undertaking this inductive process, I believe my methods fit well with the notion that grounded theory is developing in nature, allowing relevant themes to emerge as a natural process through visiting and re-visiting the data and acknowledging that in inductive inquiry the theory cannot be predicted from the start.

I have referred to both Glaser and Strauss (1967) the originators of grounded theory and the subsequent partnership of Strauss and Corbin (1998) as developers of grounded theory methodology and would like to take a moment to acknowledge the philosophical divide that subsequently emerged between the originators. Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967) developed a '*general method of comparative analysis which would allow for the emergence of categories from the data as an alternative to the hypothetico-deductive approach in social research*' (Kelle, 2005). Following their joint work on *The Discovery of Grounded Theory,* Glaser (1978) produced the book entitled *Theoretical Sensitivity* in which he paid particular attention to the nature of theory and its emergence from the data. In 1990 Strauss and Corbin set out clear guidelines for undertaking grounded theory research in *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory, Procedures and Techniques* to which Glaser (1992) responded with a damning critique in *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis: Emergence v Forcing* (Goulding, 2002:2). The differences between Glaser's and Strauss's concepts and the precursor to Glaser's charge against Strauss and Corbin was that their methods in the coding paradigm led to a forcing rather than emergence of theory from the data (Kelle,

2005 and Goulding, 2002:2). Glaser and Strauss (1967) therefore share joint intellectual ownership as originators of the grounded theory methodology, but ultimately part company in relation to their attitudes to procedure (Goulding, 2002:2). As a researcher, I did not want to blindly follow the guidelines provided by Strauss and Corbin just because, as Rennie observed *'The works of Strauss and Corbin have a resounding edge over Glaser's monographs, according to the citations in literature. The appeal of the Strauss and Corbin version probably comes from its promise of simplicity, procedural structure and verifiability'* (cited by Glaser, 1998:39). Instead, I wanted to understand enough about the differences in the application of grounded theory between the two originators to be able to make an informed decision as to which path I would take in applying the grounded theory method. To this end, in the following chapter on the research methods employed, reference will be made to both Glaser's and Strauss's perspectives on procedures in grounded theory and how they relate to the research methods employed during this study.

3.3   Methodological Conclusion

The purpose of this interpretive inquiry is to explore the meaning of a phenomenon (tutorial provision) and events (personal tutoring) in the context of post-compulsory education, from the participants' (students' and tutors') perspectives. In positioning myself as an interpretivist researcher and seeing truth as a social construct, I recognise that people see the world in different ways and therefore there cannot be one truth. Holding to the notion that reality is constructed through social discourse and recognising the existence of multiple realities I relate to a subjectivist epistemology of co-creating understanding. With multiple realities comes complexity which, although requiring some form of stable rules, also requires flexibility as there is no one right answer (Garvey and Alred 2002) just as with multiple realities there is no one truth. Social construction rejects the value neutral observer however interpretive research is nevertheless deemed to be a *'scientifically acceptable'* approach to research in the social sciences (Norris, 1990:169). Indeed, Cohen & Manion (1989:5) together with Denzin and Lincoln (2003:35) value the contribution made possible by the researcher's reflection on their own experiences that relate to the phenomenon being explored. Capturing perceptions and socially constructed meanings of participants in the field to build theory makes the emergent grounded theory process an appropriate methodology for this study. The benefit of this is recognised by Denscombe (2003:12) and Gill & Johnson (2002:168) in the practical application that grounded theory offers in the field. As I have acknowledged a desire for this research to contribute to the practical development of tutorial provision, grounded theory is a relevant methodology to adopt.

The justification for adopting a grounded theory methodology is also supported by previous studies where grounded theory principles and practices have been used extensively in education research (Charmaz; cited by Gray, 2004:330). Grounded theory has also been used to explore a wide range of management issues (Goulding, 2002:50) such as leadership studies (Parry, 1998; Hunt and Ropo, 1995) self-identity at work (Kimle and Damhost, 1997) strategic alliances (Lang, 1996) and cultural issues (Turner, 1981, 1988). These examples of grounded theory in practice serve to demonstrate its usefulness in researching phenomena related to *'people, their behaviour, relationships and communication'* and the *'transcending nature of grounded theory and its potential for application in the field of management research'*. (Goulding, 2002:50-51). Enthused by the potential for my research findings to be applied in practice, I endeavoured to learn about the method and process that makes grounded theory what it is and how it can be applied to my research. My understanding of the grounded theory method is discussed in the following chapter where you will also find a detailed account of the research activities, methods of data collection and subsequent analysis performed.

Chapter 4:   The Research Method

In this chapter, I give a chronological overview of the research activities and discuss the methods of data collection and analysis employed. Where appropriate I will consider the differences between Glaser and Strauss in their approach to grounded theory in practice, making clear the route I have chosen to take and the reasons for that choice. For clarity, the inquiry's methods of data collection and analysis will be discussed separately however we should be aware that this does not occur in practice as in grounded theory data collection stages are not separated from the interpretive process (Goulding, 2002:72). What we see in grounded theory is a perpetual shift back and forth between data and analysis that leads to further data collection as themes emerge creating additional strands to be explored until saturation has occurred. Furthermore, constant verification is built into grounded theory through constant comparison (Glaser, 1998:4). The process is not linear and straightforward, rather it is *'cyclical and multi-levelled'* (Glaser, 1978:22) which is why he warns that a grounded theory researcher must be able to *'tolerate confusion and regression whilst remaining open, trusting to preconscious processing and to conceptual emergence'* (Glaser, 2004:43). By the end of this chapter therefore you will have an overview and rationale for the research strategy and methods employed, to act as a foundation to understanding the discussion of how the theory has emerged as the research progressed, set out in the subsequent chapters.

Strauss and Corbin (1998:xi) describe their method of grounded theory as a *'fluid and flexible approach to data analysis'* and propose that their book 'Basics of Qualitative Research' is '...*not a recipe book to be applied to research in a step-by step fashion*'. Glaser (1999:841) also refers to flexibility describing his approach to grounded theory as a *'readily modifiable'* method. The differences between Glaser and Strauss are not apparent at first glance however differences do exist between these two originators of grounded theory, which are inherent in their approaches to coding and in relation to theoretical sensitivity. At first I thought that I would be required to choose one author over another and stick rigidly to their rules of procedure however, as I looked more closely at the two perspectives it became clear that the flexibility they both advocate makes best fit for the research the important factor. On this basis, where the methods of Glaser and Strauss differ, I have chosen to follow the most appropriate method at each stage of the research process. At the same time I held to the principles of theory being *'discovered'* through emergence that allows the freedom to *'explore'* rather than *'check out'* the field of inquiry as *'Grounded theory is experiential in the nature of doing it'* (Glaser, 1998:102). I will discuss these differences as they occur in this chapter but first I will begin with a description of my approach to the research activity.

4.1 The Research Activity

The empirical research took place within two post-compulsory institutions however the forum for analysis and critique of the findings was also taken outside these institutions in order to engage with others working in the field. Both institutions are situated in the Yorkshire and Humber region and provide a broad range of Further and Higher Education programmes across several campuses. The participating institutions are situated in similar economic areas, both of which are still recovering from the decline of the coalmining industry and seeking to address the skills needs of the local population. Progression to full-time education at sixteen years of age is below national average in both districts. Although the inquiry took place in two institutions I would like to be clear that the intention of the study was to develop shared understanding and was not to compare provision between the two institutions and therefore no attempt was made to do so. The reason for the two institutions being involved was a change in my place of work during the study. By moving from one institution to another the focus of my job role changed from managing tutorial provision in Higher Education to tutorial provision in Further Education. This situation offered an opportunity for any differences in perceptions of provision between students studying Further and Higher Education to emerge however again comparison was not the intended purpose of the inquiry. The following table chronicles the process of investigation.

Figure 2: Chronological Record of Empirical Research Activities

Date	Activity
Research began in College X	
14th May 2001	Higher Education Student Questionnaire
5th March 2002	Higher Education Student Focus Group: Tutorial Provision
11th June 2002	Higher Education Student Focus Group: Tutorial Relationship
15th May 2003	Tutor Focus Group: Tutorial Provision & Tutoring Role
3rd July 2003	Tutor Focus Group: Tutorial Provision & Tutoring Role
Research moved to College Y	
29th June 2004	Tutor Focus Group: Tutorial Provision & Tutoring Role
10th November 2004	Tutor Focus Group: Personal Tutoring Role and Skills
8th December 2004	Tutor Focus Group: Personal Tutoring Skills & Qualities
6th April 2005	Student Focus Group: Tutorial Provision
6th June 2005	Student Focus Group: Personal Tutoring Skills & Qualities
20th-27th June 2005	Further Education Student Questionnaire
19th June 2006	Verifying and Expanding the Model of Tutoring Styles
20th June 2006	Verifying and Expanding the Model of Tutoring Styles
21st June 2006	Verifying and Expanding the Model of Tutoring Styles
3rd July 2006	Verifying and Expanding the Model of Tutoring Styles (External)
12th February 2007	Validating the Exploratory Tool
14th February 2007	Validating the Exploratory Tool

The table demonstrates the grounded theory methodology in practice as data collection if followed by periodic pauses for analysis (see p41) and where emergent themes are explored and revisited in a cyclical and multi-levelled process (see p45).

A purposive approach to sampling (Coleman and Briggs, 2005:101) was undertaken to engage with tutor and student groups within each institution. External forums were also utilised thereby creating opportunities to draw on experiences and perceptions from the wider tutoring community through presentation and discussion at a number of conference workshops. This approach also reduced the reliance on participants known to each other or the researcher, and the potential for bias, recognising that focus groups in organisations can lead to some form of acquaintanceship being unavoidable (Morgan, 1997:30). The participants were drawn from the two post-compulsory educational institutions for a number of reasons. Firstly, the research was initiated in the first institution in part to inform management decision-making in relation to the development of tutorial provision. Secondly, the participants in both institutions were easily accessible to me for research purposes and thirdly, both institutions were similar in size and provision i.e. Further and Higher Education cohorts and patterns of tutorial delivery. The research participants were chosen on the basis that were either:

- A recipient of tutoring (students) or
- A provider of tutoring (personal tutors)

Creating homogeneity of participants is vital to their ability to share a discussion of the research topic (Morgan, 1997:38) therefore tutors and students were seen as two separate cohorts. The data collection activity was designed to draw on the experiences and perceptions of tutor and student groups across departments in each of the institutions. As the majority of tutors in both institutions were at the time involved in tutorial for both Further and Higher Education courses (since this study the first institution has given its Higher Education courses over to a local university) it was not appropriate to attempt to separate their perceptions relating to Further and Higher Education. This assumption was corroborated by the tutors' references to 'students' per se and not to Further or Higher Education students as separate cohorts.

Personal Tutors were easily identifiable through their job role within the institutions which made direct contact with participants representing this group relatively simple using staff development sessions. Meetings were scheduled and personal tutors were invited to attend via staff email and the intranet notice board. The potential student group was much greater in number and diverse in nature as the targeted cohort included sub-groups such as students undertaking full-time or part-time modes of study and students studying at various levels and years of study. In addition to the qualitative research data I was seeking to obtain for this inquiry, there was also a requirement to identify certain quantitative data for internal management information purposes. This led to a more strategic approach to reaching student participants than would normally be required in grounded theory as representative population sampling is not essential in grounded theory (Denscombe, 2003:10) and random sampling is rarely useful in

selecting focus group participants (Morgan, 1997:35). To engage with potential participants who had experience of tutorial provision either as a student or tutor, an essential pre-requisite for participating in this inquiry, a balance had to be struck between serving the purpose of the institution and of the research. To this end I began the inquiry by sending out questionnaires to students on a range of different courses, at different levels and stages of study, incorporating both male and female and a range of age groups. This sampling served the needs of the institution whilst acting as a first point of contact for the research inquiry by including the opportunity to register their interest in participating in forthcoming focus group meetings. All students expressing an interest in participating were invited to do so. In the first institution all the student respondents were studying Higher Education, as this was the cohort aimed at by the institution for which tutorial development was deemed to be necessary. In the second institution, despite the questionnaire being open to all students attending the college and made available via the student intranet, all the students responding were following Further Education courses.

In addition to using access to the student and tutor populations within these two institutions, external tutors were engaged in subsequent analytical stages of the research. This was achieved through the NAMSS (National Association of Managers of Student Services) and the HEA (Higher Education Academy) conference workshops. Discussions were also held during FETN (Further Education Tutorial Network) meetings regarding the nature of tutorial and influences affecting tutorial development. Presenting the research as it developed and engaging with participants in the wider tutoring community made participants less likely to be known to myself or each other, reducing bias where participants are recruited from a limited number of sources (Morgan 1997:35-37). Riley (cited by Goulding, 2002:89) recommend that external reviewers are invited to consider the data and offer interpretations in order to check consistency as well as returning to the original participants for their opinions on the developing theory in the early stages of collection, interpretation and abstraction. Taking the research activity outside of the two institutions also enabled me to assess whether saturation of the data had been reach or whether new themes were still to emerge that had not been previously considered. I also found it useful to have a 'fresh pair of eyes' to consider the analysis to see whether the process and findings appeared logical to practitioners that had not been involved in the early stages of the inductive process. I found that by not being involved in the earlier stages these participants were able to critique the findings without a sense of loyalty to what had come before and were more open (and sometimes harsh) in their criticisms than those closer to the original data.

It is important to engage with participants who have some knowledge or experience of the phenomena under investigation in order for them to contribute to the data collection however this should be organised in the light of theoretical sampling which is essential in grounded theory. Theoretical sampling is *'..the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes and analyses his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop the theory as it emerges',* Glaser (1978:36). In theoretical sampling groups are chosen based on need and where the researcher is most likely to find the information relating to the general phenomenon and latterly in relation to the emergent themes or codes as the research develops (Goulding, 2002:67-68). *'The general procedure for theoretical sampling is to elicit codes from the raw data from the start of the data collection through constant comparative analysis as the data pour in. Then one uses the codes to direct further data collection, from which the codes are further developed theoretically, with properties and theoretically coded connections with other categories until each category is saturated. Theoretical sampling on any category ceases when it is saturated, elaborated and integrated into the emerging theory'* (Glaser; cited by Goulding, 2002:68). Constant comparison takes place from the start as data is compared like with like to identify emerging patterns and themes that facilitates the identification of concepts. The theory can only be presented when all core categories are saturated.

When speaking of data, it is said that social scientists have abandoned the choice between qualitative and quantitative research and instead are focussing on the problem of which methods to use at what point (Cohen & Manion 1989:42). Glaser (1998:8) proposes that *'All is data'* arguing that pre-supposing what data should be used restricts the generative aspect of the process. Strauss and Corbin being of the same mind do not preclude any types of information from being data but do refer to a necessity for the data to be relevant to the phenomenon being studied (Strauss and Corbin, 1998:42). This perspective offers freedom to collate any information, incident or observations that will inform the inquiry. As the main focus of this inquiry is on exploring perceptions and experience rather than measuring or testing a hypothesis there was a concentration on the collection and analysis of qualitative data. A multi-method approach was adopted that combined a number of data collection activities (Morgan, 1997:2). This approach is often used as it strengthens the research by balancing out some of the differing strengths and weaknesses of each method (Gray, 2004:33). The focus in designing the methods of data collection was to create accessible techniques that would enable the respondents to communicate their perceptions and meaning in a way that they could understand and engage in. Robson (2002:191) suggests that interviews are the most common method of qualitative data collection but that

observation (participant or otherwise) and the analysis of documents may also be used. However Morgan (1997:61) simply suggests that '*the most basic method of determining what the participants think is important is to ask them*'. For this reason, a questionnaire was employed to begin the inductive process by generating some initial comments in relation to perceptions of tutorial provision for discussion during subsequent focus groups and also to identify potential participants for the focus group activities. As the aim of the study is to achieve a shared understanding, individual interviews were not appropriate, as they would not allow for discussion between participants therefore a number of focus groups were used, incorporating a range of data collecting activities.

Questionnaire

The first questionnaire (Appendix 1) was employed to initiate contact with potential student participants and to generate preliminary qualitative data. The qualitative data obtained from the questionnaire was used to inform preparations for the first focus group meeting, the inquiry's main approach to data collection. The questionnaire was also designed with the intention of collecting management information to inform the college's tutorial development activities. The questions were intended, in part, to investigate students' expectations and perceptions of tutorial provision, what they hoped it would contribute in relation to their studies and what they found particularly useful or not so useful in the current provision they received. Group tutorial and individual tutorial were addressed as two separate aspects of provision. The questionnaire design involved both open and closed questions. Closed questions were developed in order to gather quantifiable data in relation to patterns of use/demand and activities undertaken. For example:

Q34: In which areas did you feel particularly unprepared? Please feel free to tick more than one response.

Subject of study	☐
Essay writing	☐
Report writing	☐
Communication skills	☐
Computer skills	☐
Presentation skills	☐
Level of numerical skills	☐
Spelling and grammar	☐
Organisational skills	☐
Problem solving	☐
Taking responsibility for own progress	☐
Working as part of a group	☐

Open questions were designed to gather qualitative data that would form the basis for discussion in the planned student focus groups, for example: '*What do you think is the best aspect of Group Tutorials?*'

The first questionnaire was circulated to 300 students at the latter end of the academic year. This was to ensure that the respondents in Year 1 had experience of tutorial over a long enough period of time for them to make comments about the provision and any effect they might feel it had on them and their learning experience. The strategy employed to distribute the questionnaire was to use the registration file provided by the student records service in the College. Every 10th person was highlighted on the student list. A questionnaire was then sent out for them to complete. Of the 300 questionnaires distributed, 67 responses were returned. The pattern of respondents is shown below

Figure 3: Pattern of Higher Education Student Respondents

Current Year Of Study	1st Year 46.3%	2nd Year 44.8%	3rd Year 3.5%	No data 3.4%
Attendance	Full time 92.5%	Part Time 5%	Distance 0%	No data 2.5%
Age Group	16-20 68.7%	21+ 31.3%		
Gender	Male 35.8%	Female 61.2%	No data 3%	

The responses to the questionnaire were collated and some statistical analysis performed on the closed questions in order to identify any patterns in usage and perceived needs in content, which formed part of the management report. The qualitative data was noted in preparation for the planned student focus group meetings where comments were to be clarified and further explored. At the end of the questionnaire respondents were invited to indicate whether or not they would be willing to participate in future discussions. A total of 22 students responded positively to this invitation out of which 11 were continuing their studies at the College the following academic year and therefore available to take part. When the first student focus group was held 5 of the 11 continuing to study at the college took part.

The second questionnaire (Appendix 2) was employed in June 2005 on this occasion however the students were following Further Education as opposed to Higher Education courses. The questionnaire was again used as a means of engaging with potential student participants and also in order to gather further qualitative data. The juxtaposition of this data with the previous data would suggest whether or not new themes were still emerging or whether that particular line of exploration had been exhausted. Tutors were not asked to complete a questionnaire as it was possible to engage with them directly through the institutions' internal staff development sessions. The first questionnaire was used as a template in order to gather data on similar topics however it was amended to reflect the ongoing developments of the study. The number of questions was reduced from 35 to 19 by removing some questions that related to the management data required by the previous institution for planning purposes. The removed questions included, for example, aspects relating to previous experience of

Higher Education and entry qualifications. The question about how students would best describe their feelings when starting the course was also removed. This was due to findings from the first two focus groups suggesting that students experienced a mixture of feelings at any given time and that it would be difficult to say whether those feelings were directly related to attending the College or whether other factors such as home life, moving away from home, family or peer attitudes were contributing to the feelings experienced. Amendments to the second questionnaire were also made in relation to the language used to make it accessible to students at all levels of study within the institution. Changes were also made to some questions that may have been construed as leading rather than inductive, for example where lists of responses were offered rather than appearing as an open question.

The second questionnaire was placed on the College intranet for all students to access and was promoted by personal tutors during group tutorial classes. The questionnaire could be accessed online and either completed online then printed or printed out and completed by hand. Boxes were left at reception at each campus for students to hand them in. I considered this approach to be the most effective way of reaching the majority of students as the questionnaire was made accessible by a variety of means however only 73 completed questionnaires were received. This was despite having an opportunity to enter a prize draw for submitting a completed questionnaire. The table below illustrates the pattern of respondents.

Figure 4: Pattern of Further Education Student Respondents

Current Year Of Study	1st Year 68%	2nd Year 18.5%	3rd Year 11%	No data 3%
Attendance	Full time 93%	Part time 3%	No data 4%	
Age Group	16-20 99%	No data 1%		
Gender	Male 33%	Female 47%	No data 20%	

The majority (99%) of respondents in figure 4 fall into the 16-20 age category whereas in figure 3 the respondents in the 16-20 age category was 68.7%. This is due to the first questionnaire being directed at Higher Education students and the second question being open to both Further and Higher Education students. There were less 2nd year respondents in the second questionnaire due to the timing of the circulation that fell at the end of the academic year when many second year students were only attending College to sit for exams and were less likely to check for messages on the College intranet. Once the qualitative data from the questionnaires had been drawn together questions arising from the data were noted and used to form the basis of discussions in the subsequent focus group meetings, replicating the pattern of inquiry in the first institution.

Focus Groups

Focus groups are an appropriate forum for creating shared understandings due to their *collectivistic* character drawing on the *'multivocality of participants' attitudes, experiences and beliefs'* (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003:364). Even though Morgan (1997:30) advises against an over-reliance on focus groups he acknowledges their usefulness as *'a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the research'* (Morgan 1997:6). There were sixteen focus group meetings held during the research activity, as there were only a few highly dispersed participants available to meet at any one time and therefore it was better to run several smaller groups (Morgan, 1997:40). Morgan further suggests that projects should consist of three to five groups, claiming that more groups seldom generate new meaningful insights however the larger number of groups used in this study is justified as the focus groups were involved at the validation and trial stages and not just for data collection. He substantiates this view citing Zeller (1993) and Calder (1977) saying that data collection should cease once the researcher can anticipate what will be said in the next group (Morgan,1997:41). In grounded theory this is know as 'saturation', the point at which additional data collection no longer generates new understanding (see p61). Out of the sixteen focus group meetings held, four of the meetings were held with student participants and twelve with tutor participants. At first glance, this may appear to be an unbalanced number of student and tutor meetings however, this pattern is due to the tutors being involved in later validation and trials of the tutoring model that were not relevant for students to take part in, bearing in mind the focus on these latter occasions was on developing a tool to support personal tutors in exploring their tutoring skills. If we consider the focus groups held during this study for the purposes of data collection alone, there were four focus group meetings held to consider the student perspective and seven held to consider the tutors' perspective. The reason for holding more tutor meetings than student meetings is the need to revisit tutoring qualities until saturation had occurred.

Rather than seeking to vary the mode of data collection, i.e. interview, focus group etc, my attention was given to varying the nature of the data gathering activities taking place within the focus group meetings and to creating an environment where participants with relevant life experiences are drawn together to express their views and openly discuss their experiences and perceptions. Designing a variety of data gathering activities meant that participants could be engaged and motivated by making the activities interesting, fun, personally rewarding and relevant to the topics being explored. The various activities participants took part were group discussion, mind mapping using logo visual technology, expression through art and reflective personal stories.

Group Discussion: The focus group sizes varied between five and twelve. Morgan (1997:60) proposes group sizes should be between six and ten, suggesting that more may be difficult to manage and less may make discussion difficult to sustain. I would agree with this where individual responses or points of view are required for as Morgan points out *'Small groups are more useful when the researcher desires a clear sense of each participant's reaction to a topic simply because they can give each participant more time to talk'.* However, I found that it is useful and manageable to bring together slightly larger groups (12) that can be split into smaller subgroups. By managing the group in this way the subgroups have an opportunity for in depth discussion before the whole group consolidates their findings thereby working towards a shared understanding. This approach also made it possible to reduce the potential for one or two more enthusiastic participants to commandeer the discussion. As Morgan (1997:60) warns, we need to be aware of the potential influence of the group context on the individuals within the group and the influence of the individuals on each other within the group. I took a semi-structured approach to managing group activities where an initial task or question was set before the participants were given freedom to discuss the topic or related aspects as they arose. Morgan (1997:39-41) proposes that *'more structured approaches are especially useful when there is a strong, pre-existing agenda for the research'.* So where there is a clear sense of the research questions these can be put directly to the participants. He goes on to say however that the structure should not to become a fixed agenda that restricts participants from expressing what they feel to be relevant to the discussion. Less structured approaches are especially useful to exploratory research. *'...if the goal is to learn something knew from the participants, then it is best to let them speak for themselves'.* The problem with less structured group activity is the difficulty in comparing from group to group (Morgan 1997:39-41) however this was not a concern here because in grounded theory the data is fractured in order to compare data like with like rather than from group to group.

The first student focus group meeting, held on 5th March 2002, began by sharing some of the findings from the questionnaire with the students and posing additional questions that had arisen from the questionnaire responses (see p72). The participants were encouraged to explore the findings, taking time to make sense of comments as we progressed to ensure that a shared understanding of meaning emerged. Open questions relating to broad themes drawn from the questionnaire's qualitative responses were offered to the group for their comments but once the discussion had begun I did not attempt to control the direction or content that was discussed. This enabled the participants to talk freely about aspects of tutorial provision that they perceived to be important and to reduce the potential for bias where the researcher may lead respondents by the way questions may be phrased (Bell, 1999:140). For

example, the first finding, 63% of students responding believe the function of personal tutorial to be to plan for self development, was further explored with the focus group by asking *"What do you perceive self-development to be?"* After the first question was posed the participants engaged in conversation with each other and this led unexpectedly to discussing the tutor/student relationship. I allowed this natural deviation in the discourse to continue rather than to draw them back to the questions I had prepared as this was in keeping with the notion of grounded theory, allowing themes for discussion to emerge as the conversation developed. In the second student focus group meeting three students attended. The discussion was opened by reiterating from the previous meeting the conclusion that tutorial is provided by the institution to support the learning process and that during that discussion it had been highlighted that feelings were at play within the tutorial relationship. I also confirmed that we had agreed to explore this theme further by asking the open-ended question *"How does learning feel?"* This approach allowed the participants to discuss whatever arose enabling issues to emerge that were significant to them rather than to the researcher.

I ensured that following the 'free discussion' the same method of recording the emergent data was controlled so that the format was also the same. In doing so I felt it viable to build up a picture of perceptions and expectations from the groups as a whole by bringing together the findings from each related focus group. When I speak of related focus groups I refer to all student focus groups or tutor focus groups as separate cohorts and also the subject being discussed e.g. tutorial content or tutoring skills. As a grounded theory methodology was employed, rather than setting a fixed programme of research activities I looked to the research to lead by identifying new themes as they emerged and consequently exploring new questions as they arose. In adopting this approach I was responding to what the participants had to say which was important to the telling of their story.

Visual Exploration: During student and tutor focus groups *visual depiction* (Emmison and Smith 2000:21) was used as a *'critical approach to art as experience'* (Janesick,1998:7) in order to identify themes relating to what makes a personal tutor 'good'. Participants were invited to draw their impression of an 'ideal' personal tutor (Appendix 3). This technique was useful in bringing an element of fun to the activity as this created a rapport between the participants and myself and also between the participants themselves making comments and ideas more forthcoming (Fontana and Frey; cited by Goulding 2002:60). By encouraging participants to draw these characters they were free to express their desires as *'In imaginative or creative products, such as works of art, story-telling or drawing, instinctual wish-fulfilment may be permitted'*

(Diem-Wille in Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2001:121) Pictures have the benefit of allowing you to add thoughts piece by piece without searching for exactly the right word to communicate the meaning. Participants worked together using drawings as a form of expression and were also encouraged to talk about the picture as they were creating and also afterwards to describe its meaning to the rest of the group as *'The grounded researcher works with his or her participants to actively construct the data'* (Gray, 2004:330). Combining the act of drawing with conversation is helpful (Diem-Wille; cited by Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2001:132) and worked well in allowing the essence of what the participants believe it means to be a good personal tutor to emerge as the 'artists' explained their pictures and suggested the words or descriptions they would like recorded that best represent their collective thoughts.

Mind Mapping using Logo Visual Technology (LVT): Logo Visual Technology offers a method and associated tools to support the process of constructing meaning and is designed to *'engage verbal, visual and kinaesthetic intelligence'* (Best et al, 2005:1-6). The LVT tools employed in this study were Magnotes, magnetic hexagons that can be written on, placed on a board and moved around to make links or groups with other hexagons on the board. An example of how these were used is shown in Appendix 4 In this picture, the tutor focus group was concerned with exploring the content of tutorial provision participants were presented with the question *'What is the purpose of tutorial?'* Tutors worked in groups of two or three using magnetic boards and hexagons to mind map their ideas. Once they had reached a point where their initial ideas had 'dried up' they were invited to identify any relationship between the ideas moving the hexagons around on the board to show those relationships. Having done so the third step was to capture the meaning of the clusters they had made by giving each cluster a name or title. Appendix 5 shows an example of the outcome of this exercise. It is whilst working through this activity that the ensuing conversation leads participants to create shared meaning. The process begins with participants expressing their own sense of the subject through the mind mapping exercise. The discussion that occurs and the subsequent grouping and naming exercises leads to shared meanings being created. The use of LVT in this way engages participants not only in providing data but also in the early analysis of that data. Best et al (2005:19) illustrate the five stages of the LVT process thus:

Figure 5: Logo Visual Technology Process and Grounded Theory Coding
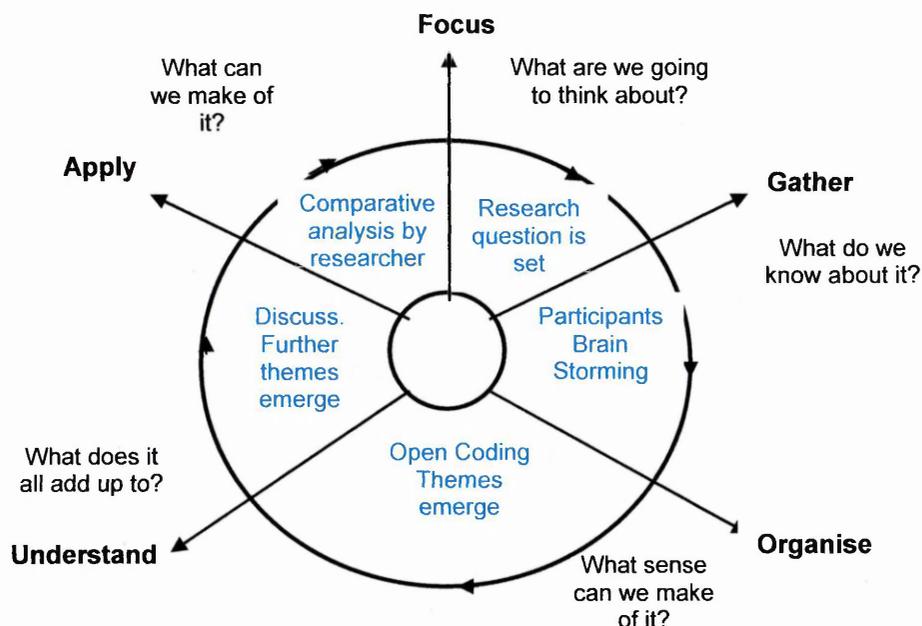
The above diagram illustrates how the research participants engaged in the collection and analysis of the data during an LVT based session. The process begins with the researcher giving the *focus* of the exploration, setting a research question for the participants to consider. The participants contribute to *gathering* the data by sharing their current perceptions, understandings and experiences in the context of the research question for example, '*what is your understanding of the purpose of tutorial provision from an institutional perspective*?' The participants brainstorm their ideas (Appendix 5) and later *organise* the data, giving the clusters labels that demonstrate the sense being made from the data. At this stage the research participants are engaged in the process of open coding, in other words '*the process of conceptualising, grouping similar items and giving those items (categories) a name*' which '*supports the reduction of large quantities of data into something more manageable*' acting as the '*foundation to theory building.*' (Strauss and Corbin, 1998:121). Further understanding is obtained during the whole group discussion where categories could be reviewed, contested or agreed so that a shared meaning is ultimately arrived at. My role in this process, other than to facilitate the activity, was to make additional notes on a flipchart and photograph the completed boards so that the process of grounded theory could continue with this information being *applied,* that is to say used in the comparative analysis along with previous and subsequent data collection.

Individual Personal Stories: In addition to the focus group activities, three student participants volunteered to write their personal story. The value of experience and the use of individual's stories and experiences as part of this exploration are brought to the fore by Cohen and Manion (1989:5) stating that '*Research is a combination of both experience and reasoning and must be regarded as the most successful approach to*

the discovery of truth'. The participants were invited to write about a time or incident that they felt was significant and lasting for them about their learning experiences at any stage in their life that they choose to reflect upon. The request was put in this manner to avoid imposing restrictions on the participants' thoughts and responses. I was seeking words or themes that were common to their collective stories and hoped to identify insights from these examples of extremes or opposites (Stebbins, 2001:24). These samples of free writing enabled valuable insights and *'They can be used to enliven less dramatic ethnographic description and more explicitly analytic works'* (Charmaz; cited by Gray, 2004:330). Furthermore, such descriptions lead to *'Understanding things from the point of view of those involved'* (Denscombe, 1998). These stories may be considered extreme examples as I do not propose that all learners experience the intense feelings provoked in the participants referred to in this part of the study but their illustrations do serve to highlight the potential emotions at play, a theme emerging from previous focus group discussion.

I also engaged in the use of my own personal story, a method generally connected with heuristic inquiry which stresses the value of self-disclosure (Moustakas, 1990:17) and engages in a process of self-dialogue in the hope that this will lead to *'self-discoveries, awareness and enhanced understanding* by *'Living, sleeping and merging with the research question'* (Gray, 2004:29). I found that this was my own experience during this study. I conclude from this that grounded theory and heuristic enquiry share commonality in so much as the researcher in grounded theory and heuristic inquiry are situated within the research and that they both subscribe to the notion of socially constructed truth arrived at through an organic process of moving back and forth between questioning and sense making. Where they differ is in the extent to which the researcher engages in the autobiographical experiences of the phenomenon, that is to say in grounded theory we seek to understand the phenomenon from the perspective of others whereas in heuristic inquiry we come from the perspective of our own experience. Using my own personal story did create a tension for me however I was aware that *'the researcher can get – and cultivate – crucial insights not only during his research (and from his research) but from his own personal experiences prior to or outside it...such insights need not come from one's own experience but can be taken from others. In this case the burden is on the sociologist to convert these borrowed experiences into his own insights'.* (Glaser and Strauss; cited by Goulding, 2002:62-63) By sharing our own pertinent stories we are able as researchers to illustrate the insights we hold about certain phenomena. The tensions I experienced in deciding whether or not to include a personal contribution was created mainly through a fear of criticism for self-indulgence. It was comforting to learn therefore that I was not alone on this issue. Mykhalovskiy's contribution in Hertz (1997:229-251), having experienced

such criticism, discusses how 'self-indulgence and related namings such as narcissism and self-absorption are used as regulatory charges against certain forms of sociology'. Megginson (2001:8) challenges, albeit with caution, the criticism of using one's own story in research, proposing that our personal stories can serve as a prime example of the phenomenon we wish to study. The caution comes as an acknowledgement that there can be a danger of this becoming 'gratuitous self-revelation' unless the story's relevance can be clearly identified and connected to the purpose of the research. DeVault, contributing to Hertz (1997:216-228) also supports the use of our stories as data and cites Myerhoof (1978), Shoshtak (1981), Rosaldo (1989), Kodo (1990) and Behar (1993) as researchers who all embrace personal writing as an integral part of analytical research text. This gives strength the argument that such a method of writing has a contribution to make. DeVault goes on to describe the researcher's stories as a mixture of disclosure and discretion. I would agree that an appropriate balance between disclosure and discretion would allow a richness drawn from personal insight to be added to the text. But the message coming from DeVault (1997), Mykhalovskiy (1997) and Megginson (2001) was to tread carefully and question whether or not the additions are vital to the story. In essence, the notion of boundaries should be considered carefully in the use of personal stories, particularly in relation to what the reader needs to know in order to understand and what the writer actually chooses to say. So I would say that rather than concentrating on trying to objectively separate ourselves, we should concern ourselves with deciding whether what we want to use in the data or say in our writing is necessary to the story being told or whether it is merely feeding our own cathartic need. I therefore assessed each potential contribution in terms of whether the research would be any more enlightened for its inclusion or whether the point may have been equally expressed by one or more of the participants.

4.2   Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study is designed to follow the principles of grounded theory. This is to 'create, revise and refine theory in the light of the data collected' (Burns, 2000:433) through an inductive process that involves 'moving from the 'plane' of observation of the empirical world to the construction of explanations and theories about what has been observed' (Gill and Johnson, 2002:40). The research process as a whole followed a pattern of asking, sense making and validation as the various themes emerged. I consistently returned in my own mind to the questions 'What do the participants think about this or mean by this?' During the inquiry I found that some data was quite simple to interpret such as the responses to what students feel the purpose of individual tutorial is, making the validation process relatively straightforward. Other data was more complex such as the exploration of personal tutoring skills. There were

times when the analysis of initial responses raised further questions which were then discussed and the process for exploring this aspect became a constant to and fro of activity as I made sense of the additional data and returned once again for validation. The completion of this process was reached once saturation occurred i.e. there were no new emergent themes.

The process of analysis in this study has involved scanning data, identifying relationships between categories and summarising working typologies before finally modifying, enlarging or restricting the original theory (Cohen et al 2000:151). My methods of analysis may also be related to the analytical induction process (Le Compte and Preissle; cited by Cohen et al, 2000:151) in the following manner:

- *Data scanned*: The qualitative comments drawn from the questionnaires and from the focus group discussions were recorded using Visual Concept 2.5 software package (a computer version of the magnetic boards and hexagons).
- *Relationships between categories sought:* The comments were analysed using the same process that tutors had followed i.e. moving the hexagons around to find relationships and themes emerging out the related comments. Each hexagon represents an individual comment and each titled group represents a theme.
- *Working typologies and summaries are written:* these included initial themes that were presented to appropriate groups (either student groups or tutor groups) for critique and further developed as new data emerged.
- *Typologies and summaries refined*: following a period of critique and validation of the typologies and summaries by participants and external reviewers the subsequent theory is evolved.

The inductive process has also been considered by Mintzberg (cited by Gill and Johnson 1991:149) as having three stages. The first stage is what he refers to as the '*detective work*' where the researcher seeks out order and patterns in the data. The second stage is described as the '*creative leap*' beyond the data, finalising the process with a synthesis of emergent themes into patterns rather than categories arising from '*mechanical data reduction techniques*'. The '*creative leap*' is where engaging in theoretical sensitivity takes the research into the realms of grounded theory. Goulding (2002:70) found that Glaser and Strauss hold a difference of opinion in relation to how theoretical sensitivity should be applied, suggesting that Strauss and Corbin (1994) consider the original Glaser and Strauss's book 'The Discovery of Grounded Theory' (1967) to over-emphasise induction thereby reducing the role of creativity and theoretical sensitivity. Glaser refuted this in his publication 'Theoretical Sensitivity' (1978) claiming that theoretical sensitivity is a vital component of the original grounded theory and that '*being honest about the data is paramount*' (Glaser, 1998:3). In relation to staying true to the data, Strauss & Corbin (1998:182) claim that the macro and micro conditions surrounding a phenomenon should not be ignored as they provide a '*conditional/consequential matrix*' as a tool for researchers to track the connectivity between conditions, subsequent actions/interactions and consequences. I would agree

that considering external factors may be helpful to contextualise the emergent theory and its potential for practical application. However, by bringing external influencing factors into play where the participants have not previously identified them is to stifle theoretical sensitivity by *'forcing the data into pre-defined categories for which there may be no evidence'* (Glaser; cited by Goulding, 2002:88). Where macro and micro conditions are sought out and examined I would see this at best as an extension of the emergent theory relating to the original phenomenon and not a part of the originating theory. Furthermore I would advocate that each influencing factor should be subjected to the same rigorous exploration following grounded theory principles on its own merit so that new theory can sit alongside the original theory rather than theory being entangled with supposition that did not emerge from the data. I have followed this principle in my analysis of the data in this research and have not engaged in using the conditional/consequential matrix for these reasons.

Although grounded theory analysis is inductive in nature, the creation of theory takes place through a process of coding. Coding is the conceptualisation of data by the constant comparison of incident with incident, and incident with concept, in order to develop categories and their properties (Glaser; cited by Goulding: 2002:77). The coding process involves a *'fracturing'* of the data that is then conceptually grouped into codes which explains what the data is saying (Glaser 1978:55). In practice, this involves *'breaking down interviews, observations and other forms of appropriate data in distinct units of meaning which are labelled to generate concepts. They are then re-evaluated for their interrelationships and through a series of analytical steps are gradually subsumed into higher order categories, or one underlying core category, which suggests an emergent theory'* (Goulding, 2002:74). Coding begins with a process of open coding from which core variables (variables which occur consistently in the data) are identified. Selective Coding follows which concentrates on issues that are central to the emerging theory. When no new patterns or concepts are emerging saturation has been achieved. In the early stages of analysis the coding will be broad and lack focus however through the various levels of coding a sharper focus on the core categories will emerge. (Goulding, 2002:76). Rennie, (cited by Glaser, 1998:39) found that *'the works of Strauss and Corbin have a resounding edge over Glaser's monographs, according to the citations in literature. The appeal of the Strauss and Corbin version probably comes from its promise of simplicity, procedural structure and verifiability'.* Having sought clear guidance on the practice of grounded theory in the works of Glaser (1978, 1987, 1990, 1998) I am apt to agree with Rennie's conclusion and so turn to Strauss and Corbin (1998:121-161) for procedural technique. They propose that in order to begin the process of coding the researcher should undertake

microanalysis of the data to generate initial categories including their properties and dimensions. The data is analysed at varying levels in order to build the theory, thus:

Open coding supports the fluid process of conceptualising, grouping similar items and giving those items (categories) a name by reducing large quantities of data into something more manageable. This process acts as the foundation to theory building. Tasks within this stage of the process include:

1) Discovering concepts
2) Labelling phenomena
3) Conceptualising (the name may be taken from the words of the respondents)

In **axial coding** the aim is to systematically develop and relate categories derived from the process of open coding, (Strauss and Corbin, 1998:142), forming the basis for the construction of theory (Goulding, 2002:78). Axial coding tasks include:

1) Laying out the properties of a category and their dimension
2) Identifying the variety of conditions, actions/interactions and consequences associated with the phenomenon
3) Relating a category to its subcategories through statements denoting how they are related to each other
4) Looking for cues in the data that denote how major categories might relate to each other

Selective coding refines the theory through a process of integrating and refining categories.

1) The first step in integration is to organise categories around central concepts. Various techniques can be used to facilitate the integration process such as telling or writing a storyline (for example my presentations of the developing research at conferences and staff development sessions); using diagrams and sorting memos.
2) Having outlined the *'theoretical scheme'* progress can be made towards refining the theory by either removing excess categories or developing poorly developed categories (through theoretical sampling).
3) Validation of the theory by presenting it to participants for their responses. At this stage the main concepts should still be recognisable to the participants although each participant may not agree wholly with all aspects.

Although validation is shown here as a final stage it is important to note that '*In social research generating theory goes hand in hand with verifying it; but many sociologists have diverted from this truism in their zeal to test either existing theories or a theory that they have barely started to generate*' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967:2). To this end it is worth noting that for the purposes of this study there was a perpetual cycle of seeking data, analysing and verifying until theoretical saturation was reached. During this process memos were constantly recorded. Memos are a consistent core activity in grounded theory, the purpose of which is to allow the researcher to write freely and take chances with ideas. In the initial stages memoing does not need to ensure 'fit' as this comes later through the sorting process (Glaser 1998:83). Memos are vital to the development of 'good ideas' (Glaser; cited by Goulding, 2002:56) as they provide a bank of ideas that can be revisited in order to map out the emerging theory (Goulding,

2002:75) that supports the sorting process and development of the 'theoretical scheme'. An example of memoing can be seen in Chapter 8 where the metamorphosis of the evolving theory is illustrated.

4.3 Undertaking the Literature Review

Rather than providing a chapter on the literature relating to this study you will find relevant literature discussed in each chapter so that it can be discussed alongside the theory being created. Although the literature review can normally be situated in the introduction, as a separate section or at the end of the thesis, the inductive nature of grounded theory means that the literature review is more likely to appear towards the end of the research '*providing a benchmark against which the results can be compared*' (Creswell; cited by Gray, 2004:54-55). The reason for this is to mirror the point at which the review occurs in the research process. Any influence of the literature on the data in this study was minimised by undertaking the literature review once the process of grounded theory had allowed themes to emerge and questions to come to the fore. This follows the principle that the grounded theory researcher will have a competent level of knowledge about the area of inquiry and will not refer to a body of literature at the onset of the study (Gray, 2004:330) as '*Literature can hinder creativity if it is allowed to stand between the researcher and the data*' (Strauss and Corbin,1998:53). Glaser (1998:67) is also strict in his directive for grounded theory researchers not to undertake a literature review in the substantive or related areas of the research until the sorting and writing up stages are reached, at which point the literature search should be '*woven into the theory*'.

The literature review was undertaken using a key word search based on the themes emerging from the data. For example where discussion with respondents had raised issues in relation to the personal tutor relationship the string of words personal + tutor + relationship was used and also personal + tutor + student to find related literature. As themes emerged a literature review file relating to each core category was created and notes made, an example of which can be seen in Appendix 6. Details recorded included page number, whether the reference was a direct quote or a précis of my own understanding. Comments occurring to me at the time regarding links to specific issues or questions to be pursued were also recorded, contributing to the process of memoing (see p62). As well as noting the relevant content from the article or book I followed up the references to identify further related materials.

4.4 Summary

Strauss and Corbin (1998:xi) and Glaser (1999) refer to the flexible nature of grounded theory as a method. There are some differences in grounded theory technique between the originators Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss and where such differences do occur I have chosen to follow the most appropriate method that fits best with the nature of this study, holding to the notion that grounded theory is *'experiential in the nature of doing it'* (Glaser, 1998:102). The grounded theory method is *'cyclical and multi-levelled'* (Glaser, 1978:22) with data collection and analysis working simultaneously. Data collection was based on the premise that *'All is data'* (Glaser, 1978:36) which allowed freedom in deciding what was to be collected and how it was to be obtained. To this end a multi-method approach (Morgan, 1997:2) was undertaken which strengthens the research by balancing out the strengths and weaknesses of each method employed (Gray, 2004:33). The methods of data collection and some stages of the analysis were designed to create accessible methods of communication for the participants and an informal approach to creating shared meaning. Both questionnaires and focus groups were used. The focus group activities included:

- Group discussion
- Visual exploration
- Mind Mapping using Logo Visual Technology
- Personal Stories

The creation of theory occurs through a process of coding and constant comparison (Glaser; cited by Goulding, 2002:77). Rennie (cited by Glaser, 1998:39) found that Strauss and Corbin's version of grounded theory draws its popularity from the simplicity in which the process is described in contrast to the often complex monographs presented by Glaser. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998:121-161) the grounded theory process begins with 'Open' coding to initially sort the data and identify categories, followed by 'Axial' coding when themes emerge and finally 'Selective' coding to refine the theoretical scheme.

The process of coding described by Strauss and Corbin (1998:121-161) largely mirrors the building of theory as suggested by Glaser however Glaser (1998:3) insists that *'being honest and true to the data is paramount'* as it is the basis for theoretical sensitivity, an area on which Glaser and Strauss differ. Strauss and Corbin (1998:182) claim that macro and micro conditions should be brought into play, using their conditional/consequential matrix as a tool for analysing these conditions. However, Glaser (cited by Goulding, 2002:88) condemns this approach suggesting that this is *'forcing the data'.* I have chosen not to engage in this analysis, preferring to work only with what the data reveals as suggested by Glaser (1998:3). This is not to say that factors influencing the research topic should be ignored (see pp60-61). The

researcher's experience in the field of study is as valuable in understanding and making sense of the data as the participants' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003:52).

Whilst grappling to simplify the concept of coding in my own mind I found myself comparing it with doing a large jigsaw puzzle. Each small piece of data has some contribution to the picture as a whole but its purpose cannot always been seen at first glance. To assist in making progress small pieces that make up the corners are sought out as they are more easily identifiable followed by the identification of related pieces to continue along each side, making some sense of the size of the picture at least. This can be related to the process of open coding. Then, taking one piece at a time we test out its fit against the others. For some, our hand appears to intuitively move to where it fits. For others, our hand hovers over the puzzle unsure where to make its move before setting the piece to one side with others that, for the moment, do not appear to belong. This reflects the process of constant comparison. The pieces that do not immediately fit are not discarded they are merely left to rest until at some point we revisit them as the puzzle becomes clearer and the relationship of the unplaced pieces shows itself. In committing these to memory to be returned to later we are replicating the process of creating memos. This is how a grounded theory researcher sorts and analyses the data. Making sense of small pieces, comparing for fit and relationship until the fragments of information finally come together to make the bigger picture. Unlike a standard jigsaw puzzle however, the final picture in grounded theory is unknown until it emerges from the data. This is how I could encapsulate the process and saw where the need to *'tolerate confusion and regression whilst remaining open, trusting to preconscious processing and to conceptual emergence'* (Glaser, 2004:43) came from in order for the theory to build through an evolving, organic process.

This chapter has provided an overview of the research activities and the rationale to support the methods employed. By doing so you will now be conscious of how and why I proceeded to collect and analyse the empirical data for each theme as I did, which should be helpful when I discuss how the grounded theory has emerged in the following four chapters. I have also justified my approach to reviewing and discussing the relevant literature at the end of each chapter to juxtapose it against my research findings. In short the justification is that grounded theory rules suggests that the researcher should not hinder their creativity before the theory has emerged after which the literature should be *'woven into the theory'* (Glaser, 1998:67). In the next chapter you will see the grounded theory process in action and be able to recognise the research methods we have discussed, so I will now commence reporting on the empirical research findings, starting with the exploration of the nature and purpose of tutorial provision.

Chapter 5: Exploring the Nature and Purpose Of Tutorial Provision

The nature and purpose of tutorial provision was chosen as the first theme for exploration in order to understand the manner of provision before considering the tutoring role within it. This research has recognised that the lack of definition and shared understanding arising from a confusing range of terminology for tutorial provision, contributes to tutors' depleted confidence (see p9). Furthermore, Megahy (contributing to Calvert and Henderson 1998:26-29) proposes that the absence of a working consensus has led to inadequate support for pastoral care in post-compulsory education at a national level. The findings that emerge from the inductive exploration in this chapter will contribute to addressing the lack of definition, by presenting the shared understandings of those best placed to contribute to the debate, namely the students who are in receipt of tutorial provision and the tutors responsible for providing it.

In addition to the difficulties in articulating the nature and purpose of tutorial currently, and as the personalisation agenda progresses, tutorial is becoming the focus for developing what the DfES refers to as 'soft skills' (see p22) and for responding to the holistic learning needs of each student (see p22). This means that the tutoring community is attempting to manage the expansion of a provision that currently is not fully understood, therefore the changing nature of tutorial brings even greater uncertainty for the management and delivery of this provision. Add to this the requirement to engage more than ever in listening to the 'Learner Voice' (see p25) and responding to their demands as 'consumers', the need to investigate and clarify the purpose of this provision identified by Bramley (1977), Lang (1985), Earwaker (1992), Best (1995), Calvert and Henderson (1998) and Megahy (1998) is gathering pace.

In order to contribute to this dialogue in light of today's student expectations and tutors' current practice and understandings, this chapter reports on the inductive exploration of their perceptions of the nature and purpose of tutorial provision. In the previous chapter we established that in grounded theory *'all is data'* (see p49), justifying the use of both quantitative and qualitative data gathered for this aspect of the inquiry. The quantitative data gives an overview of the engagement in and perceived usefulness of tutorial provision at the time of the inquiry, and also ascertains the level of student satisfaction with tutorial within the institution at that time. The qualitative data explores perceptions and understandings of tutorial provision from which the grounded theory will emerge.

The students and tutors perceptions are presented separately to allow any differences between the two groups to emerge. It is also worth a reminder here that as this research was undertaken in two separate institutions (see p46) there was also an

opportunity to comment on any differences in perceptions emerging between the Further Education and Higher Education student cohorts. The findings from students' perceptions are reported in two sections, those from Higher Education students and those from Further Education students. Group tutorial and individual tutorial are also discussed separately as it has emerged that the participants identify with these as two distinct activities. The data will be presented to reflect the sequence of research events for this theme, beginning with the findings from the Higher Education students' exploration.

5.1 Students' Perceptions of Tutorial Provision in Higher Education.

To begin the data gathering in relation to Higher Education students' perceptions of tutorial provision a questionnaire was employed to capture initial responses and identify willing participants to take part in a forthcoming focus group activity. In order to reflect the pattern of inquiry I will discuss the findings from questionnaire before moving to consider what transpired during the subsequent focus group meetings.

<u>Findings from the Higher Education student questionnaire</u>

This questionnaire *(Appendix 1)* was directed at Higher Education students who were at the time studying at the first institution (see p46). The questionnaire was completed by 67 respondents (36% male, 61% female, 3% not known) who matriculated onto their course of study via a range of academic or vocational entry qualifications. The respondents' pattern of attendance for group tutorial showed that 71.6% do attend and 28.4% do not attend. The reasons given for not attending are shown in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6: Higher Education Students Reasons for Not Attending Group Tutorial
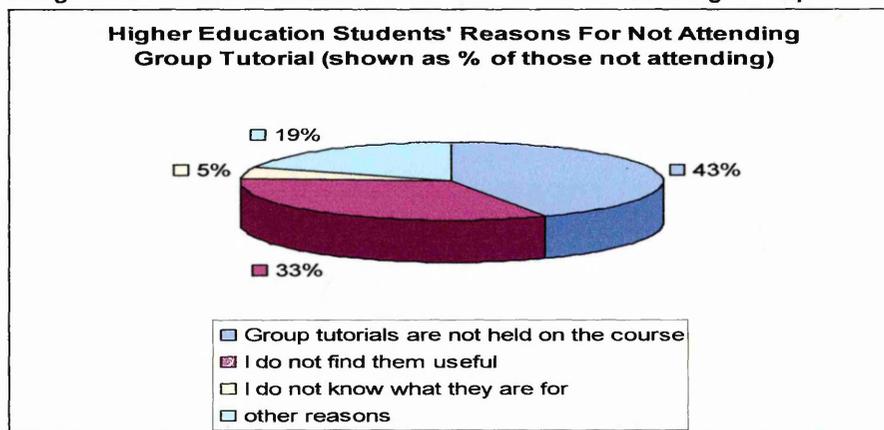
It was interesting to note that 43% of students responding believed that their course did not hold group tutorial. Group tutorial sessions were (I no longer work at this institution so cannot comment on current practice) integrated into all courses for full-time programmes of study and as 92.5% of respondents were undertaking full-time courses this perception led me to consider why this number of students appeared to be unaware of their group tutorial provision. Further inquiries found that where students

believed group tutorial was not held on their course this was due to one or more of the following:

- poor dissemination of information relating to when and where group tutorial classes were taking place
- some courses not providing the tutorial entitlement
- the tutorial classes being used for other activities such as time to work on assignments and 'catch up' time for other subjects that the students may be struggling with for example maths on an engineering course.

For those students attending some or all of their group tutorials the perceived effect on their study experience was perceived by 67% to be generally positive, by 2% to be generally negative. A further 2% of respondents did not answer this question. These findings indicate that it would be purposeful to explore what students do want from this provision in order to make it of value to them, particularly in light of the level of attendance standing at only 71.6%.

Question 28 asks respondents to identify what they felt the main functions of group tutorial are, to ascertain the perceived purpose. The list of options was generated from previous students' comments made during course evaluations. The number of answers allowed for this question was not limited and the following pattern of responses occurred.

Figure 7: Higher Education Students' Perceptions of Group Tutorial

Higher Education Students' Perceptions of the Purpose of Group Tutorial (shown as % of all responses)

- □ Opportunity to discuss aspects of the course as a group
- ▨ Academic support
- □ To receive information about college activities
- □ To develop new academic skills
- ■ To develop new personal skills
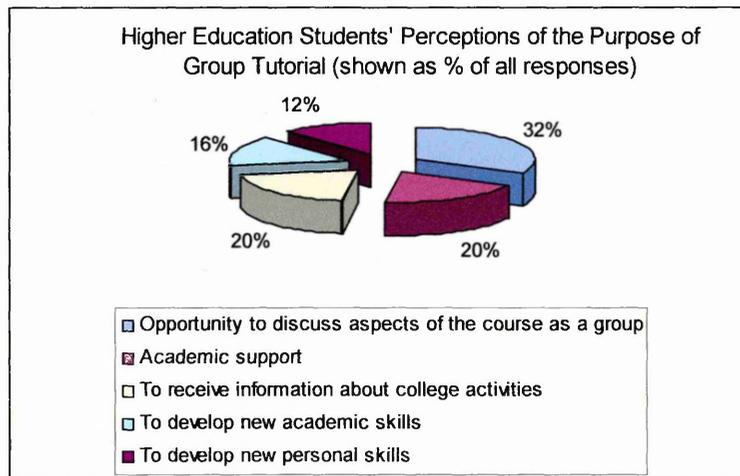
The most favoured response was to be able to discuss the course as a group. Space on the questionnaire was also available for additional comments to be made where it was found that the students wanted to be able to raise grievances and sort out problems. In response to question 24 *'If you could change one thing about group tutorial what might it be?'* the responses included a request for more information to be given about college activities, more structure to the tutorial sessions and to cover general aspects of career development such as career planning, interview skills and psychometric testing. Less than half (38.8%) of the respondents identified academic support as a key purpose of group tutorial however 82% reported that they discuss

academic support as part of their individual reviews. I also noted that 34% of respondents felt they were unprepared for the demands of their course in relation to study skills. The main areas of concern for study skills are shown in Figure 8 below.

Figure 8: Higher Education Students' Study Skills Concerns
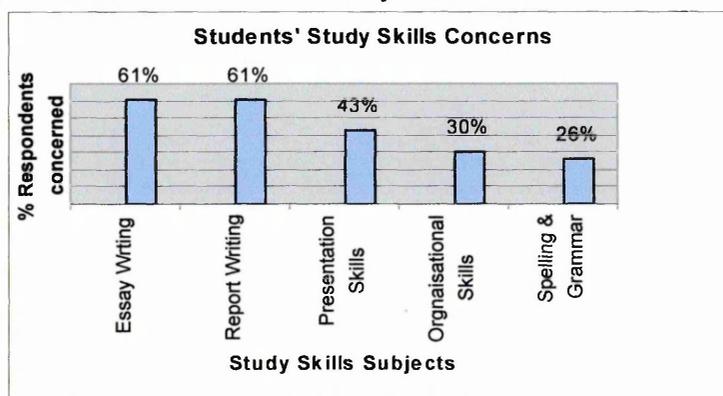
In addition to identifying the range of study skills concerns, I have also compared them against the students' matriculation qualifications (Appendix 7). The chart indicates that those students matriculating with non-traditional qualifications i.e. students in the widening participation cohort shown as 'other' on the chart, are most likely to experience anxiety about their levels of study skills. These findings imply a need to provide a range of academic support to address study skills concerns for individual students and are corroborated by JM Consulting (in HEFCE 2006:7) who suggest a range of study skills initiatives were found to be highly effective in supporting widening participation (see p19).

I also sought to ascertain what aspects of group tutorial students' value by posing the question *'What is the best aspect of Group Tutorial?'* The responses were listed, thereby breaking down the data into distinct units of meaning (see p61) and saved in rich text format before transferring them into the LVT software package for analysis (Appendix 8). By following the coding process, outlined in Chapter 4 of this thesis, relationship between the comments were sought, clusters created and subsequently labelled (Appendix 9). Theoretical sensitivity (see p42) was applied to this process whilst seeking out links between categories and making sense of the fractured data, which enabled the following themes and descriptions to emerge:

- **Group bonding and socialising**: An opportunity to get to know each other, learn to appreciate diversity and different points of view, support for each other in realising they have shared concerns.
- **Problem solving**: An opportunity to discuss problems as a group, supporting each other to raise issues connected with college or individual group members.
- **Opportunity for discussion**: To be able to discuss how they feel about the course, assignment work and group tasks.
- **Receiving information**: Being informed of college services and activities and a forum in which to ask questions
- **Career planning**: Time to receive help and consider career planning and preparation for progression.

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These themes suggest that the students view group tutorial as an opportunity to achieve a sense of belonging, a time when they are kept informed of course or college activities, a forum for sharing and solving problems and looking to the future. There is a sense that social integration plays an important part during group tutorial sessions, as communication, discussion and learning about others' views and experiences are implicit in the nature of these themes arising from the comments received.

Responses relating to individual tutorial

In relation to individual tutorial, I found from the questionnaire responses that many of the Higher Education students do not attend all their individual tutorial meetings but the most do attend some if not all. However, of those students attending the meetings, the majority found them to be a positive part of their study experience. The chart below demonstrates the pattern of attendance at individual tutorial sessions

Figure 9: Higher Education Students' Pattern of Attendance for Individual Tutorial
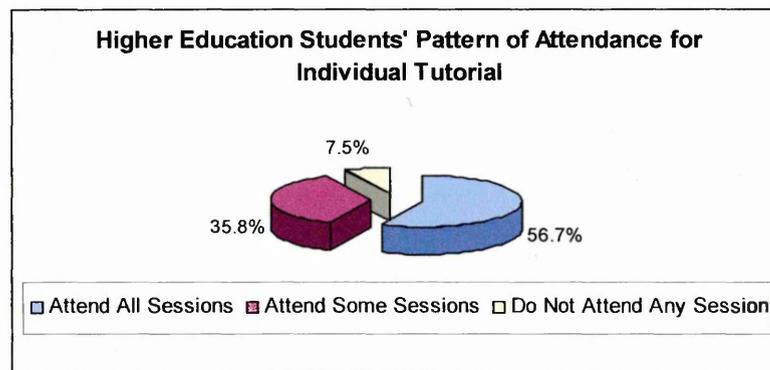
In addition to patterns of attendance it was found that, of those students who do attend their individual tutorial, the perceptions in relation to the effect it had on their studies was that 75.8% found it to have a generally positive effect and 24.2% perceived it to have no apparent effect.

The questionnaire also asked students to consider what they believed the purpose of individual tutorial to be. The number of responses allowed for this question was not limited and it was found that planning for self-improvement was perceived to be one of the main functions of individual tutorial by 63% of respondents. The term self-improvement was explored in the subsequent focus group meeting to ascertain what the students believed this term to mean. Pastoral care and careers guidance were also identified as key aspects of individual tutorial (both rated as a key activity by 49% of respondents). Following the same pattern of questioning for individual tutorial as for the group tutorial questions, the respondents were asked to identify what aspect of individual tutorial, if any, they would like to change. The responses showed that some students would like more than the three individual tutorial meetings per year that they were receiving at the time. Others expressed the opinion that they had no need of

individual tutorial and would prefer them not to be mandatory. Comments were also made regarding the timing of individual tutorials and suggestions were made for a drop in system to be put in place rather than timetabled sessions in order to address their needs on demand. Some issues relating the earlier *'Attitudinal Aspects'* arising out of the group tutorial analysis emerge again here, reiterating their importance to the students. Comments such as *'doesn't feel person specific, tutor doesn't seem to differentiate between us'* suggests that being seen as an individual 'person' rather than one of a homogenous group labelled 'student' is desired.

In order to ascertain what the students most value during individual tutorial the questionnaire asked *'What is the best aspect of Personal Tutorial?'* The process for analysing this data was the same as for the group tutorial comments. The LVT software was used to record and group the comments to allow themes to emerge (Appendix 10). This process resulted in the following themes and their descriptions:

- **Personal support**: Includes an opportunity to have confidential discussion about welfare and other personal issues that may negatively affect learners' progress and/or achievement and explore strategies for dealing with issues. It is also seen as an opportunity for learners to put their own views across and receive one-to-one feedback.
- **Academic support**: This includes study skills, managing workload, work experience and career development. The opportunity to discuss assignments and review personal development and academic progress.
- **Attitudinal Aspects:** This third aspect relates to the accessibility and attitude of the tutor and the physical environment in which individual tutorial takes place.

The research suggests here that there are two areas of focus for individual tutorial, personal support and academic support. There were also some comments that could not be necessarily separated into these two categories such as *'Get to know your weaknesses and abilities'* which could be referring to either personal or academic development suggesting that the two are intrinsically connected. It was also interesting to note that *'attitudinal aspects'* appeared as an unexpected theme that emerged from data, suggesting that the tutor's attitude and style of interaction were significant to individual tutorial in some way. As grounded theory allows the research to lead the way, (see p41) I pursued the emergence of tutor's attitude and style of interaction as an additional theme to be explored. This is discussed in Chapter 7.

Findings from the student focus group meeting

I convened this first focus group meeting with Higher Education students to explore further questions arising from the questionnaire analysis relating to the nature and purpose of tutorial provision. I began the meeting by explaining the purpose of the research and my intention to use the data to inform tutorial development within the institution. I also sought the participants' permission to use their quotes and responses in this thesis on the understanding that they would remain anonymous. Following this

introduction, I gave a brief verbal overview of the questionnaire findings in order to initiate discussion. What follows is a summary of the focus group questions and responses:

1. 63% of respondents saw the purpose of personal tutorial to be planning for self-development – what do students perceive self-development to be?

The response to this began with a focus on academic review and how students could be supported to develop various skills during the course of study. As the discussion continued however the focus broadened to encompass the personal aspects of students' development for example confidence building and assertiveness. One student related his view of self-development in college to that of professional development experienced in the work place saying *"Self-development is looking at where we are now, where we want to be, try to cast a bit wider so that it's not college based – it's more the life after if you like"*.

2. What is the purpose of tutorial?

Here the group proposed that tutorial should be about *"Whatever is in the students' interest"* and that both the tutor and student should be able to take their own agenda to tutorial meetings for discussion thereby implying that group tutorial should be a negotiated activity. The group suggested that the purpose of group and individual tutorial should be clarified as there are times when the meetings seem to have little purpose or structure. The group described their perception of group tutorial as being about sharing information, being able to discuss issues/complaints and engaging in group learning. The participants described group learning as generic to include study skills but also preparation for independent living such as financial management, health and safety in the home etc.

3. Do students' needs in personal tutorial differ depending on the level and/or year of study?

The group were very clear in their opinion that there are significant differences in their needs as they progress through their course of study. They proposed that in the first year their needs are centred on settling into college, understanding the course they are enrolled to and focussing on study skills that will support their learning. As they progress to the second year they suggest more focus on career planning and preparation for progression.

4. 28% of respondents say they do not attend group tutorial whereas only 7% of respondents say they do not attend individual tutorial. Why do students choose not to attend tutorial?

The purpose of asking this question was to explore what was perceived to be useful/not useful about the tutorial provision at that time. Some students expressed the opinion that the time allocated to group tutorial could be *'better spent'* working on

assignments as they did not feel a clear purpose was given to the sessions. It is possible that this perceived lack of purpose indicates poor lesson planning or a limited programme of activity that acts as a disincentive. During discussions about individual tutorial, there was a great deal of focus on the tutor/student relationship and its effect on the learning experience. Based on the emergence of the tutoring relationship the participants agreed to meet with me for a second time to continue this discussion. The findings from the second focus group meeting are discussed under the relevant theme in Chapter 6, where the feelings and emotions at play within the tutoring relationship are explored.

This concludes the findings from the Higher Education students' perceptions of the nature and purpose of tutorial provision. The next phase for this particular element of the research was to explore the same theme in the second institution but this time the participants were Further Education students.

5.2   Students' Perceptions of Tutorial Provision in Further Education

The findings presented in this section are drawn from the empirical research activities undertaken in the second institution (see p46). Although the inquiry here was not intended to be restricted to Further Education students, it was found that Higher Education students did not take part in the focus group meeting or respond to the questionnaire. This being the case, it was pertinent to present the findings in this section as Further Education students' perceptions. This would allow me to compare these findings with the findings from the Higher Education students and identify any variations occurring that might suggest new themes to be explored. As this phase of the research began with a focus group meeting to explore the purpose of tutorial provision, I will begin with these findings.

<u>Findings Of The Student Focus Group Meeting</u>

In order to call together a group of participants the personal tutors were requested to invite students to participate in the focus group meeting to discuss their perceptions of tutorial provision. At the meeting held on 6th April 2005 a total of 6 students attended. The focus group explored the purpose of tutorial provision by asking a) what are the best aspects of group tutorial? And b) what are the best aspects of individual tutorial?

I invited the participants to write down their thoughts before sharing them with the rest of the group so that they captured their own personal views before being influenced by others. The individual comments were collected in at the end of the session to be included in the data gathered during the meeting. As the discussion progressed, the participants' thoughts and ideas were recorded on a flipchart, using the respondents' own words and phrases in order to closely reflect their perceptions. This information

was later analysed against themes that had previously emerged during the analysis of data gathered in the first institution so that any thoughts or comments that did not fit the original themes would highlight new ones. This process of analysis reflects the *'constant comparative analysis'* (Glaser; cited by Goulding, 2002:68) required to achieve a grounded theory (see p49). The outcome of this comparative analysis in the following two tables shows the participants' responses to each question set against the corresponding themes.

Figure 10: Further Education Students' Perceptions of Group Tutorial Compared With Initial Themes

Question: What is the best thing about Group Tutorial?	
Responses:	Corresponding Themes
Sorting out or sharing problems with the whole class. This includes everyone so everyone is aware of problems but also we can share the solution and find the good and bad points of the solution.	Opportunity for discussion Problem solving
Best thing about group tutorials is you get to hear every body's views.	Opportunity for discussion
Getting information	Receiving information
Everyone can share their problems and talk about any issues they may have. It is a good way to interact with people	Opportunity for discussion Problem solving Group bonding
Finding out others problems and being able to work in a group to achieve sorting out the problems. Helps us to come together as a group.	Opportunity for discussion Problem solving Group bonding
Best thing is that you can discuss other peoples problems and get group issues sorted e.g. if more than one person is struggling with for example CVs.	Opportunity for discussion Problem solving Career Planning
Getting everyone together at once, having friends there to discuss with.	Group bonding Opportunity for discussion

Figure 11: Further Education Students' Perceptions of Individual Tutorial Compared With Initial Themes

Question: What is the best thing about Individual Tutorial?	
Responses:	Corresponding Themes
The personal level of interaction with your tutor. There's no superior person it's a talk about you personally and in college.	Attitudinal Aspects
Not having to worry about problems that you don't want to discuss in a group. To a tutor who can help and is approachable.	Attitudinal Aspects Personal Support
Best thing about individual tutorial some students that are shy or do not have confidence can easily speak to the tutors about their problems about their course.	Attitudinal Aspects Academic Support
More important, tutors get to understand you better and discuss anything with one person, one to one.	Attitudinal Aspects Personal Support Engaging with the tutor
Best thing about individual is that you can discuss personal problems and goals without being interrupted and express your personal opinions on particular subjects.	Personal Support Attitudinal Aspects Environment
It is a more personal meeting and you can talk about personal problems.	Personal Support Attitudinal Aspects

I deduced from this exercise that for group tutorial, most comments sat comfortably within the initial themes emerging from the Higher Education students' exploration. However, in relation to individual tutorial the Further Education students implied a desired level of engagement with the tutor with the comment *'Tutors get to understand you better'.* A comment about the meeting being *'uninterrupted'* suggested that it is important that the meeting is private and not disturbed.

In addition, the participants were also invited to comment on what they might change about the provision if the opportunity arose. Their specific responses in relation to group tutorial were:

- The time of it, because it's slap bang in the middle of a Friday and we don't have any other lessons on a Friday.
- Have a lesson/lessons on problems that may arise in the future i.e. money, stress, etc.
- Happy with tutorials. Just think we should have individual tutorials.
- Make the tutorial an important part of the course, need to put everyone in a group working together.
- I would make it so the whole group is involved for example splitting the group further and discuss in a smaller group and then express it to the remaining group.
- I would change the group tutorial, by focussing on future plans, e.g. going to university etc. and making them longer.

These suggested changes were generally related to the timing of group tutorial sessions in the context of their overall timetable. The responses also suggest that group tutorial is valuable, particularly where the whole group is working together on subjects individuals feel are relevant to their own learning agenda and where they are given an opportunity to hold discussions in smaller groups before feeding back to the group as a whole. Adequate time for progression planning was also highlighted with suggestions that these sessions should be made longer. It is also suggested that students are not happy attending college for a day where tutorial is the only session taking place.

The students were also asked about individual tutorial and the following responses were received:

- More individual tutorial time throughout the week.
- Done in a relaxed way no stress maybe drinks.
- Individual just basically have more.
- I would say the individual meeting should be at least once a month.

The main area of improvement for individual tutorial was for more meetings to be provided and it was suggested that weekly or monthly intervals would be preferable. The comments suggested that the students value the opportunity for one-to-one discussion in a relaxed environment with an approachable tutor who is willing to listen and able to support them, particularly when they are facing difficulties.

I had found an indication of new themes emerging from this cohort. These were in relation to individual tutorials such as engaging with the tutor and comments on the environment in which individual tutorial takes place. In light of this I decided that a further questionnaire, circulated to reach a wider audience within the second institution would be useful to validate the findings to date and to explore whether further themes were yet to emerge. I also undertook to analyse the data arising from this questionnaire using the LVT software as with the first questionnaire, so that this data could speak for itself (see p40) before comparing these emergent themes with those from the initial exploration. The continuous revisiting of this theme using a different mode of inquiry was to seek validation of the findings and to confirm when theoretical saturation had been achieved.

Findings From The Student Questionnaire

I designed the Further Education student questionnaire (Appendix 2) to create a further layer of data that would contribute to the perpetual cycle of seeking, analysing and verifying data until theoretical saturation is achieved (see p42). The questions mirrored a number of key questions from the first questionnaire, focussing on student perceptions of the purpose of provision. Taking account of reflections on the previous questionnaire design resulted in a shorter questionnaire that focussed on patterns of attendance, reasons for not attending and open questions relating to the purpose and content of tutorial provision. The questionnaire was completed by 73 respondents, comprising of 33% Male, 47% female and 20% not known. The respondents' mode of attendance was 93% full-time, 3% part-time and 4% provided no data. Of the 73 respondents 68% were 1st year students, 18% were second year students and 11% were third year students, 3% provided no data in relation to year of study. The responses ascertained that the respondents' pattern of attendance for group tutorial was that 93% do attend and 7% do not attend.

The attendance for this group of students shows a markedly higher proportion than the proportion of Higher Education students attending. This could be reflecting the influence of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) paid to Further Education students if they achieve 100% attendance for all timetabled classes each week. It may also suggest that the students value group tutorial and find them useful. The respondents were asked for their reasons for attending however, 30.2% of all respondents did not comment. The remaining 69.8% responded as shown below.

Figure 12: Further Education Students Reasons for Attending Group Tutorial

Further Education Students' Reasons for Attending Group Tutorial (shown as % of those attending)

38% — 27% — 10% — 10% — 7% — 2% 2% 2% 2%

- ☐ It is compulsory
- ☒ It helps
- ☐ To talk about student council
- ☐ I enjoy them
- ■ Education Maintenance Allowance
- ☐ I want to learn more
- ▣ It's nice to talk about what other people have done
- ☐ I want to see if I have achieved all my targets
- ■ They won't know your needs
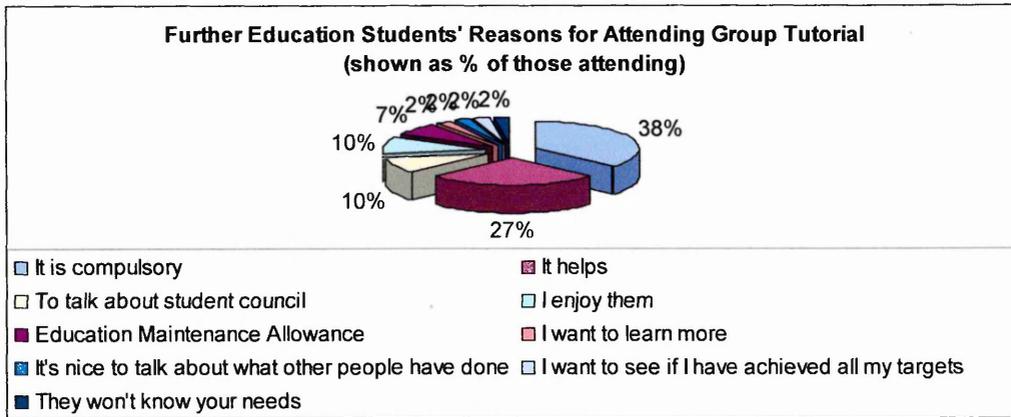
It appears that the greatest motivating factor for attending group tutorial for these Further Education students is compliance (however the response about it being compulsory may also be attributable to receiving EMA). There is also an indication that the respondents believe that group tutorials help with their course although it should be recognised that this is indicated by a relatively small number (5.5%) of respondents overall. The findings also suggest that the respondents value the opportunity to voice their opinion on college matters through the Student Consultative Committee. The Student Consultative Committee is a forum that contributes to the learner voice (see p22) by enabling students to comment on their learning experience and where students are able to raise issues regarding aspects of student life at the college, ranging from requests for additional college facilities to complaints about the price of chips in the refectory. When asked directly if group tutorial helped with their studies the responses were as shown below.

Figure 13: Further Education Students' Perceptions of the Effect of Group Tutorial

Further Eudcation Students' Perceptions of Group Tutorial

- No response — 4%
- They do not make a difference either way — 27%
- No they do not help — 7%
- Yes they do help — 62%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70%
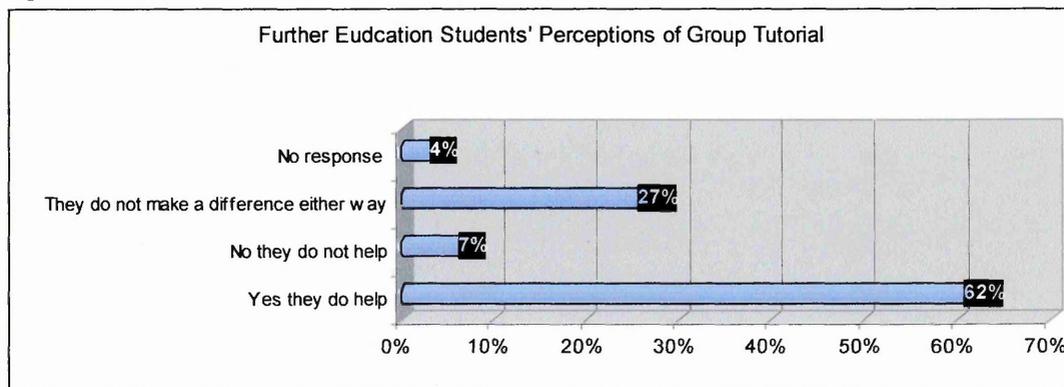
In order to understand what aspects the students found particularly useful from group tutorial the respondents were asked the question '*What are the best aspects of group tutorial?*' The same process of analysis used for the first set of questionnaire data (see p69) was employed here, replicating the coding process by comparing data like with like and allowing patterns and themes to emerge. The themes emerging in this instance (Appendix 11) are summarised below.

- **Group bonding and socialising:** The opportunity to meet with other students and get to know them on an individual basis. This was expressed as a social, relaxed activity.
- **Classroom environment:** This reflected the desire for group tutorial to be different from other academic or vocational classes by having the opportunity for the sessions to be '*more laid back*' and to be able to have fun.
- **Engaging with the tutor:** This relates to tutors having time to engage on an less formal basis than would be expected in academic or vocational classes.
- **Learning and development:** This area refers to an enjoyment of learning as an activity and learning new skills in order to prepare for the future and for independent living.
- **Group discussion and problem solving:** Focuses on teamwork and sharing ideas for problem solving, talking things over as a group and gaining support from knowing how others feel.
- **Receiving information:** This includes information about college-wide student forums, activities and services.
- **Discussing the course and progression:** This refers to discussion around course content and objectives, difficulties with particular subject areas and a focus on progression after the course such as applying to enter Higher Education.

Perceptions of individual tutorial were also considered as part of the questionnaire and analysed using the LVT software. The data originating from the questionnaire suggested that 93% of respondents attend their individual tutorial and 90% said it helps them on their course. The students were asked to comment on what they believe the best aspects of Individual Tutorial to be. Themes emerging from the responses to this question (Appendix 12) are summarised below.

- **Personal aspects and problem solving:** This relates to the opportunity for a personal discussion that may include personal, social, work and welfare issues. It is also seen as an opportunity to 'clear the air' and 'speak what is on your mind'.
- **Planning and monitoring academic progress:** This is about setting and monitoring targets, to discuss progress and areas for improvement and also to gain some re-assurance or positive feedback.
- **Attitudinal and environmental aspects:** The desire for having to have a private one-to-one discussion with their tutor without interruption was expressed. Some tutor qualities namely 'good' listening, eye contact, willingness to help also emerged.
- **Receiving advice and support:** The important aspects to receiving advice and support are the willingness for the tutor to help all they can and for that help to be timely.
- **Preparing for progression:** Simply expressed as preparing to leave college and to discuss career options.
- **Academic support:** This included discussion about assignments and individual subjects, understanding the course, problems with particular lessons. It also includes receiving help with college work.
- **Motivation:** Help in being motivated to work and being kept 'on track'.

When asked what areas for improvement might exist in individual tutorial the same aspects suggested by the Higher Education students emerged here, relating to the timing of the sessions and the length of time allowed, with some suggestion that more time was needed.

By this stage of the research I had gathered and analysed the data, then through the process of open coding, themes had emerged as described. I sought relationships between the categories within each set of data and working typologies subsequently written as seen above. The final stage in this process, for the students' perceptions of tutorial provision, was to refine these typologies through a process of selective coding in order to generate a theoretical scheme (see p62). To do this, the findings from each cohort (Further Education and Higher Education students) are compared below. The group tutorial and individual tutorial are considered separately. The two tables below demonstrate at a glance, apparent differences between Further Education and Higher Education students' perceived purpose of tutorial provision.

Figure 14: Comparison of Further and Higher Education Group Tutorial Themes

Higher Education Group Tutorial	Further Education Group Tutorial
Problem solving	Group discussion and problem solving
Opportunity for discussion	Discussing the course and progression
Group bonding	Group bonding and socialising
Receiving information	Receiving information
Career planning	Learning and development
	Classroom environment
	Engaging with the tutor

Other than the Further Education students making reference to the classroom environment being more relaxed and enjoyable than other academic or vocational lessons there were no other distinct differences in the themes for group tutorial.

Figure 15: Comparison of Further and Higher Education Individual Tutorial Themes

Higher Education Individual Tutorial	Further Education Individual Tutorial
Personal support	Personal aspects and problem solving
Academic support	Planning and monitoring academic progress
Attitudinal aspects	Attitudinal and environmental aspects
	Receiving advice and support
	Preparing for progression
	Academic support
	Motivation

This table appears to be show significant differences in the emergent themes in relation to the purpose of individual tutorial however further clarification was achieved as the theory was integrated and refined through the selective coding process. I have merged and analysed the responses from the Further and Higher Education students' questionnaires and focus group data to identify whether the categories provided by the two groups suggest shared perceptions when considered in the light of refined categories (Appendix 13). I found that two student cohorts share the same perceptions in relation to the purpose of group tutorial with one exception, the tutorial environment. The Further Education students perceived that one of the positive aspects of group tutorial was related to the classroom environment, proposing that group tutorial is good when it is carried out in a fun and relaxed environment. The themes that best describe

the shared perceptions of Further and Higher Education students in relation to group tutorial are as follows and are listed in no particular order.

- Group bonding and socialising
- Group discussion
- Personal Development
- Problem solving
- Career and progression
- Giving Feedback (Learner Voice)
- Academic Development and related course issues
- Receiving information

The themes that best describe the shared perceptions of Further and Higher Education students in relation to individual tutorial are as follows (Appendix 14), again listed in no particular order.

- Being heard and being valued
- Planning and monitoring academic progression
- Tutor engagement
- Problem solving
- Individual tutorial environment
- Academic and course related support
- Preparation for progression
- Personal development
- Personal support and guidance

In addition to these shared themes, I found that the Further Education students make specific reference to individual tutorial being an activity to motivate them.

If we take the initial themes of Personal, Academic and Attitudinal (Appendix 10) that arose out of the first set of data, they can still be applied to the refined categories listed above.

Personal	Academic	Attitudinal
Problem Solving	Planning and Monitoring Academic Progression	Being Heard and Being Valued
Personal Development	Academic and Course Related Support	Tutor Engagement
Personal Support and Guidance	Preparation for Progression	Individual Tutorial Environment
Motivation	Motivation	Motivation

You will see that 'motivation', the theme identified by the Further Education students, is shown in each column. This is because students can feel that they need to be motivated in relation to either their personal or academic progression and in order to facilitate this it is suggested that tutors need the ability to motivate. The question of what students' expect of the personal tutor is explored in Chapter 7.

By asking the students what is best about group or individual tutorial, the data has drawn out what is important to them and therefore what, in their opinion, is desirable provision. This however is only one side of the story. For, as well as the need to listen to what our students want and need in order to support them in their learning and

development, the tutors responsible for delivering this provision have their own drivers and perceptions of what the purpose of provision is from their own and the institutions perspective. We now go on to explore this aspect.

5.3 Tutors' Perceptions of Tutorial Provision in Post-Compulsory Education

The range of terminology and descriptions attributed to the nature and purpose of tutorial provision (see p8) makes it difficult for many tutors to feel confident in the design and delivery of tutorial curriculum and the pastoral role. It would be fair to say that the additional complexity of working in an institution where you may be expected to provide both group and individual tutorial to Further Education and Higher Education students can create further confusion. I found however that tutors do not appear to differentiate between the types of provision required by each of these groups. Instead, they view the provision in terms of what is required by one homogenous group of 'students'.

The research focussing on tutors' perceptions began with two tutor focus group meetings held in the first institution, one in May 2003 and one in July 2003, to explore the nature and purpose of tutorial. During these meetings, the LVT magnetic boards were used and tutors were asked to consider what they perceived the purpose of tutorial to be and to write each idea on a separate hexagon. The tutors contributed in part to the open coding analysis of their data as they grouped and categorised the findings (see p57). I took photographs of the magnaboards (Appendix 5) at the end of the session as a permanent record of the data. I also entered the data into the LVT software for further analysis. Both sets of data were analysed together (Appendix 15). The themes emerging from this exercise were:

- **Academic Aspects**: Including induction, an overview of progress, assessment guidance and feedback, study skills development, generation of ideas, understanding the course syllabus.
- **Group Bonding**: To develop a cohesive group and enable group discussion
- **Personal Support**: General welfare, confidence building, getting to know and understand the student, develop a student/tutor relationship, to offer personal time for students to talk and discuss issues, to listen to students' anxieties, offer pastoral care act as a sounding board.
- **Personal and Professional Development**: Helping students to clarify their goals, recognise their strengths and weaknesses, develop interpersonal skills and provide advice and guidance on sexual health, drugs, finance etc.
- **Problem Solving**: Support the student in identifying and discussing potential solutions to problems and to present students' ideas and issues on their behalf.
- **Career Planning**: Support the planning and preparation for career development an future employment
- **Receiving Information**: A forum for exchanging course information, understanding procedures and creating awareness of the support services available in college.

- **Organisational objectives:** Reference was made to individual tutorial being an organisational strategy for student retention.
- **Attitudinal aspects:** This referred to the role and skills of the tutor.

I carried out a similar exercise in the second institution on the 29th June 2004. Again I entered the findings into the LVT software and coded them as before (Appendix 16) and the following themes emerged:

- **Personal development and social skills:** This related to supporting students in their personal development relating to social and life skills. It was suggested that group tutorial was about learning but not related to the vocational or academic curriculum
- **Academic achievement and progression:** This aspect was related to the students' vocational, academic and study skills support, i.e. their core curriculum
- **Student-centred approach:** This was partly about tutorial focussing on the student and their needs, ensuring that different styles and levels of learning were accommodated and that a broad range of subjects (other than core curriculum) were covered. It also related to acknowledging and valuing what students bring in terms of their own experiences, skills and knowledge.
- **Holistic Learning:** Here tutors were talking of a co-ordinated approach to supporting students, considering the 'whole picture' including life experiences in order to support the student well. Reference was also made to a balanced curriculum including personal and professional as well as academic and vocational.
- **Guidance and support:** The tutors suggested that this is about being 'more than a teacher'. It was felt that help with student issues occurring outside the college was part of this activity and counselling was also felt to be part of this role.

I then compared these two sets of findings with the previous tutor perceptions to see whether any new themes had arisen.

Figure 16: Comparison of Tutor Focus Group Findings Relating to Tutorial Provision

1st Analysis of tutor perceptions	2nd Analysis of tutor perceptions
Academic Aspects	Academic Achievement and Progression
Personal & Professional Development	Personal Development and Social Skills
Personal Support	Guidance and Support
Career Planning	
Problem Solving	
Group Bonding	
Receiving Information	
Organisational Objectives	
Attitudinal Aspects	Student centred approach Holistic Learning

Although not all the themes emerging from the first set of data were represented in the second set, I found that the themes from the second analysis sat well with those from the first and as no new themes had emerged and I therefore assumed that theoretical saturation had occurred. I also noted that once again the attitudinal theme arose, suggesting that tutors, like students, perceive this to be an essential consideration in the delivery of tutorial provision. This subject is explored further in Chapter 7.

At this stage of the research into the purpose of tutorial provision, although the names given to the emergent themes did not match exactly, by engaging in theoretical

sensitivity to make the 'creative leap' (see p60) towards the evolving grounded theory I deduced a strong sense of connectedness between the various groups' of findings. In order to draw this particular process of theoretical discovery to a close, I merged the findings from the tutors' data in order to refine the typologies through further selective coding. As part of this final act of analysis however, I also considered the potential connectedness between the students' and tutors' perceptions by attempting to merge the categories within the tutors' themes into the students' final theoretical scheme. The results of this activity (Appendix 17) found that the following themes presented themselves as perceptions of the nature and purpose of tutorial shared by tutors and students.

- holistic and personalised learning
- personal development & life skills
- academic development and related course issues
- planning and monitoring academic progress
- career planning and progression
- personal support and welfare
- being heard and being valued
- group bonding and socialising
- receiving information
- problem solving
- individual tutorial environment
- tutor engagement

In addition to the shared student and tutor perceptions, the tutor role was identified as a theme by tutors as they questioned how they were to fulfil the perceived requirements of the provision. In addition, the tutors identified the need for confidentiality for individual tutorial but made no mention of the classroom environment for group tutorial. The Further Education students however voiced their expectations for group tutorial to be a more informal, relaxed and fun environment in comparison to other vocational or academic classes. This list of final themes represents tutorial provision as a whole however it was the various aspects of provision would fall under the auspices of either group or individual tutorial, which will be discussed in the following section.

5.4   Research Findings and Literature Review Discussed

This chapter has explored students' and tutors' perceptions to ascertain what the nature and purpose of tutorial provision in today's post-compulsory education sector would look like, if designed to meet the needs and demands of both users and providers. I have found that the uncertainty regarding the nature and purpose of tutorial provision is not a new concern. Lang (1985:208-209) for example enquired *'Are we simply dealing with a set of techniques and strategies designed to help pupils cope more efficiently with the curricula diet they are currently offered or are we concerned with wider questions, for example, what constitutes an 'educated' person?* If, as this research suggests, tutorial is about a wider educational experience then the debate is

even older. Aristotle (cited by Megahy contributing to Calvert and Henderson, 1998:26) stated *'At present there are differences of opinion as to the proper tasks to be set, for all peoples do not agree as to the things that the young ought to learn'*. This being the case, I do not expect this discussion to provide answers to such an age-old question however, by drawing together current perceptions and relevant literature this research will contribute to moving the tutorial debate forward.

Earwaker (1992:95-100) identifies the vagueness surrounding the purpose of student support policies and a need to clearly articulate what is to be provided, how it is to be provided and by whom. It is interesting to note that he uses the term 'student support' whilst describing what the participants in this study describe as 'tutorial provision'. This in itself contributes to the current vagueness of purpose, as the term 'support' for many would imply an activity that assists in the pursuit of a main objective, and does not acknowledge that tutorial also has its own objectives in relation to personal and social development or indeed life skills and progression planning as this research suggests (see p83). The terminology used to describe tutorial often leads to confusion, as there are very few common definitions. Lago and Shipton (1994:61) for example describe tutorial as a meeting with very small groups with the topic and direction coming from the tutor. Tutoring, according to Lublin (1987:3), is the support of academic development, helping students work through exercise sheets and ensuring that course content is covered. The descriptions outlined here refer to academic development, which does concur in part with what students perceive group tutorial to be for, however it is a narrow view of what both students and tutors agree is a complex provision. This is not to say that Lago and Shipton (1994:61) or Lublin (1987:3) do not acknowledge broader benefits of tutorial. Lublin (1987:3) for example talks of how tutorials can *'powerfully affect the development of attitudes and values in students'* but notes that this is still within the context of academic development. The development of personal skills in this instance is seen as an additional outcome to the tutorial's main purpose rather than it being an integral part of tutorial. Hamblin (1986) uses the term 'pastoral' and 'tutorial' interchangeably throughout his book on pastoral care in schools, describing this area of provision as being concerned with *'respect for the individual and the transmission of values as well as provision of skills'* with the intention of developing autonomous, rational consideration. Calvert and Henderson (1997:141) refer to the whole tutorial provision as pastoral care and suggest that it has *'undergone dramatic changes in the last thirty years and continues to evolve'*. They recognise an emphasis on academic achievement and suggest that *'...a narrowly defined curriculum'* threatens to *'stifle imaginative, holistic approaches to curriculum design'*. Bramley (1977:16) shares a similar view referring to an imbalance in demands for academic excellence to the detriment of social and interpersonal growth. This research has found that students

and tutors value the opportunities for personal and social development afforded by tutorial provision (see p83). It has also been found that personal and social development is high on the 14-19 Education and Skills agenda, it is embedded in the new Specialised Diplomas and at the core of personalised learning (see p21).

The research findings I have presented here contribute in part to resolving the vagueness that currently surrounds tutorial provision, by identifying students' and tutors' expectations of the provision and by providing some useful terminology for the tutoring community to build on. I describe the terminology as useful because it is derived from students and tutors everyday language and relate to tutorial in practice and can therefore be readily understood. I have found that students and tutors in post-compulsory education share the following expectations of tutorial provision and describe them as:

- holistic and personalised learning
- personal development & life skills
- academic development and related course issues
- planning and monitoring academic progress
- career planning and progression
- personal support and welfare
- being heard and being valued
- group bonding and socialising
- receiving information
- problem solving
- individual tutorial environment
- tutor engagement

It can be seen from these themes that Bramley (1977:16) is right to be concerned where tutorial provision is overtaken by demands for academic excellence as it is suggested by these findings that students and tutors value tutorial for the personal and social development as well as for the academic support it offers. Bentley (1998:4) also recognises value in *'opportunities to develop emotional competence* [as] *a crucial part of the new landscape of learning'.* He substantiates this by claiming that education currently faces three challenges namely learning about citizenship and morality, developing employability skills, implicit in the ECM themes (see p27), and addressing underachievement and exclusion which is now an expressed objective of tutorial support (see p7). His response to these challenges is to acknowledge learning from a broad range of contexts, which is described by the tutors in this study as holistic learning.

The themes presented above represent tutorial provision that, as a whole, would serve the needs and expectations of both students and tutors. However, the planning and organisation of tutorial delivery is divided between group tutorial and individual tutorial. The following table illustrates how it is envisaged that the provision would be delivered based on the students' exploration of group and individual tutorial.

Figure 17: Aspects of Tutorial Provision Allocated to Group and Individual Tutorial

Group Tutorial	**Individual Tutorial**
Personal development & life skills	*Personal development & life skills*
Academic development & Course related issues	*Academic development & Course related issues*
Career planning & progression	*Career planning & progression*
Being heard and being valued	*Being heard and being valued*
Problem solving	*Problem solving*
Tutor Engagement	*Tutor Engagement*
Group discussion, bonding and socialising	Holistic & personalised learning
Receiving information	Planning & monitoring academic progress
	Personal support and welfare

The first five aspects of provision shown in italics demonstrate that there are connections between the objectives of group and individual tutorial and the remainder belong solely in either a group or individual tutorial context. The research suggests that these aspects of provision should be considered alongside the environment in which it takes place and therefore the structure of provision also has implications for appropriate accommodation to enable either the confidentiality that is required during individual tutorial or rooms to facilitate the experiential learning desired by Further Education students.

Having considered the overall nature and purpose of tutorial provision we will move to discuss group and individual tutorial as two separate modes of tutorial provision.

Group Tutorial

This empirical research found that Further and Higher Education students' expectations of group tutorial are:

- Group bonding and socialising:
- Group discussion:
- Personal development and life skills:
- Career progression:
- Giving feedback
- Academic development and related course issues
- Receiving information

In addition to these shared perceptions, the Further Education cohort also placed importance on the group tutorial environment being relaxed, informal and fun. I found that tutors share these perceptions but also suggest that they are underpinned by an ethos of holistic and personalised learning. The findings of this inquiry support in principle McMahon's (1985:46) proposal that group tutorial should be used for:

- administration
- student selected items/skills
- reflection/evaluation of weeks' work
- ideas exchange
- future planning
- feedback
- problems - important to ensure students do not think this is all the tutorial is for
- relationship building teacher/group and intra-group.

Furthermore, my research findings add to McMahon's (1985:46) student selected items/skills by providing a list of topics students suggested during this research. And, the findings from the exploration of feelings and emotions at play covered in Chapter 6 extend McMahons' (1985:46) reference to teacher/group relationship building.

I found that students and tutors recognise that group tutorial offers an opportunity to provide a range of academic support activities to address, for example, study skills concerns. This is corroborated by JM Consulting (in HEFCE 2006:7) who suggest a range of study skills initiatives were found to be highly effective in supporting widening participation (see p19). The development of study skills concurs with the current Labour Government's agenda to improve basic skills at all ages and integrate key skills (soon to become 'functional skills) into the Further Education curriculum (see p20). I noted however that the need for study skills development varies between individuals and this research found that although generic study skills support was deemed appropriate for group tutorial, it is preferable for students to address their individual study skills problems in the privacy of an individual tutorial.

During this research, the Higher Education students suggested that there are significant differences in tutorial requirements at different stages of their studies. They suggest that during the first year they are concerned with settling into college and focussing on study skills, whilst in the second year they turn their attentions to career planning and progression. Earwaker (1992:19) recognises that there are differences in students' needs in terms of various stages of their student life, which he refers to as:

- General development (development as a person): growing up and growing older and aspects of development related to that age group
- Vocational or professional development occupational socialisation

He also recognises the development 'as a student' which he describes as a cyclical process as students progress through their course. Wheeler and Birtle (1993:24-27) have also recognised this, suggesting that the pattern of tutorial provision should follow the academic lifecycle similar to the stages of development as a student that Earwaker (1992:19) suggests. In essence Wheeler and Birtle (1993:24-27) propose the following structure to provision:

- First Year: Induction – Establishing a good rapport in the initial meeting and getting to know a little about the student using open ended questions. The conversation should explore something of the student's academic background and current needs or anxieties around their student life, personal/social interests, and career aspirations.
- First Year: 2nd Term – Discussion around how things are going, problems/difficulties that may have arisen, progress on assessment work.
- First Year: 3rd Term – Progress review, preparation for exams, work placement or summer work may feature.
- Second Year: Students are now aware of expectations and standards. Students are also aware that by now they should have integrated into university life. If

they have not, discussions around expectations and disappointments surrounding the student's course or social life may feature.

- Third year: Features final exams, career progression, and preparation for leaving university. Often featured are financial problems and personal relationships.

Although these are useful guidelines in terms of identifying students who may be struggling or in extreme cases at risk of disengaging, it is still arguably based on the deficit model of problem solving with a little forward planning included. This pragmatic approach to 'doing' in relation to organising and problem solving as opposed to 'developing' through experiential learning and reflection, discussion and exploration is maintained, in their view, as the purpose of group tutorial. They describe the content of group tutorial, again using the student lifecycle approach, as follows:

- Induction: Introductions and discussion of hopes, fears and expectations of the course
- Mid first term: how the students are settling in and discussion about good and bad aspects of the course
- Second Term: monitoring progress, study skills, preparation for exams
- Third Term: Coping with exam anxiety, planning revision, thinking about summer vacation
- Second Year: Review of year 1, lifestyle, coping strategies, thoughts about the future
- Third Year: Review of year 2, coping strategies for stress, applying for jobs or placement, career, planning for final exams, saying goodbye

Personal anxieties and coping strategies are addressed, as are study skills, development of exam skills, and plans for progression. These are all aspects of tutorial provision identified by students and tutors during this study. However two points should be made here. Firstly, it is unclear what Wheeler and Birtle (1993:24-27) mean by lifestyle and whether this refers directly to student life in which case the personal development and life skills elements as described by the students in this study do not appear to be addressed. Secondly, the timing for some of these activities could be questioned. For example, where study skills are not addressed until the second term, those students in need of support may already be falling behind or have dropped out for fear of not being able to cope. Leaving discussion about careers until the final year can sometimes be too late, particularly for those who are still unclear about their choices but feel they cannot allow the time to explore options as they write their dissertations and/or prepare for final exams. It can also be problematic for those students who wish to continue with further study on popular courses which they should have applied for earlier and find are already full for the following academic year.

This investigation has found that both students and tutors desire a tutorial curriculum that combines personal development, life skills and study skills. This does not fully concur with the views of Clutterbuck (1998:11) who proposes that tutorial is about developing knowledge rather than skills unless, as Bentley (1998:4) proposes, there is

a shift in what we perceive to be knowledge to include what to say, how to say it, knowledge of oneself and the *'ability to do'*. Bentley's (1998:4) suggestions are based on his findings that many young people are unable to apply what they learn in schools to other situations. He also proposes that current education is organised in a way that creates *'an artificial distinction'* between knowing and doing. This is why he suggests extending the curriculum to one of personal development and making sense of what is learnt in order to make it useful. The experiential approach suggested by the Further Education students would facilitate the link between knowing and doing as Bentley suggests.

The notion of tutorial being developmental is supported by students and tutors, both groups indicating a desire for tutorial to incorporate personal and professional growth and development as well as individual support for those facing difficulties. This suggests moving from a deficit model of tutoring designed only to assist students in times of difficulty, to a developmental model that broadens the curriculum to encompass a holistic approach to learning. Such an approach would allow students to draw from a range of experiences in a variety of contexts such as college, work and their social environment and would address student difficulties by drawing on their own internal resources for decision-making and problem solving. The research by Bagdonas (2003) into students' stress and fear supports the notion of a holistic approach to self-development, grounding it in the ideology of humanistic education proposing that the aim is to develop *'positive self-evaluation, self-identification comparing oneself to others, openness to new experience and mastering senses acquired at school and from other informal sources'*. This research has found that students value group discussion that allows them to be heard and be valued, to air their views and listen to the views of others, activities that contribute to forming their own identity as they learn from others. However, to enable this development to occur Bagdonas (2003) suggests that emotional freedom to learn through subjective experience and self-expression is essential, which relates well to the Further Education students' expectations for the tutorial environment to be fun and relaxed. Lang (1985:208-208) does not deny that activity-based tutorial can make a valuable contribution to student development however he suggests a need to consider the effectiveness of activity-based tutorial work and how that differs between institutions, implying that there is the possibility that such activities are not necessarily carried out effectively enough to be of benefit to the students' wider development.

Working alongside the benefits of an experiential approach to tutorial is the group bonding and socialising that students and tutors value. This confirms the importance of developing identity through self-awareness within a reasonably 'safe' environment such

as in a group tutorial setting. This comes with the caution however that there is the potential to adopt ones identity from such groups thereby becoming *'what we belong to'* rather than *'what we are'* Hamblin (1986:2-3). This is a qualified reminder to consider the objectives of tutorial provision in relation to developing autonomy. Autonomy is not only about students developing the skills and knowledge to become *'expert and independent learners'* (see p24), but also to come to know and understand themselves, their values and attitudes and develop life skills such as decision making and coping strategies to enable them to be at ease living and working in today's society. Learning and knowing about oneself also requires a person to take responsibility and ownership for who you are and to make decisions about how that is played out in society. Group tutorial can support this transition by facilitating debate discussion and problem solving activities in order allow students to explore their thoughts, beliefs and social interaction. Hamblin (1986:2-3) supports this, proposing that personal development should include:

- Development of identity through self-awareness
- Developing ability for rationale self-vigilance
- Exploration of intrinsic motivation and going beyond what is required
- Responsibility to others and the environment
- The forces that affect their autonomy

The need to broaden personal development to encompass responsibility to others and the environment is mirrored by Bentley (1998:61-62) who suggests that people need to learn to cope with the kinds of tensions and conflicts that present themselves in both work and social contexts throughout life. He describes these conflicts as follows:

- Rules versus norms
- Power versus authority
- Self versus other
- Structure versus creativity
- Control versus freedom
- Familiar versus novel
- Abstract versus concrete

By facilitating the exploration of these tensions using contexts relevant to their general progression paths and career aspirations, group tutorial can provide the forum for personal and life skills development as identified in this study (see p82). Hamblin (1986:8) stresses a need for tutorial to be meaningful to all those taking part, suggesting that tutorial programmes should be negotiated activities designed around the perceptions of what pupils (he uses this term as he refers to tutorial in schools), tutors and parents believe to be useful. Hamblin (1986:2-3) proposes that considering the tensions such as those suggested by Bentley (1998:61-62) can lead individuals to a deeper understanding of how to make choices, preparing them for independent decision making and autonomous learning. He illustrates it thus: *'How does a child decide between the knowledge that he should obey rules set by his school to move between lessons as quickly and safely as possible, and the pressure arising from the*

norm set by his peers to dally in the corridors, chatting and catching up with his friends? In trying to solve a maths problem, how far should a pupil follow the structure set out by her text book, and how far should she try different approaches based on past experience of what has worked, or even on a hare-brained idea that she has a hunch might be useful?' In this explanation, Hamblin has captured the essence of experiential learning through fun and social interaction that the Further Education students in this study seek from group tutorial. Rogers (1969:26) recognised trust as an essential component for students to achieve holistic personal as well as academic development suggesting that *'Classrooms became more exciting places of learning as I ceased to be a teacher. It happened rather gradually but as I began to trust the students I found they did incredible things in their communication with each other, in learning of the content material in the course, in blossoming out as growing human beings'.* This research found that Further Education students spoke of a desire to enjoy their group tutorial by having fun in a relaxed environment. This suggests an experiential approach to group tutorial design and delivery.

We have spoken at great length about a developmental approach to tutorial provision being desirable from a student perspective, valued by tutors, and required from a regulatory standpoint (see p25). This is not, however, to undermine the importance of the support element integral to tutorial where, for example individual students require academic, personal or welfare support to enhance their potential to achieve and progress. On that note, we will now consider the nature and purpose of individual tutorial.

Individual Tutorial

The nature and purpose of individual tutorial can be as confusing and misunderstood as group tutorial. It is suggested that the lack of a working consensus as to the nature and purpose of tutorial provision leads to inadequate support for pastoral care in post-compulsory education at a national level (see p9). Wheeler and Birtle (1993) and Earwaker (1992) refer to the historical context of tutorial provision beginning in Oxbridge colleges where the personal tutor acted in loco parentis. Personal tutors were responsible for the academic progression and personal and moral development of the students in their care. This was a personal relationship in which many things were discussed of both a scholarly and personal nature, dictated by the students' academic performance and personal development needs. Wheeler and Birtle, (1993:15) citing Halsey (1991) and Tapper and Salter (1992) state that the expansion of Higher Education in the UK has seen a decline in this style of personal tutoring provision. As the personalisation agenda progresses however, tutorial is again becoming the focus for developing what the DfES refers to as 'soft skills' (see p22) and for responding to

the holistic learning needs of each student (see p23), suggesting that the latter day Oxbridge model may return, albeit in a slightly different guise, in Further Education at least.

Institutions rely on individual tutorial to improve levels of student retention and achievement by offering personal support and guidance. Martinez & Munday (1998) reported on the causes of student persistence and dropout and found that staff and students both felt there to be a relationship between students' personal circumstances and student dropout. Examples of these include:

- Lack of parental or partner support
- Caring or other family commitments
- Pregnancy and arranged marriage
- Illness
- Financial hardship
- Benefit problems
- Time, distance, cost of travel
- Cost of course materials
- The demands of part-time jobs
- Progression reasons including students leaving to take up employment

Staff also highlighted the importance of the following problems:

- Limited awareness of how to access help and support
- Inadequate referral and support for vulnerable students
- Pressures on time, caseloads and the level of demands on tutors
- Lack of recreational activities

The report acknowledges that student help and guidance increases the potential to retain students facing personal difficulties and it suggested strategies such as specialist advice or counselling. It also suggests creating opportunities for alternative modes of study when attendance is difficult, which supports the move towards flexible learning outlined in the personalisation agenda (see p22). It is recognised that many colleges provide student services such as counselling and advice on careers, finance, benefits, accommodation and healthcare issues. The report found that although students were generally aware that these services existed they were not clear on how they could be accessed. Inconsistent provision within individual institutions was found.

Some students expressed the opinion that they had no need of individual tutorial and would prefer it if the meetings were not mandatory (see p71). Bramley (1977:15) suggests that the formal tutorials are 'disastrous' with the tutor feeling obliged to follow a process that leaves students feeling awkward. The result of this is that the student fails to turn up or the tutor makes excuses for not being able to keep the appointment. In these circumstances, the purpose of the tutoring relationship is negated. It is fair to assume that some students are able to work more independently than others and with the minimum of tutorial input. However, a tension does occur between the students' needs to feel independent and the institution's regulatory requirements. Students require the freedom to develop as autonomous learners whilst the institution is required

by the inspection regime to evidence that progress is monitored and support is in place. The opinion expressed here by some students also implies that they only envisage individual tutorial as a support mechanism, however the general consensus amongst tutors and students in this research is that individual tutorial is as much about development as it is about support and encompasses:

- Planning and monitoring academic progress
- Academic and course related support
- Problem solving
- Personal development
- Preparation for progression
- Personal support and guidance
- Being heard and being value

In addition to these shared perceptions between Further and Higher Education students, Further Education students also recognised a desire to be motivated by the tutor whereas this did not emerge from the Higher Education cohort.

As well as discussing the purpose and content of individual tutorial, the level of tutor engagement was raised on a number of occasions. It was found that students and tutors alike recognised tutor engagement as a factor affecting the effectiveness of individual tutorial and referred to developing a student/tutor relationship. As this was a recurring theme the student/tutor dynamics are explored in Chapter 6. Furthermore, an exploration of the desirable skills and attributes to facilitate a positive tutoring relationship are discussed in Chapter 7. Wheeler and Birtle (1993:3) describes individual tutorial as an 'anchor' for providing for a range of personal and academic issues including anxieties relating to their studies, relationships, finance and other welfare issues, a view that is broadly confirmed in this thesis. Other contributors to the development of post-compulsory tutorial provision such as Lublin (1987) and Lago and Shipton (1994) share this position but also refer to the role of tutorial in supporting students through periods of transition. This relates to both the settling in period at the start of a course and the preparation for progression as proposed by both students and tutors. During this study, it was found that tutors questioned the nature of the tutoring role, suggesting that the personal tutor role was '*to be more than a teacher*'. Lang (1985:208-209) proposes that there are '*uneasy relationships*' between pastoral care and personal and social education that must be addressed. This is particularly true now in light of the focus on the ECM themes (see p27). According to Lago and Meah (1999:7) tutorial provision is primarily aimed at facilitating students' personal development, monitoring progress and providing a link between the student and the institution. They propose that in order to achieve these aims personal tutors should act as both confidante and advocate on the students' behalf. I consider this further in the context of the tutoring role in more detail in Chapter 7.

Three individual tutorial meetings appear to be the norm across the sector however, this study found that some students would like more than the three to meet their needs. This suggests that either students generally find individual tutorial particularly useful or that some students are more dependent on the tutor for help or guidance than others and it is those students that suggest an increase in provision. The latter explanation would have some significance in relation to developing of the autonomous learner or '*expert learner*' to use LSN terminology (see p24). It should be considered for example whether students entering Higher Education are expected to enter as competent autonomous '*expert*' learners or is the expectation that they will be supported to develop independent learning skills during their Higher Education studies. The generic personal, learning and thinking skills integrated into the new Specialised Diplomas (see p20) suggest that this issue will be addressed before students enter Higher Education, however the Widening Participation review (see p17) suggests that study skills initiatives are effective in supporting students entering Higher Education through non-traditional routes. This being the case wherever Widening Participation activities continue to encourage students in Higher Education from non-academic backgrounds, those students will not have had the opportunity to develop as '*expert learners*' before entering Higher Education. For those students choosing not to attend individual tutorial, the tutoring relationship was often cited as the barrier. One participant related their feelings of anxiety about being '*judged*' and implicitly referred to the balance of power within the tutoring relationship by saying "...*you can meet them on this level, even though you know that they are obviously above you*". It is right and proper to acknowledge that this is how this particular student read the relationship, however it should also be acknowledged that this might not necessarily be as a result of the tutor's behaviour or what the tutor intended. It is equally feasible that where such perceptions occur there is a possibility that the student makes this assumption based on prior rather than current experience.

Comments were also made regarding the timing of individual tutorials. Suggestions were made for a drop-in system to be put in place rather than timetabled sessions in order to address their needs on demand. This certainly fits with the need to be more responsive to learners' needs highlighted in the personalisation consultation paper (see p22).

Situational Learning

There has been previous mention in this thesis of the complex system in which tutorial provision occurs (see p38) and there are clear examples of this in relation to individual tutorial. To illustrate the richness of the context I will contrast tutorial in arts and media with tutorial in engineering. I shall begin with personal tutoring in the arts and media

departments. As students explore the artistic dimensions of their work they also reflected inwardly to understand where their ideas emanated from and how their ideas could be further developed. To this end, tutor/student interaction is a constant engagement on a personal level from which their vocational and wider skills development emerge. Personal and social aspects influencing their studies emerged through this dialogue. Tutors in these vocational areas describe students' wider personal and social development as learning through conversation. Juxtapose this with the department of engineering, a science based vocation where the teaching of 'fact' is at the heart of the curriculum. A clear resistance to engaging with students on a personal level was found at both institutions. Tutors in the engineering departments made it explicit that the development of knowledge was about transferring information from tutor to student and that personal issues were not related to learning. Barnes and Shemilt (1992:144) describe these differences in tutors' attitudes using the terms 'Transmission Teacher' and 'Interpretation Teacher'. A Transmission Teacher *'Perceives the teacher's task to be the evaluation and correction of the learner's performance, according to criteria of which he is guardian'.* The Interpretation Teacher *'perceives the teacher's task to be the setting up of a dialogue in which the learner can reshape his knowledge through interaction with others.'* I believe that these two descriptions fit well with the examples previously given, that is to say I would recognise tutors in the engineering departments to be mostly transmission teachers and tutors in the arts and media department to be mostly Interpretation Teachers. The assumption that various groups of tutors are influenced by the vocational area in which they work they work may appear to be a sweeping generalisation however this is supported by Barnes and Shemilt's findings. They found, for example, that teachers of science or languages where the objective is to teach the 'rules' that underpin these subjects were nearly all at the transmission end of the continuum. Teachers of religious education on the other-hand, in their quest to develop student's moral understanding, were closer to 'Interpretation'. These norms appear to have developed as part of the culture of the departments or professional groups. I have also noted that where this occurs tension can be created where institutional objectives do not sit well with the individual groups' values.

5.5 Summary

This chapter contributes to resolving the lack of definition surrounding the nature and purpose of tutorial provision by offering a frame of reference (Appendix 19), to aid planning and design. The inductive exploration of students' and tutors' shared perceptions has resulted in descriptions emerging from their everyday language and terminology and is therefore useful in practice, and will contribute to addressing the

confusing range of tutorial terminology at least within individual institutions if not across the sector. From an institutional perspective, the focal point for tutorial provision is on supporting student retention and achievement (see p7) and fulfilling the Every Child Matters agenda that is embedded in the Ofsted inspection regime. It is also a vehicle for engaging with the 'Learner Voice' and responding to students' demands as 'consumers' (see p15). From students' and tutors' perspectives, tutorial provision is broadly considered to be an opportunity for personal, social and academic development; guidance, support and welfare; having a voice to influence their learning experience; the giving and receiving of information; career and progression planning and all that these activities entail (Appendix 19). Tutorial provision can therefore be described as complex and multi-faceted.

It has been found that the nature of tutorial provision in practice is dependant on a number of factors, namely the institution's tutorial ethos, ownership of the tutorial agenda, the level of tutor engagement and the tutorial environment. The tutorial ethos determines the approach to delivery and underpins the institution's tutorial policy. It is helpful therefore, for institutions to be explicit about what purpose tutorial provision serves in light of their own institutional values, mission and strategic objectives. Or, as Lang (1985:208-209) puts it, make clear '*What* [in their view] *constitutes an educated person*' If an institution perceives an educated person to be someone leaving the institution with the qualifications they intended to achieve and nothing more, that institution's tutorial ethos may be described as achieving academic excellence. The provision therefore may be designed around target setting, monitoring student progress and academic development including study skills as in Lublin's description (1987:3). Institutions proposing a holistic tutorial ethos such as Bramley suggests (1977:16) are more likely to adopt a wider curriculum based approach to tutorial that encompasses personal, social and academic development. As institutions consider how their tutorial ethos is translated into policy other considerations come into play such as the regulatory guidelines and current Government education policy that I have discussed Chapter 2. At present, the current Government education agenda focuses on skills development, personalised learning and widening participation. The related policies emphasise personal as well as academic development and therefore it would be beneficial for post-compulsory institutions to adopt a holistic and personalised ethos in order to comply with regulatory requirements. Moreover, this research has found that students and tutors perceive the holistic, student centred approach to be of value to student achievement and progression (see p85). Students and tutors participating in this research also indicated the importance of tutorial being flexible and responsive to students needs. Interestingly these aspects form part of the structure for personalised learning (see p22). This research suggests that a flexible and responsive approach to

tutorial curriculum design would enable the needs of students to be met through a negotiated tutorial curriculum. It would also serve to address the diverse attitudes and approaches towards tutorial that exist across an institution and allow the design to reflect the stage students are at in their studies in order to make the provision relevant to their needs at that time (see p89). To this end, a 'one-fits-all' group tutorial programme is not advised as it discourages student ownership of the learning agenda and does not allow for flexibility to respond to students' needs as various issues naturally occur. The management implications for enabling a flexible and negotiated model would however make quality assessment and mapping of regulatory requirements more complex than where, for example, an institution adopts a single tutorial curriculum across the board. There are also implications for practitioners in relation to tutors' attitudes, approaches and levels of confidence. Some tutors feel 'safe' with strict curriculum guidelines to follow (see p10) and find that working flexibly can create tensions under the current inspection regimes where quality is judged in part by schemes of work, lesson plans and so on which do not sit well with a class working to an open agenda. Furthermore, the Further Education students were very clear about their expectations for the group tutorial environment to be relaxed, fun and 'different' to other classes (see p75) however in practice it has been found that again, some tutors are anxious to step away from the didactic approach that ensure clear and measurable outcomes, and towards an experiential approach that, to the untrained eye, can appear disorganised and without purpose.

The individual tutorial environment has also arisen during student and tutor discussions, emphasising the need for privacy. One aspect of individual tutorial is to enable students to disclose either personal or academic issues affecting their potential to succeed (see p93). Experience has taught me that where a confidential conversation cannot take place students will not raise difficult issues and subsequently they do not receive the support they need, which results at best in their unnecessary struggle and at worst in complete disengagement. Students and tutors also referred to individual tutorial as a developmental relationship that contributes to the holistic development of the learner. Tutor engagement again comes into play here. Both students and tutors recognise that positive tutor engagement is essential for individual tutorials to be beneficial (see p93). Allied to this, both Further and Higher Education students referred to the importance of the personal tutors' attitudes, skills and qualities, which is explored further in Chapter 7.

So, we have found that tutorial is complex but not unfathomable. Institutions need to be clear about how they intend both group and individual tutorial to contribute to students' support, development and general learning experience, and importantly, to make that

information explicit for those undertaking the task. It has also been found that there is a balance to strike between meeting the students' curriculum and pastoral needs, and fulfilling the need for institutions to comply with regulatory requirements. It is suggested that this balance can be achieved through a flexible and negotiated curriculum, and that such flexibility will turn enable the design of provision to take account of the internal complexities and timeliness of activities. However, for this to work successfully the research suggest a need to recognise that tutors need support in order to make the transition from tutors who 'deliver' the tutorial curriculum to tutors who 'engage' in the tutorial curriculum by embracing the notion of experiential learning.

Finally, this element of the research has brought to mind the significance of the student/tutor relationship in the context of tutorial provision, but particularly in relation to the personal tutoring role. It has made mention of the students feelings and emotion instigated by tutoring relationship, so we will now take a brief look at some of the emotions at play in order to understand how the tutoring relationship can impact on the students and on their learning experience.

Chapter 6: The Tutoring Relationship, Feelings and Emotions at Play

One of the fascinating aspects of undertaking grounded theory is that you can never be sure where the research will lead you, as this chapter demonstrates. The reason for exploring the effects of tutoring interaction emerged from an unexpected theme arising from the inquiry into the nature and purpose of tutorial provision. The tutoring relationship became a recurring theme that suggested tutors' attitudes (see p71) and tutor engagement (see p93) are significant to the students learning experience. In Chapter 1 of this thesis, we discussed how students in post-compulsory education are directed by the institution towards their personal tutor to support their personal and academic development, and to address any concerns affecting their academic progress (see p7). Essentially, if this relationship does not work the student is likely to find progress review meetings with their tutor at best uncomfortable and worst untenable. Furthermore, it is unlikely that students finding themselves in a difficult tutoring relationship will disclose personal or academic issues that are negatively affecting their studies, thereby removing the opportunity for essential support to be put in place. The risks here for both the student and the institution are that as the student struggles to reconcile the situation they may disengage completely, leaving the institution with a sense of failure. This in turn reduces the institution's success rates and income. So, it is important for all concerned to ensure that the tutoring relationship works well to benefit all parties. This exploration considers findings from a student focus group together with a number of personal stories that illustrate some of the factors affecting the student/tutor relationship and how the students interpret these events to impact on their learning experience.

6.1 Students' Experience and Emotions

This section presents the empirical research undertaken to explore students' experiences and emotions within the tutoring relationship. This began with a student focus group discussion and was followed by the sharing of personal stories to illustrate individual thoughts and feelings. I shall begin by reporting on the focus group discussion.

Higher Education Student Focus Group

I arranged a focus group meeting of Higher Education students, on 11th June 2002, to explore issues around emotions and learning. These themes had emerged during the first meeting with this group (see p73). The discussion then centred on the feelings at play in learning situations. I used open-ended questions to trigger discussion as this allowed a natural flow to develop. This was to ensure the participants were at liberty to

discuss aspects they felt were relevant to their experiences rather than being controlled by the researcher.

When the participants were asked how learning 'felt' one student's initial response was to explain that at the beginning of the course it was a steep learning curve and he, along with a number of fellow students *"Felt like packing it in"*. He talked of getting through everything and having so much to do. Reference was also made to how everything was new and how they experienced a feeling of alienation as friendships were not yet formed explaining *"You haven't got the support there to cope with it"*. Other participants agreed that the amount of work was a worry and the type of work that was expected such as presentations or academic writing concerned them. Each student had different concerns relating to their academic performance and reiterated their need for study skills to support their academic development (see p69). When the participants discussed writing and submitting assignments one student commented *"I get really nervous about my work being judged"* and stated that they would not admit to being unable to do something as they felt there was an expectation that they could and should be able to cope. The same attitude applied in relation to having an unwillingness to disclose personal difficulties that may be affecting their ability to work well. When the matter of disclosing difficulties was explored further, the personal tutor relationship was cited as a reason for choosing whether or not to enter into such discussions. One student reporting an extremely positive attitude to tutorial support stated *"It's like having a friend who you can talk to about anything"* whereas another student who admitted to being less likely to discuss problems said of his tutor *"They are obviously above you"* indicating perceptions of power and equality at play in the student/tutor relationship. The attitudes displayed by tutors and their level of engagement were also raised as it was said to be important that the tutor was *"Willing to engage with you, what's going on in your course and if necessary, what's going on in your personal life as well"*. This aspect was also touched on in the exploration of the purpose of tutorial (see p72). The group went on to talk about their own perceptions of their abilities and the personal hurdles they faced. There were underlying issues of confidence and a perceived need for more individual support in the shape of encouragement and for tutors to voice a belief in the students' ability. The students expressed wanting *"Someone available to go to when needed"*, which supports earlier findings that a flexible approach to support is desirable (see p97).

Anxieties did not just revolve around tutor interaction. Some frustrations were felt in relation to other students' behaviour. For example, some individuals not contributing to group work within given deadlines it was felt demonstrated poor commitment and a lack of consideration for others. The participants acknowledged that it is possible to

misjudge peoples' intentions particularly if they are not aware of others' personal circumstances and what may lie behind some of their actions. It was suggested that this was one of the benefits of group tutorial in lending itself to discussing and resolving such issues in order to reduce tensions amongst the group (see p78). In touching on what lies behind students' actions, and considering their perceptions of their tutor relationships, I was intrigued to discover what emotions the participants had experienced during their learning journeys and what events had stimulated those emotions. To this end, I invited the participants to share their personal stories in order to gain some insight.

Participants' Personal Stories:

This section presents four students' stories that illuminate various emotions experienced (see pp57-58) during their learning experiences. The participants were invited to write about a significant learning event or episode that they found to be either positive or negative. They were not limited to drawing on experiences in their current studies as it was more important for me to find out what experiences stood out in their minds and why. I agreed to participate in this activity to demonstrate mutual respect and I shared my story with each participant as they shared theirs with me. All the participants in this exercise chose their own pseudonyms to protect anonymity.

Blissful's Story

Blissful, wrote about her experience of education in a convent school and described one incident thus: 'Each class has it's own little concert - girls would get up in front of the class and dance or sing or recite a poem. My tour de force was a rendition of 'All I want for Christmas is my two front teeth'. I had lost both my front teeth while having my tonsils extracted... One of my teeth was my second and so from that early age I had the embarrassment of having to wear a false tooth on a little pink plate. That event is another ball game altogether but it does put what happened, the choice of song etc., into perspective... It was a nun we had that year and I had only sung the first line or so before she bellowed "*sit down, your behaviour is disgraceful*" or similar words. To this day I can feel the shock of hearing those words, the cruel tone of her voice, the hurt, the humiliation I felt then. I remember my friends all being supportive and issuing various levels of curses on this nun and telling me how great I could sing that song. But the hurt never ever left me'. Blissful had puzzled over what she described as a seemingly harsh reaction that had she experienced from the teacher. In discussion, Blissful suggested that the intensity of the teacher's outburst was an unexpectedly harsh and aggressive display. Blissful went on to disclose how she had found this and other similar incidents humiliating, and revealed that she felt these events had affected her personality and her later path in life. She explained,' Hindsight is a wonderful thing,

or so they tell us. For me it highlights the emotions I felt as a young vulnerable child and young lady. The fear of authority figures has remained with me. Lack of confidence in myself, and my abilities (decisions not to further my education at one point, 'settling' for such and such rather than aspire to higher things) is still an issue for me. It has permeated my working life, my marriage even my relationship with my children'. Blissful explained that the examples here were one of many similar events over a number of years and that she believes that over time these events destroyed her self esteem and self worth. Blissful notes that her deep-seated lack of confidence creates a general anxiety in her daily life and she does not view her achievements comfortably or with pleasure but more with a sense of relief. As a student, Blissful has to be strongly encouraged to try something new for fear of failure and is anxious about the response she will receive for her efforts.

Sara's Story

Sara described two brief but lasting incidents that took place during her secondary education. The first related to when the class was receiving some marked homework. The second related to perceptions of her abilities and aspirations. She wrote as though telling a story in order to distance herself from the events. *'Sara looked up at the figure whom she thought she knew but did not recognise, watching the woman's mouth move, but hearing nothing except the voice in her own head. Sara's mind was filled with confusion, sadness, anger and a barrage of questions. Sara wanted to know why this person she had previously trusted, and who had previously been so encouraging, had betrayed her in this way. What right did this person have to make Sara feel so alone, so humiliated in front of all these people? Had she not tried her level best to concentrate on her work? She had put effort into this and if it was wrong, not what the teacher wanted to read, should that really justify the way this person now made Sara feel? Was talking in a cold, slow, exasperated tone, simply because Sara could not get the hang of what they were trying to teach, really called for? It may well have been frustrating for the teacher but demonstrating it so obviously merely compounded Sara's existing anxieties'.* When discussing this part of Sara's story she said that what was significant for her about this incident was how she had previously felt about this teacher. There had been a trust between them that made her feel safe in that relationship. That trust had allowed Sara to be brave in her writing however, this one incident had changed the nature of the relationship and therefore, for Sara, it had changed the rules of engagement. In order to avoid further humiliation therefore Sara chose not to try anything different but would in future play it safe. In making this decision, Sara had chosen to limit her own expectations. Sara also refers to emotions of sadness, anger, humiliation and the anxiety this causes her and asks what right the teacher has to behave in this way. Here, Sara is demonstrating an expectation for the

teacher to be aware of the effect their interaction has on students, suggesting that tutors are expected to possess a level of emotional intelligence. Furthermore, Sara asks 'What right' the tutor has to act in this particular manner. Sara also spoke of her career aspirations and perceived levels of capability. *'Pupils were streamed at that time and she was in the E stream (just above what was sensitively referred to as 'remedial' class) but did manage to do well in English. However, having been sick due to nerves during her one and only mock 'O' level English exam it was decided she was not 'academic' and not afforded the opportunity to try again. Sara had felt that she had effectively been written off, having been told that she was 'not academic' the future in Sara's eyes looked bleak and her aspirations plummeted. During the statutory careers interview before leaving school the opportunity to progress to College was out of the question and therefore never explored. It was many years before Sara chose to face education again and found that being labelled 'not academic' has always remained an obstacle to her self-esteem'.* This part of Sara's story serves to illustrate how the negative attitudes of others can detrimentally affect a person's view of themselves and their potential to achieve. Having been labelled 'not academic' she subsequently lived out the prophecy until such time as she was able to challenge the assumption in her own mind.

Philip's Story

Philip provided a potted history of his educational journey since his early schools days which was fused with aspects of his home life from which his aspirations to 'better himself' had emerged. This is an excerpt from his story. *'I qualified to go to Grammar School and received a scholarship to pay the fees – it was like a different planet, everyone spoke posh, you called the teachers master and everyone called you by your surname. I was bullied terribly there and felt I had no one to talk to. My mum would tell me I had to put up with it otherwise I would end up like my dad. As for my dad he was either drunk, in bed or at the pit. In the end I just refused to go – they would drag me to the bus stop and then I would run away – there was no one who would help me. Eventually I was transferred to the local comprehensive, and surprise, surprise I was bullied again because I was cleverer than was true – I was becoming violent like my dad. I can remember no teacher in whom I could confide, they appeared not to have any sense of humour, apart from one, but yet I had been labelled as someone who should do well and as such when I didn't reach those expectations no one tried to find out why. I fell in with the wrong crowd and received the cane several times, there was no one who said 'here is a boy who is clever and yet he is not achieving- why?' Looking back I feel let down by the system, I could have done better than I did and as a result I am having to make up for it thirty years later. I eventually settled down, got a good job but was very antagonistic to those who had degrees. I did go to night school and get*

'O' levels, but I never felt adequate. Being made redundant last year after 27 years in my job was a real shock. I must admit I drew great satisfaction in doing a much better job then those more qualified. There appeared to be some mystique about those with a degree. So there we have it – my innermost feelings revealed. College is brilliant. I have enjoyed my first year doing a degree course, apart from the first few weeks. I'm treated as a person – but is that because I am older? I have done very well and can't believe that the tutors are writing about me when they describe my work as 'excellent', 'exemplary' and 'brilliant'. I hope to go into teaching myself and intend to do a better job than was done on me'. Philip believed in his ability to achieve and aspired to do well. He also saw education as a means to achieving his aspirations however he did not feel socially accepted at grammar school due to the bullying he received and he eventually disengaged, reverting to where he felt he belonged. He talks with regret about being labelled as someone who should do well and saddened at the lack of engagement he received from tutors, which he took to imply a lack of interest in why he was not achieving. Philip's story suggests that without positive engagement the tutor is unlikely to know the student well and can therefore remain unaware of the help and support needed for the student to succeed in their endeavours. This story illustrates how students can face personal challenges that may have a negative impact on their potential to achieve and that, where the tutor is unaware of such circumstances, adequate support may not be offered. This story also highlights that the tutor's role is potentially more complex than simply providing academic support as Philip expected someone to recognise that he was not achieving to his full potential and 'tune in' to what was happening and how he could be further supported.

<u>Joanne's Story</u>
Joanne wrote about her first day at college.' *The reason I decided to become a student is totally superficial. The area I live in is overrun with people that never made anything of their lives, including my parents. I didn't fit in with the kids in my area. I went to a Catholic school and wasn't allowed out after 8 o'clock. I want to show them all that I'm better than them. I want to look down my nose at them. It sounds nasty but I can't help it. I want to show that being different can be used as an advantage. It is also to prove to my Mum and Dad that I'm not some frump that doesn't do anything. It's like a competition in my house – my younger brothers have always had talent. One is really good at rugby and is worshipped for it. The other is Mummy's little baby. It seems to be a constant battle for attention so the only way I could get attention was to be a student. I can remember being really excited but had this feeling in the gut of my stomach. I met with my two friends and went to college. We had to sit in the lecture room with loads of students. We were picking who we thought was on the course. The main thing I was worried about was the other people on the course. I was scared I*

wouldn't be liked. I wasn't scared of the work being too hard or whether I liked the course. At first I seem confident and secure but I am intimidated by pretty bitchy girls. However, it made it a lot easier with my two friends joining me. At the back was a girl who I've run into a few times and we have had slanging matches. She was one of the pretty bitchy girls that I was scared of but would never let on that she bothered me. We were sorted out and a woman came to collect the new group. On the way out of the lecture room, the bitchy girl started shouting things. I was swearing and calling her names. The woman asked me sarcastically if I'd finished. I then found out that the woman was my tutor. I was devastated. She seemed like the type I was not going to get along with. I was also upset that her first impression of me was that display.'

Joanne was anxious about fitting in with her peers and getting on with her tutor. The information she provided before describing the incident suggests feelings of insecurity and the comments about the 'pretty girls' suggests low self-esteem. Her story implies the study she was about to embark on was important to her on a number of levels but the need to be liked and accepted was certainly amongst them and featured more prominently than a desire to succeed on her course.

6.2   Literature Review and Discussion

At the heart of these stories and discussions lies the students' need for relationship, a sense of emotional bonding that respects and nourishes the selfhood of one another (Perlman, 1979:23-24). The students express a wish for their tutors to demonstrate a willingness to engage and an interest in them, both as students and as people. They seek evidence of a tutor's faith in their abilities and an environment of mutual trust and respect. The essence of what students seek is a democratic relationship demonstrated through social equality and positive dialogue. Dialogue is, as Williamson (1998:188) suggests, central to successful learning, as it is a *'special form of communication'* that extends the notion of conversation to involve a commitment from those engaged. Bohm (cited by Dixon, 1998:30) differentiates dialogue and discussion by offering an analogous description of dialogue as *'a stream running between two banks'*, illustrating the flow of meaning between two people, so as one person triggers the thoughts of another in conversation they are developing a meaningful understanding between themselves, whereas discussion merely offers separate points of view. Effective dialogue in new tutoring relationships is therefore important in formulating shared rules of engagement for positive future interaction as a willingness to engage democratically is demonstrated. But democracy is a learned ideal (Williamson,1998:206) therefore it is not one that every tutor will necessarily or intuitively bring to his or her learning relationships. The right conditions required for democratic dialogue to take place such as the capacity to reason and debate with an open mind may be hindered by attitudes

borne out of self-interest, mistrust of others, prejudice, ruthless pursuit, power over others and pervasive ignorance (Williamson,1998:206), some of which we have seen at play in the stories considered in this chapter.

The students have referred to events where they have experienced negative emotions such as feelings of insecurity, anxiety and fear of humiliation, caused either knowingly or unknowingly by the tutors. For example, Sara and Blissful both speak of humiliation. Sara describes how she felt humiliated by the way her tutor spoke to her in front of a class of students. Blissful said she was humiliated by the tutor's *'bellowing'* and *'cruel tone of voice'*, illustrating how *'some teachers are too condemnatory in their criticism or too overwhelming in their approbation* (Bramley, 1977:7). The experiences described by Blissful, Sara and Joanne support the findings of Kearney et al (1991) that students can experience inappropriate, destructive teacher behaviours including sarcasm or putdowns, verbal abuse and being rude or condescending. Sara and Blissful go on to say how these feelings negatively affected their decisions to further their learning ambitions demonstrating the views of Bagdonas (2003) that feelings of insecurity, anxiety and fear of humiliation create barriers to learning. Negative feelings in Joanne's story relate to her first encounter with her tutor when caught swearing at another student saying *'The woman asked me sarcastically if I'd finished. I then found out that the woman was my tutor. I was devastated'*. In reacting to the incident in such a manner the tutor knowingly or unknowingly created an anxiety in this student for it is recognised that criticism and sarcasm *'leaves the person feeling helpless and angry'* (Goleman, 1996:151). I say the tutor acted knowingly or unknowingly because '...*the personal tutor will possibly be dimly aware of his or her own unconscious responses to the person seeking help and probably, at first meeting, totally unaware of the unconscious or only half-glimpsed preconceptions the student has about the tutor'*. Joanne was not only concerned that as a result of this incident she had surmised that the tutor was not the type of person she would get along with, she was also upset about the first impressions she had made on the tutor. By either party holding onto the assumptions made at this time, future dialogue will be impaired (Dixon, 1998:32) and unfortunately, as Lago and Shipton (1994:20) suggest, *'Such feelings may never be acknowledged by either party, but they will certainly load the student-tutor relationship with hidden agendas, hopes and fears'*. There are also feelings of inadequacy that run through each of these stories to a greater or lesser degree, not least in Philip's story when he speaks of feeling inadequate despite attending night school to undertake 'O' levels and continuing onto Higher Education. These feelings are played out in his anxieties about his worked being judged which is not uncommon as, sadly *'fear of mistake has become one of the dominant features of school life'* (Bagdonas 2003).

The need for relationship has occurred during the student focus group discussion when they described how some students *'felt like packing it in'* at the beginning of the course as friendships were not yet formed (see p100). This is also clearly demonstrated in Philip's story as he wrote about the concern he felt at not having a social network, his recollection being that neither his tutors nor his peers engaged positively with him which resulted in him changing schools. For some students, the anxieties of establishing friendships in a new learning environment coincide with other vulnerabilities as they face emotional and physical change when they may also be dealing with previously unknown responsibilities that come with independent living (Wheeler and Birtle,1993:3). Their needs for tutoring support therefore may be personal as well as academic, which further explains the students' emphasis on tutor engagement being friendly, approachable and sympathetic (Appendix 14). Bramley (1977:17) recognises the importance of students feeling that they are able to converse informally with their tutors. Furthermore (Bramley,1977:15) notes the potential for a poor learning environment to negatively affect students' wellbeing, which can lead to interpersonal deprivation manifesting itself as depression, withdrawal or loss of motivation but suggests that these feelings can be reduced through a sense of belonging grown from shared beliefs and endeavours that, over time, move to comradeship. Yet as a student, having the confidence to enter into dialogue in order to create a positive relationship is difficult when, like Blissful, you are predisposed to fear of authority figures and consider tutors within this category. When Blissful refers to her continuing fear of authority she is illustrating how our personal and social history creates 'hidden baggage' that colours our communication with others, an aspect that also arose during the focus group discussion. Where this occurs within the tutoring relationship it can lead some students to either intentionally or unintentionally misconstrue what is said to them (Lago and Shipton, 1999:24-25). Robertson (1999:159-151) reports on the phenomenon of 'transference' that is *'unconscious displacement of thoughts, feelings and behaviours'* played out in our interaction with others. Robertson (1999:159-160) offers examples of transference including a student's intense liking, disliking or indifference towards a tutor; a student being overly familiar with the tutor; the student being unable to accept constructive criticism or an excessive need for the tutor's approval. It is also noted that this phenomenon is not restricted to students and examples are given of tutors experiencing intense positive or negative feelings towards particular students and tutors that feel compelled to 'rescue' a student. Tutors feelings can lead them to make unfounded assumptions as Meighan (1996:319-322) suggests, citing the works of Hargreaves (1978) and Rist (1977) who both found examples of subjective evaluation and labelling by teachers based on social class distinctions. In addition, Sara's actions bear out Meighan's (1996:319-322)

conclusions that we take on and live up to the persona attributed to us by others, by accepting the 'non-academic' label and not furthering her learning ambitions. Rogers (1996:115) suggests that by becoming more aware of our feelings and attitudes we are more likely to recognise pre-conceptions and perhaps misconceptions about people and situations and thereby learn from our experiences to understand and manage future learning interactions. Robertson (1999:152) concluded that little guidance is available to support tutors in their role other than to be *'trustworthy, caring, nurturing mentors'* and that coping with the 'dark side' of the helping relationship for example managing boundaries or interpersonal conflict is largely left to the individual.

6.3 Summary

Learning embraces the whole person and therefore full personal development of human beings can only be realised through their relationships with others (Jarvis; cited by Williamson 1998:193). It follows then that a negative tutoring relationship, i.e. one that does not engage fully with the student, does not support the complete fulfilment of an individual's development. It is necessary therefore to *'raise the experience called relationship to our conscious and careful consideration'* (Perlman,1979:4) if we are to engage in a positive and meaningful way. The stories in this chapter have illustrated undemocratic relationships where the students have perceived there to be no right to reply, and forms of negative interaction such as aggressive or sarcastic retorts. All of these have been found to negatively impact on the students emotional wellbeing, sometimes creating long lasting perceptions of self and others, as for example in the case of Blissful where many years hence she suffers low self esteem and a fear of authority (see p102). McPherson et al (2003:86) found that teacher anger is not uncommon in the classroom however I would argue that those findings should not serve to defend such actions, particularly in light of the potentially damaging impact this study has found to have on the students. Instead, their findings should instigate further exploration to consider how such attitudes may be challenged and modified.

It is has also been recognised that it is difficult, as complex human beings, to know intuitively what effect our actions and interactions may have on those we meet, as all people are embedded in their personal and social history (Tilleman, 1997), and make sense of the world through our *a priori* (see p34). We have discussed how we cannot always know instinctively of the 'hidden baggage' others bring to the relationship and so, even with the greatest of care, we cannot always foretell how our interaction will be received. It is suggested however that the potential for creating a negative effect on others can be reduced where we attempt to *'bring intelligence to our emotions'* (Goleman, 1996:151). Whilst being mindful in our expectations as we are an emotionally repressive society with *'no working concept of the wounded child'*, and that

our only socially accepted norm for emotions is to control them. This is despite there being no differentiation made between healthy control and unhealthy suppression (Heron, 1992:131). Bagdonas (2003) proposes that '*an autonomous individual commits to look for ways of better managing one's personality development and creation of human relations in society',* suggesting that as tutors we have a responsibility not only to develop our management of human relations, but as educators we should also be responsible for enabling the same in others. It would be purposeful therefore to learn to harness our emotional intelligence to raise awareness within ourselves as to how our style of interaction as tutors may potentially affect our students and to develop our personal strategies to be able to bring the relationship 'back on track', should negative situations occur. Proposing that tutors look to themselves to develop and maintain positive relationships is due to most student failure resulting from teachers' poor competence and lack of flexibility however it should be recognised that this stems from weaknesses in teacher training to develop teachers' self-awareness (Bagdonas,2003; citing Klippert, 2002). It is therefore unreasonable to expect the skilful building of relationships without providing support to develop the necessary skills.

From the research findings, I propose that the value and significance of 'relationship' should figure highly in professional development for the tutoring role together with an understanding of the nature and value of dialogue. I also suggest that there would be merit in exploring to what extent and by what means tutors' manage their emotions and the emotions demonstrated by their students, and to understand whether or not suppressing emotions can adversely affect dialogue within the tutoring relationship. Such exploration would contribute to tutors being able to recognise and manage the effects of emotions at play and work towards redressing the weaknesses in teacher training identified by Bagdonas (2003). Allied to this, I propose that, in managing tutorial provision consideration should be given to the needs of tutors to be able to explore their attitudes in a safe and supportive developmental environment and to have a forum where their concerns, uncertainties and disappointments may be shared with other tutoring practitioners.

This exploration has found that poor tutoring relationships can negatively affect the potential for students to succeed in their endeavours. Furthermore, in severe cases, poor tutoring can be detrimental to the students' mental and physical wellbeing and cause destructive self-perceptions and distorted perceptions of others. It is beneficial therefore, for both students and the institution, that managers of tutorial provision consider carefully the recruitment and development of personal tutors, in order ensure that tutors possess appropriate skills, qualities and attributes to develop positive tutoring relationships. But for managers to recruit appropriately for the tutoring role they

need to be aware of the task being undertaken and the skills and attributes required for the task. In order to shed some light on this aspect, the following chapter explores the tutoring role and what 'appropriate' skills, qualities and attributes are deemed necessary from students' and tutors' perspectives.

Chapter 7: Exploring the Personal Tutoring Role and Attributes

The personal tutoring role is recognised as an important means to support student retention and achievement (see p7) and this study has found that the way in which the personal tutoring role is undertaken is significant to how students feel about their learning experience (see p98). The Widening Participation agenda, implementation of the Every Child Matters agenda and the forthcoming Specialised Diplomas all signify changes in the post-compulsory student cohort and subsequently the requirements of the tutoring role (see p27) for which tutors currently express a desire for greater clarity (see p11). The lack of clear guidance for pastoral care has previously been identified by Bramley (1977), Lang (1985) and Calvert and Henderson (1998). This indicates that a clearly articulated definition of the purpose and ethos of the tutoring role is long overdue for tutors undertaking the role and by managers responsible for effectively identifying and supporting personal tutors' training and professional development. The Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) has recently recognised this need and have commissioned the LSN to run a number of pastoral pilots during 2007 in order to capture and disseminate guidance on good pastoral practice (see p23). Although the work currently being undertaken by the LSN is designed to consider pastoral systems as a whole, it is not examining the facets of the tutoring role, nor is it exploring the skills and attributes required to undertake the role effectively. In response to the expressed need to clarify the tutoring role in the context of today's post-compulsory education, this chapter considers what students and tutors believe the role of the personal tutor to be and what they perceive the essential skills and qualities are to enable a positive tutoring relationship as students describe. We begin by exploring tutors' perceptions before the considering students' perceptions, to mirror the process of inquiry, which then leads to a discussion around shared and differing perceptions of the two groups

7.1 Tutors' Exploration of Personal Tutoring Role and Attributes

During the tutor focus groups in May and July 2003 the participants considered the tutoring role as part of the wider exploration of the purpose of tutorial. The participants used the LVT boards (see p56) to record their ideas as they emerged after which the group categorised their findings into themes. The boards were photographed and the data was subsequently entered into the LVT software for further analysis. I analysed the two groups' findings together (Appendix 20) during which the following themes were identified:

- **Function:** the tasks to be undertaken by a personal tutor
- **Attitudes:** how the role was undertaken for example student-centred, non-judgemental, willing to be there.

- **Skills**: their perception of the skills tutors should possess in order to be able to undertake the role effectively.
- **Knowledge**: the knowledge tutors should bring to the tutoring relationship in order to support the students' personal or academic development
- **Personality**: The personal attributes required to form a positive and effective tutoring relationship

I undertook the same exercise with another group of tutors, this time in the second institution, on the 29th June 2004. Again the boards were photographed (Appendix 21) and the data was entered into the LVT software. This data was merged with the previously analysed data to ascertain whether any new themes would transpire. However it was found that all the data from this activity could be integrated into the original themes.

The tutor focus group held on 10th November 2004 was organised to look specifically at the tutoring role and attributes, which were explored using the LVT boards (Appendix 22). On this occasion, the participants took part in comparing their data with previous findings. Working in small groups the participants undertook the initial brainstorming exercise, the subsequent categorising task and then shared their findings with the whole group. I provided the participants with the categorised lists of skills, attributes, personalities, knowledge and functions that had emerged from previous data. I invited the participants to make comment on how their findings compared with the previously emergent themes. The participants were also encouraged to consider whether any of the descriptions would be better placed under a different theme or whether they saw any additional themes emerging from the data as a whole. The participants were of the opinion that no changes should be made. Through this discussion, it was found that the tutors were attempting to identify themselves with some of the descriptions. A number of names emerged to describe the tutoring role undertaken which included (but is not restricted to) mentor, counsellor, manager and role model. The participants proposed that, whichever name they identified with, this was the 'type' of tutor they perceived themselves to be. This suggested a means by which they could understand their approach to the tutoring role and how they played it out. The group also discussed their general feelings about the role, highlighting both positive and negative aspects as follows:

Positive aspects:
- able to support students in their ultimate direction and help in planning to achieve their targets
- have an opportunity to get direct student feedback

Negative aspects:
- experiencing stress – where does the role end?
- experiencing self-doubt – am I giving the right advice?
- feeling a high level of responsibility
- having difficulty judging the level of support students require

- demands on time can be overwhelming at certain times of the year raising issues around availability and demand

In this continuing discussion, three general attitudes towards undertaking the tutoring role emerged. In the first instance it was said that some tutors would prefer to 'opt out' of personal tutoring, explaining that they entered teaching to teach their subject specialism and find they are not comfortable with the 'added' responsibility of tutoring. Secondly, there was also the view that some tutors generally accept the role as part of their overall responsibilities. They see some value in it and do it to the best of their ability but do not wish to become too involved in supporting students on a personal level. Finally, there are those tutors who express an enjoyment of the role because they value the opportunity to get to know their students on an individual basis and experience a sense of pride when they have 'helped' their students. There were also extremes emerging from these attitudes. Some tutors not wishing to undertake a tutoring role suggest that personal matters have no place in a learning environment as students attend to learn and not to be looked after. Conversely, some tutors suggesting that they enjoy the role express ownership of the students in their tutor group and voice a dislike for what they term 'interference' by other parties in 'their' students' development and support, appearing in some cases to be over-possessive.

During the focus group held on 8th December 2004, tutors explored their perceptions of the skills and attributes required to undertake the role effectively. On this occasion visual exploration (see p55) was undertaken as participants were invited to work in groups to draw their impression of an 'ideal' personal tutor (Appendix 3). This different approach was introduced to the data collection in order to strengthen the research by using more than one method (see p64). Once the tutors had completed this task, each group presented their pictorial 'colleague' and described the figure they had created and the thinking behind it. As the group presented their artistic interpretations notes of key words or descriptions were recorded on a flipchart that were later transferred to an LVT software document for analysis and photographs were taken of the pictures as a permanent record. At this stage, I considered it pertinent to merge the data from the various tutor explorations relating to the tutoring role, and analyse it as a whole without the constraints of the previous themes. It was interesting to find however that the five themes previously emerging, Function, Personality, Attitudes, Skills and Knowledge had occurred again during this exercise (Appendix 23) thereby demonstrating the possibility that theoretical saturation (see p42) had occurred.

7.2 Students' Exploration of Personal Tutoring Role and Attributes

Students' references to tutoring skills and attributes first arose during the Higher Education student focus group discussions in March and June 2002 when certain words or phrases were occasionally mentioned. At this stage it was not clear that this aspect would develop into an area for further exploration however, following the two meetings the words and phrases relating to this aspect were drawn out of the data and held as a memo (see p62) for future reference. As the significance of this theme grew, emerging also out of the subsequent tutor focus groups (May and July 2003) the student data was later re-visited and analysed for emergent themes, as is the nature of grounded theory. As the data were analysed, themes emerged similar to those arising from the tutors' data (see p111). The emergent themes were Function, Attitudes, Skills and Personality. However, Knowledge did not emerge as a theme in this student data but the emergence of the tutorial environment was identified as a new theme (Appendix 24). The individual tutorial environment also emerged during student and tutor explorations of the nature of tutorial provision (see p96).

During the Further Education student focus group, held on 6th June 2005, students' perceptions of desirable personal tutor skills and qualities were explored. I had previously noted that the visual exploration exercise had worked well with the tutor focus group as the participants found it to be enjoyable and good rapport made ideas and comments more forthcoming (see p55). With this in mind, the student focus group participated in a similar activity as they were invited to draw a picture of their 'ideal' personal tutor (Appendix 25). The participants worked in groups of two or three so that they could discuss ideas and develop the drawing together, forming a shared perception. Once everyone felt they had exhausted their ideas the drawings were shared with the whole group and the ideas behind the pictures were explained. During the groups' presentations I recorded key words or phrases on a flipchart as a permanent record of the data, along with photographs of the drawings. The words and comments were inputted into the LVT software to sort and categorise the data into themes (Appendix 26). On this occasion, themes arising from analysis of the students' data mirrored those of the tutors, which were Function, Skills, Knowledge, Attitudes and Personality.

During the discussion, the students offered additional information about their expectations of the tutoring role. They all felt that the tutor supporting them through the course should be the same person throughout their period of study so that they could build a good relationship over time. They also felt that the tutor should have a working knowledge of the course content and/or vocation they are studying. The students proposed that the tutor would lose an element of credibility if they could not support the

students with problems relating specifically to the course and it was felt that the tutor should also be in a position to support them for both personal as well as academic issues. There was a strong desire for the personal tutor to be the students' ally or advocate, describing them as someone 'on their side' and prepared to challenge the system where it was deemed to be unhelpful or discriminatory towards an individual. An example was given of a student who received constant admonishment from tutors because they were, unavoidably, fifteen minutes late for class each morning due to their responsibilities as a carer. It was felt that in such cases the personal tutor should be able to negotiate special dispensations on a student's behalf where they feel they are not being treated fairly or where the impact of the student's personal circumstances or not being fully appreciated. The students also acknowledged however that there are circumstances when it is particularly difficult for personal tutors to support a student complaining of unfair treatment when the tutor they have a grievance against is their personal tutor's close colleague or line manager and cited that where this situation occurs problems tend not to be resolved.

7.3   Comparison of Students' and Tutors' Perceptions

Following the student and tutor explorations, I was interested in how the students' expectations corresponded with the tutors' perceptions of the tutoring role and attributes. The two sets of findings were therefore juxtaposed in the following tables so that any potential differences could be clearly identified. Each of the themes, that is to say Function, Skills, Attitude and Knowledge, is considered in a separate table for clarity.   The tutorial environment is not discussed here as it has already been addressed in Chapters 5 and 6. The left-hand column in each table shows the original comments and descriptions drawn from the students' and tutors' focus groups and/or questionnaire responses. Where similar words or comments occur they have to put together to offer a fuller description of that aspect.

Figure 18: Students' and Tutors' Perceptions of Function Compared

Function	Identified by Student	Identified by Tutor
Offer impartial advice	√	√
See the bigger picture	√	√
To be there (for the student)	√	√
To guide,	√	√
To provide information	√	√
A facilitator for problem solving	√	√
To build confidence	√	
Offer constructive criticism	√	
To be a friend, be re-assuring	√	
To be a source of support (personal and academic)	√	
To be calming	√	
Advocate or ally	√	
Guidance - counsellor		√

Mentor		√
Sounding Board		√
Keep students 'safe' and identify potentially explosive situations		√
To manage students,		√
Act as role model		√
Act as motivator		√
Act as psychologist		√
Act as boss		√
Act as advisor		√
Act as problem solver		√
Act as authority figure		√
Act as leader		√
Act as manager		√

This table indicates that both students and tutors perceptions of the personal tutoring 'function' is for the tutor to be there for the student giving impartial advice, guidance and information based on an overview of the students' holistic support and development needs (the bigger picture). The students identified a desire for personal tutors to be a re-assuring and supportive friend who would be able to offer constructive criticism and help to build students' confidence, which fits in part with those tutors' who perceive themselves as a mentor or motivator. Students also want the tutor to be able to bring calm to the relationship just as tutors see themselves as keeping students 'safe'. It is interesting to note that students' expectations of support are for personal tutors to facilitate problem solving as this meets with some tutors' perceptions of acting as a 'sounding board'. Other tutors however identify themselves as 'managing' students which implies a sense of control. The term 'role model' is also used by some tutors indicating an assumption that they are in a place that the students are aspiring to be. Interestingly during the tutor explorations of the role a number of 'acting as' perceptions were offered where tutors perceived themselves to be taking on various personas. This showed signs of the tutors wishing to identify themselves as being a particular 'kind' of tutor.

Figure 19: Students' and Tutors' Perceptions of Skills Compared

Skills	Identified by Student	Identified by Tutor
Reflective listening, questioning & speaking skills	√	√
Persuasive and influential as an advocate	√	√
Ability to create concrete positive outcomes	√	√
Ability to relate to others	√	
Counselling skills	√	
Ability to advise without imposing	√	
Ability to draw things out during one-to-one discussion	√	
Observant - ability to identify problems and pick up less obvious signs	√	
Mentoring Skills		√
Organisational skills		√
Negotiating skills		√
Time management skills		√

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Creative thinking		√
Leadership skills		√
Clarity of thought		√
Ability to facilitate group discussion		√

Here students and tutors share the same expectations in relation to reflective listening and questioning skills, being persuasive and influential on behalf of the student and creating positive outcomes. The students express a desire for the personal tutor to be able to relate to others and to demonstrate counselling skills. They also seek a personal tutor to advise without imposing. This reflects their perceptions of the tutoring function to be, in part, to *facilitate* problem solving. The students also refer to personal tutors needing an ability to be observant and to be able to 'draw things out' in discussion, relating to the desire for tutors to be engaged in the relationship and 'tuned in' to the student as a person. The skills that tutors identified include the ability to facilitate group discussion. However facilitating the individual (shown in the previous table under 'functions') did not occur which may signify a perception that students can be *facilitated* in groups but should be *managed* as individuals, implying the removal of autonomy from individuals in one-to-one situations. Put another way, the tutor holds the greater power during the personal tutoring relationship. The organisational and time management skills are referred to as skills to be used by the tutors in their own work but also as skills to be 'passed on' to students to support them in their holistic development. Leadership skills and clarity of thought were suggested by tutors as skills they require to be able to assess the progress students were making, to enable them to have a clear view of the development, support and guidance each student requires and the leadership skills to enable them to work with the student in meeting their needs. Finally, the tutors identified mentoring skills here, underpinning their earlier perceptions of the tutoring role being, in part, that of a mentor.

Figure 20: Students' and Tutors' Perceptions of Knowledge Compared

Knowledge	Identified by Student	Identified by Tutor
Understand potential problems and alternative solutions	√	√
Knowledge of additional support available	√	√
Know when to refer on to internal or external support agencies (understand own knowledge limitations)	√	√
Know and understand course structure, required outcomes and assessment	√	√
Know the student and how they are doing at College	√	
Life experience and self-awareness		√
Understand how to apply current professional requirements to course		√

In relation to the knowledge, tutors bring to the role, both tutors and students expect that the tutor will know and understand about the student's course of study in terms of structure, outcomes and assessment. Tutors added to this knowledge of current

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professional standards relevant to the student's course in order to enhance their learning outcomes. Both groups expected that tutors would need to be aware of potential problems students could face and be able to offer alternative solutions. This includes understanding the additional support services available for students within college and also from other external support agencies. Alongside this lays an expectation that tutors will know their own limitations in 'helping' students and understand the boundaries of their role as personal tutors. Students alone express a desire for tutors to know them and how they are doing at college. This refers, yet again, to the desire for tutors to be engaged in the relationship. Tutors value the contribution their own life experiences and self-awareness can bring to helping others.

Figure 21: Students' and Tutors' Perceptions of Attitudes Compared

Attitudes	Identified by Student	Identified by Tutor
Supportive, sympathetic and understanding	√	√
Being willing to be there	√	√
Flexible/adaptable	√	√
Organised, disciplined	√	√
Welcoming, approachable, receptive	√	√
Helpful, desire to help	√	√
Non-judgemental, Objectivity, Do not display favouritism, treat everyone equally	√	√
Respect for confidentiality - not to share information with other students and tutors	√	√
No barrier between tutor and student	√	
Willing to engage	√	
Pride in the role	√	
Prepared to negotiate	√	
Clean and tidy/good presentation	√	
Be able to work with the person as a partnership	√	
Assertive but not aggressive	√	
Respect students' wishes to keep things to themselves	√	
Punctual	√	
Determination to make you do well	√	
Formal but caring	√	
Offer alternatives not direct instruction. Allow students freedom to make own choices/decisions	√	
Not superior, mutual respect, allow students to maintain self-respect	√	
Detached		√
Ownership and responsibility		√
Competent		√
Considerate, diplomatic, tactful		√
Realistic expectations		√
Appropriate openness		√
Student-centred		√
Firm but fair		√

At first glance there appears to be a wide expanse of difference here, with both parties sharing only a few expectations, however although the exact words may not be used, much of the sentiment is similar. Students and tutors clearly agree that a supportive,

sympathetic and understanding attitude is required and can be demonstrated through a welcoming, approachable and receptive persona and a desire to help. Both parties also agree that, although an organised and disciplined approach is required, an element of flexibility and adaptability is also desirable. They both agree on the need for tutors to respect students' confidentiality. Students want tutors to be professional and to take a pride in their tutoring role. They also seek evidence that tutors have a determination for the students to do well through a formal and caring approach, which sits well with the tutors' proposal that they should be firm but fair. Tutors acknowledge the need for professionalism, describing this as being competent and taking ownership and responsibility (although it was not made clear as to the extent of ownership they desired). Alongside this, tutors also suggest a need to hold realistic expectations of students' capabilities and to be both considerate and diplomatic towards the student. Students refer to the desire for an equal relationship where no one is superior (which throws tutors' perception of ownership into question) and mutual respect is demonstrated in the form of, for example, the tutors' punctuality. In relation to equality, students also want tutors to treat each student equally and without favouritism. They also speak of the personal tutor working in partnership with the student through negotiation, being assertive but not aggressive and being willing to work in partnership so as to remove any perceived barriers between them. In doing so students hope that they will be allowed the freedom to make their own choices and decisions based on alternatives the tutor offers rather than direct instruction on what to do. So, the only distinction that can be made between the students' and tutors' data arising here is in relation to some of the tutors suggesting that they should be detached: whereas, students desire engagement.

Figure 22: Students' and Tutors' Perceptions of Personality Compared

Personality	Identified by Student	Identified by Tutor
Genuine/credible - acknowledges human imperfection	√	√
Humorous – good sense of humour	√	√
Kind, caring, compassionate	√	√
Honest, truthful and trustworthy	√	√
Confident	√	√
Understanding, empathetic	√	√
Patient	√	√
Friendly	√	√
Have an emotional side/emotional intelligence	√	

I found in relation to the tutors' desirable personality traits, that students and tutors share the view that in order to create a beneficial tutoring relationship it is necessary for the tutors' general demeanour to be confident but friendly. They also agree that tutors should come across as genuine and credible, that is to say not assuming to be perfect

or to be unrealistic in their expectations of others. In order to be genuine and credible students and tutors suggest that tutors should also be honest and trustworthy. Students highlight their desire for tutors to demonstrate emotional intelligence. This relates well to student and tutor expectations for tutors to demonstrate a sensitive side in being kind, caring and compassionate as well as understanding and empathetic to enable students to feel they can discuss sensitive issues and disclose confidential personal information when they feel they need help or support.

7.4   Literature Review and Discussion

This exploration of students' and tutors' perceptions of the nature of the tutoring role has led to the emergence of five themes which are Function, Attitudes, Skills, Knowledge, and Personality (see p111). 'Function' refers to various tasks carried out by the tutor who, whilst undertaking the role, demonstrate various 'Attitudes' towards their tutoring activities and their students. The remaining three themes namely 'Skills', 'Knowledge' and 'Personality' are what the tutor brings to the relationship and contribute towards forming the 'Attitudes' displayed by the tutor during the tutoring relationship.

Figure 23: An Archetype of the Personal Tutor Role and Attributes
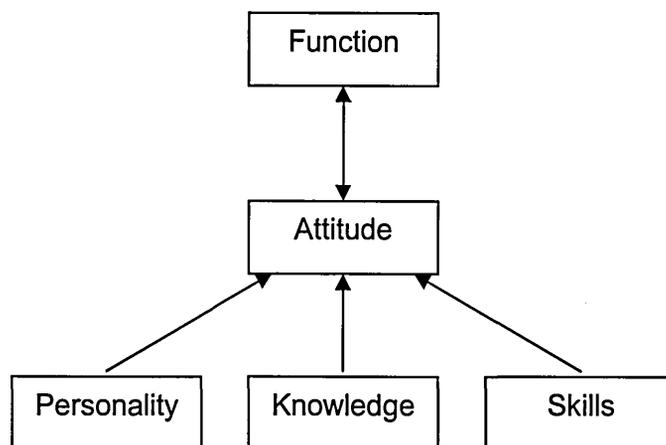
There was a sense during the focus group discussions that the students share similar expectations of the personal tutoring role and of the personal tutor attributes. The tutors however appear on occasion to hold opposing views between themselves in relation to the tutoring 'Function'. A range of personas emerged within the Function theme from both students and tutors, which the tutors subsequently attempted to identify themselves with, these were:

- Role model
- Psychologist
- Advisor
- Advocate
- Mentor
- Problem solver

- The boss
- Counsellor
- Authority Figure
- Manager
- Motivator
- Leader
- Sounding board
- Guide
- Facilitator

Some of these names or titles appear contradictory. For example 'facilitator' and 'manager'. Facilitating implies the tutor is supporting students through a process or activity that the student has control over, whereas managing a situation implies having control over the activity and its outcome. These differing perceptions suggest that contrasting tutor ideologies are being demonstrated through the 'hats' they choose to wear. I also found during the tutor discussions that they wear these different 'hats' on different occasions, depending on the task being undertaken. Lago and Shipton (1994:22) use the 'tutors wearing different hats' metaphor and suggest that tutors move '*happily*' between being supportive listener to dealing with disciplinary matters. I have found during personal tutor support meetings however that tutors find the shift back and forth between supporting and disciplining a student a difficult transition to make. This creates for them some personal anxiety. King (1999:61) also found that tutors have concerns about moving between being a student advocate to undertaking a student disciplinary, and found that tutors often face difficulties knowing which line to take when the institution's demands do not fit with the student's needs whom they are trying to support. The tutors during this study point out that where they are seen by the student to be constantly 'switching sides' between supporting the student and the institution, the student loses trust in the tutor, which in turn negatively affects their personal tutoring relationship. The students' perspective on this matter is that the personal tutor should be an advocate or ally and also a re-assuring and supportive friend (see p115). By using the term 'ally', students are suggesting that tutors are 'on their side' so it is understandable that the relationship breaks down if the tutor is perceived to be defending the institution against the student's wishes. Similar tensions are identified in relation to the role of assessor and advocate as Rippon & Martin (2003) and Williams and Prestage (2002) found. To this end, I propose that the role of course co-ordinator, with whom responsibility for recruitment, retention, achievement and related disciplinary procedures for the course sits, should be separate from the personal tutoring role in order to remove this conflict. McMahon (1985:25) also supports the proposal that the disciplinary role should be separated from the pastoral role.

Earwaker (1992:132) proposes that tutoring is quite clearly a role that focuses on the day-to-day activities of an educational establishment, and not about *'long heart-to-heart talks with students'*. However this research contests Earwaker's proposal as it has found that students and tutors identify the tutoring role with, in part, facilitating problem solving (see p115) using a holistic approach for both personal and academic matters (see p84), which can often involve lengthy conversation. Furthermore, the mentoring role and skills identified by students and tutors (see pp114-115) and the tutors' recognition that they draw on their own personal and life experiences in supporting students (see p118), implies that *'heart-to-heart'* talks naturally occur on occasion, dependant on the topic being discussed. However, Earwaker's (1992:132) concerns about tutors entering into long *'heart-to-hearts'* are worthy of consideration in relation to the boundaries of the tutoring role and the extent to which tutors become involved in students problems. As we have previously ascertained, the personal tutor role from the institutions perspective is to act as a point of contact (see p7) from which students may be referred to counselling, or other support services within college, as necessary. I hasten to add however that for referral to be appropriate to the students' particular need, positive dialogue must occur beforehand to ascertain what the student's needs are. I propose therefore that what Earwaker (1992:132) suggests would hinder the opportunity for dialogue and assessment of need and where useful dialogue does not occur between the student and their personal tutor *'the pastoral system* [can become] *distorted into a discipline, and non-compliant pupils are shovelled off to counsellors to have their personhood processed'* (Watkins; cited by Cooper et al, 2005). Students and tutors together have an expectation that tutors will know their own limitations in relation to helping and the boundaries of their role as personal tutors (see p117). King (1999:61) recognises the importance of understanding the boundaries between tutors' various roles in the institution and how role conflict can arise. Allied to this she also highlights the importance of explaining the boundaries of the tutoring role to students including its confidential nature but also the tutors' obligation to report certain instances where they consider that student to be at risk, within the remit of the Child Protection Act. King (1999:58) also recognises that on occasion tutors need to 'contain' their feelings about what they hear and that this can be difficult, suggesting that support for tutors in this role is essential to their wellbeing, as was found earlier in this study (see p108).

Lublin (1987:3) supports the idea that the role is flexible in nature and suggests that tutors undertake to be a 'leader, supporter, facilitator, challenger, questioner, supplier of answers, clarifier, instructor, role model'. Based on the findings of this exploration, I would accept much of what Lublin suggests but would be wary of the proposal that tutors are suppliers of answers. Students and tutors perceive the tutoring role to involve

providing information (see Fig 18, p115) but to supply answers may be taken to suggest that students are not charged with their own decision-making. This contradicts this study's finding that students wish tutors to 'advise without imposing' (see Fig.14, p116), to 'Offer alternatives not direct instruction' and to 'Allow students freedom to make [their] own choices/decisions' (see Fig.21, p118). So a model whereby tutors act as 'consultants' to students as they work through their own process of analysis (Hamblin,1996:112) is more in keeping with students' expectations.

Whilst engaging in the tutors' exploration of the tutoring role, three general attitudes or schools of thought emerged (see p113). The first refers to those tutors who are averse to engaging in a tutoring relationship, explaining that they have come into teaching to teach their subject and were not happy about this added responsibility. Bramley (1977:19-20) also came across this attitude and quoted one of her own personal tutors saying "Look here. I am employed as an academic and this is a college not a hospital, not a nursery and not a bloody rest home". The second general attitude emerging refers to those tutors who see some value in the role and accept it as part of their overall teaching responsibility, but they do not wish to become 'too involved' in dealing with students' problems. The third general attitude refers to those tutors who enjoy and value the tutoring role and express pride in supporting and helping students. It was also noted that extremes existed within these attitudes as some tutors have been known to adamantly refuse to take on a personal tutoring role. Conversely, some tutors expressing an enjoyment of the role appeared particularly possessive over the support administered to 'their' students.

As our perceptions arise from our personal and social history (see p107) and we interpret the world through our a priori, seeing the world as it 'appears to us' (see p35), each tutor will have a differing view of the tutoring role. Entwistle et al (2000) supports this notion with their findings that student teachers' perceptions of 'good teaching', their theories of teaching and their emerging identities as teachers had all been substantially influenced by their prior beliefs' and derived from 'the personal history of the individual and the ways in which the culture is mediated through family and school, before the student enters Higher Education'. An illustration of this can also be found in Philip's story where he states "I hope to go into teaching myself and intend to do a better job than was done on me" (see p104). Further support for the notion that attitudes are demonstrated through individual tutors' approaches to their role can be found in the work of Barnes & Shemilt (1992:139-142) who propose two teacher ideologies, Transmission and Interpretation (see p130), based on teachers' views of what constitutes knowledge. So tutors perceptions of their tutoring roles demonstrated via their attitudes whilst undertaking the role are deeply seated in their own belief systems.

Bramley (1977:7) proposes that '...*another pressure comes from the response of adults, who sometimes find adolescents' behaviour alarming, annoying, confusing, or secretly enviable'*. Such perceptions can serve to hinder democratic dialogue (see p105) so Bramley's (1977:7) suggestion that '*It is in this area of personal feelings towards adolescents that tutors might look more closely at their interaction with students*' is valuable advice. It is important to recognise however that changing teachers' beliefs is complex and difficult to bring about as this challenges the tutors' core values, which often are not explicit or recognised. However, trying new practices can lead tutors to question their underlying beliefs which can result in attempting new behaviour (Calvert,1991:26) as part of the tutors' journey in learning to manage their human relations (see p109). I propose therefore that supporting tutors in a process of self-revelation by reflecting on their tutoring practice should be encouraged as part of their wider professional development.

Whilst looking in detail at students' and tutors' shared expectations in this study it was found that both groups believed that tutors should demonstrate a helpful and supportive persona by being welcoming and approachable whilst maintaining a professional and disciplined approach (see p118). In addition, students refer to the desire for an equal and mutually respectful relationship where tutors and students work in partnership, allowing students to retain ownership over their decision-making, which is facilitated by the tutor. This reiterates the findings in Chapter 6 that students seek a democratic relationship demonstrated through social equality and positive dialogue. But as Williamson (1998:206) points out, democracy is a learned ideal and the right conditions are required (see p105). Democratic dialogue involves a capacity to reason and debate and an open-mind. The skills identified by students and tutors during this exploration contribute to effective reasoning and debate such as reflective listening and questioning, negotiating skills, persuasiveness and creative thinking. Being open minded requires clarity of thought and a non-judgemental attitude. King (1999:58) recognises the value of skilled listening and responding to the pastoral role and notes that teachers will find their own style of listening and responding. Egan (2002:113) notes that some helpers, although not always realising it, can be poor communicators. In referring to listening and responding as key communication skills he identified 'three dimensions of responding skills', which he refers to as perceptiveness, know-how and assertiveness. He proposes that perceptiveness comes from basic and social intelligence, experience and reflection on experience and social-emotional maturity. Know-how is about putting perceptiveness into practice, understanding how best to help and assertiveness allows you to share your thoughts and understandings. Students need to be able to understand and clarify their problems and also to explore their feelings without fear or criticism. Many of the tutoring skills identified in this study

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(see p116) are supported by Wheeler & Birtle (1993:31-51) and King (1999:54-55). However Lago and Shipton (1999:24-25) share an affinity with the findings of this study in relation to desirable tutoring skills and qualities, by proposing the following:

- *Acceptance*: the ability to demonstrate non-judgemental acceptance of the tutee
- *Listening*: attentive listening by 'setting aside our own busyness' and being sensitive to the tutee's concerns to enable a deeper comprehension of the situation they are in.
- *Understanding/Empathy*: the attempt to understand the tutee and demonstrate your acceptance of them through empathic response
- *Paraphrasing*: also part of the empathic process, paraphrasing confirms your understanding of the tutee's situation and offers them the opportunity to objectify their statements.
- *Questioning*: appropriate use of questioning enables the tutee to clarify their own position and offers the tutor a broader understanding of the tutees situation or concerns.
- *Summarising*: accurate understanding can be achieved through summarising and is useful to both tutor and tutee. It allows the tutee to focus the difficulties they have described during the conversation and supports the tutor in their understanding of the situation.
- *Being Yourself*: it is important for the tutee to feel the responses they receive are genuine. Where difficult information has to be shared with the tutee it is important to be sensitive but honest otherwise there is a danger that the tutee may question the tutor's trustworthiness.
- *Considering Choices*: this relates to exploring possible actions towards resolving the issues or difficulties. This may take the form of referring the tutee elsewhere or simply making a further appointment to see them oneself.

It is the essence of democratic relationship and dialogue evident in the descriptions of these skills and qualities that has resonance with this study. Positive dialogue is implied with the reference to acceptance and empathy, and 'attentive' listening which entails tutor engagement in the process rather than remaining passive. The participants in this study also suggest that mentoring and counselling skills are desirable skills for tutors to possess (see p116). Wheeler & Birtle (1993:31-51) would agree as they suggest that when students are in need of support, personal tutors should access their helping skills to explore problems and work towards a resolution and that by possessing counselling skills *'personal tutors are able to present an alternative response to students' concerns and to help them use their own resources to reach a satisfactory conclusion'*. They substantiate their proposition by suggesting that the same underlying principles of mutual respect, trust, understanding, a degree of equality and being non-judgemental are present in both tutoring and counselling relationships. Students also refer to tutors being able to *'pick up less obvious signs'* (see p116) recognising emotion in others (Goleman, 1996:43) which relates to students and tutors shared view that tutors should be empathetic. Hamblin (1986:108) found that *'Empathy or the capacity to take the standpoint of the individual and comprehend his feelings is essential for effective helping'*. However, Martinez and Munday (1998:102) refer to counselling skills and tutoring skills as two separate entities stating in their report that

some institutions engaged counselling staff in delivering training on interpersonal, counselling and tutoring skills. Earwaker (1992:67) suggests that without appropriate skills '*The tutorial relationship, like any other relationship, works best when these qualities are dependably present; without them it may all too easily lapse into some form of exploitation, manipulation, dependency or harassment*' which support findings from the previous chapter that poor tutoring can be detrimental to the students' mental and physical wellbeing (see p109).

Teacher training has been charged with a failure to equip tutors well enough for the personal tutoring role (Bagdonas,2003; citing Klippert, 2002) and it has been found that teachers often have difficulty articulating their training needs in relation to delivering pastoral care (Calvert & Henderson, 1998:113). This study has found that tutors explicitly request more training and support to equip them for this role (see p11) Furthermore, whilst exploring tutors' initial training requirements, Maher and Best (cited by Lang and Marland,1985:63) found respondents suggesting that pastoral care should be a compulsory component and, if necessary, the length of the PGCE should be increased to make this possible. Wheeler and Birtle (1993:162) propose that all personal tutors should undertake an introductory training course prior to undertaking the role to include the structure of student welfare support in the institution, an opportunity to meet key personnel involved in student support activities and a brief introduction to interpersonal communication skills. A refresher course should also be available to cover the introductory aspects in brief with additional detail about working with overseas students, study skills, understanding adolescence and counselling students who 'fail'.

7.5   Summary

Personal tutors are currently concerned over the lack of clarity for the tutoring role which often leaves them feeling ill-prepared for the role and less than confident (Calvert and Henderson 1998:113-114). The current ambiguity is compounded by a plethora of contradictory definitions of the role. For example, Lublin (1987), Lago and Shipton (1994) and Wheeler and Birtle (1993) all propose that tutoring is primarily aimed at facilitating students' personal development, monitoring progress and providing a link between the student and the institution. Lublin (1987) and Lago and Shipton (1994) add that the role of tutorial is also about supporting students through periods of transition, whereas Earwaker (1992:132) proposes that tutoring is about the day-to-day activities of the educational establishment and not about '*heart-to-hearts*' with students. Lago and Shipton (1994:61) describe tutorial as a small group meeting with the topic and direction coming from the tutor. Lublin (1987:3) suggests it is helping students work through exercise sheets and ensure course content is covered. Hamblin (1986)

uses the term 'pastoral' and 'tutorial' interchangeably describing tutorial as concerned with *respect for the individual and the transmission of values as well as provision of skills'* with the intention of developing autonomous, rational consideration. These complex descriptions of tutoring frustrate attempts for the tutoring community to share a common understanding. Therefore, tutorial development remains fragmented. Furthermore, tensions are created by the multiplicity of the tutoring role (King 1999:61) and the lack of definition, arising out of multiple interpretations, contributes further to the role's indistinguishable boundaries. The purpose of the tutoring role in the context of today's post-compulsory education has been clarified in Chapter 5. This chapter builds on the understanding of the purpose personal tutoring by exploring perceptions of the personal tutor role and related attributes, in order to clarify how the personal tutoring role may be best undertaken. I found that the personal tutoring role emerged as five components namely Function, Attitudes, Personality, Knowledge and Skills (see p120).

Tutors' Attitude towards the tutoring role are formed through their *a priori* and based on their core values (see p123). The skills, knowledge and personality that tutors bring to the role, along with their pre-formed attitudes, will influence the type of tutoring function they engage in. Each of the five components emerging from the students' and tutors' perceptions (see pp115-119) are summarised in Appendix 27 as an archetype of the tutoring role. The diagram captures the essence of the Attitudes, Personality, Skills and Knowledge the participants consider necessary meet students' expectations and tutors' responsibilities for the role. The Functions shown in the diagram refer to the various tasks undertaken as part of the tutoring activity and were provided by the students and tutors as names or titles. The research found that not all the tutors agreed with all of the names proposed and that the tutors' ideologies of what constitutes knowledge would contribute to determining which names they related to. Furthermore, three general attitudes emerged in relation to the tutors level of preparedness to undertake the role, the first being a desire to undertake the role based on the tutors enjoyment of it and the value they see in it. Secondly, a willingness to undertake the role out of a sense of duty but with an appreciation for the contribution it makes to students' academic development. Finally there is a negative attitude towards the role by those who prefer to teach their own specialism and do not see personal support and welfare as having anything to do with their teaching.

This study has also found that tensions exist for tutors where the boundaries are uncertain between the tutors' role as student advocate and their position as a course team member and representative of the institution. Evidence suggests that where uncertainty occurs it has a negative impact on the personal tutoring relationship. It is

proposed therefore that the personal tutoring role should be separate from the disciplinary role as suggested by McMahon (1985:25) so that tutors are not forced into a situation where they are constantly switching between supporting the student and defending the institution (see p121).

Whilst examining the tutoring Functions emerging from this report it has also been shown that unclear boundaries exist in relation to the personal tutoring role. The names used to describe tutoring functions included frequent mention of mentor and counsellor, which are recognised professions in their own right. Merging these two roles into a broader description of personal tutoring contributes to the lack of definition and potential misinterpretation. I propose therefore that it would be helpful to explore the issue by contrasting the tutoring, mentoring and counselling roles in order to clarify where the boundaries of the tutoring role lie.

The following penultimate chapter in this thesis builds on the emergent theme from the exploration of the tutoring role. Its purpose is to draw together the findings related to the personal tutoring role (Chapters 6 and 7) in order to develop an exploratory tool to aid tutors' reflection on practice.

Chapter 8: Towards a Theoretical Model of Personal Tutoring

During the exploration of feelings and emotions at play within the tutoring relationship, I found that the essence of good tutoring was a democratic relationship demonstrated through social equality and positive dialogue (see p105). I also found that where student/tutor interaction is marred by skewed preconceptions, borne out of negative previous experience (either by the tutor or the student), the conditions for democratic dialogue are less likely to occur (see p107). The exploration undertaken during this study revealed evidence of some tutors engaging in undemocratic interaction, whether deliberately or without awareness, with detrimental effect for the students concerned (see p108). As a result of my study's findings I have concluded that educators have a responsibility to be aware of their tutoring methods and the impact this may have on the student. Furthermore, as managers of tutorial provision, we must be aware of the weaknesses in teacher training to address these aspects (see p129), and therefore accept responsibility by supporting tutors in their endeavours to understand the tutoring role and their own tutorial practice (see p109).

This chapter builds on the study's previously emerging theory that the tutoring role is comprised of five components namely Function, Attitudes, Personality, Knowledge and Skills (Appendix 27). I noted during this particular exploration that tutors attempted to identify with the various 'Functions' in order to understand their role better (see p116) and also that tutors' 'Attitudes' towards undertaking the tutoring role are influenced, in part, by their teaching ideologies. The forthcoming developments in this chapter respond to the tutors' desire to identify with styles of tutoring and take account of the influence their ideology and methods of interaction have on their tutoring. The outcome of this final analysis is the development of a tool to aid tutors' reflection on their tutoring practice by exploring the nature of their tutoring relationship and their style of interaction.

The grounded theory approach adopted throughout this study continues here, allowing the theory to emerge and be refined as the research progresses (see p41). The constant moving to and fro between ideas and data as theory is created, revised and refined requires memos to capture the 'creative leaps' as they occur. Memos are also important in allowing the researcher to be free to develop 'good ideas' (Glaser; cited by Goulding, 2002:56) from which, through a process of sorting, the theoretical scheme emerges (see p62). As I consider this process to be a crucial aspect of the grounded theory leading to the emergent theoretical scheme, I have chosen to illustrate my thought process as the final exploratory tool evolved. To this end, I will now present the

sequential phases in the model's evolution and explain the reasoning behind each stage of development.

8.1   Developing an Exploratory Tool

In order to develop a means by which tutors can relate to the concept of their teaching ideology I turned to the Barnes and Shemilt (1974) Transmission and Interpretation model. I consider this work by Barnes and Shemilt (1974) to be relevant to this study because their research, like mine, highlights the importance of communication (see p105) as they propose that *'Education is a kind of communication'*. They also agree with this study that we are not highly aware of the nature of our communication, proposing that our views on classroom communication *'tend to be intuitive and inexplicit'* (Barnes and Shemilt 1974). The aims of Barnes and Shemilts' research was to *'throw light upon teachers' implicit beliefs about communication and learning as a whole'*, the results of which serves this study well in providing a simplified illustration of teaching ideologies, that is to say the attitudes tutors hold towards what constitutes knowledge and learning.   By adopting the transmission and interpretation model as a dimension within the developing exploratory tool, tutors' attention is drawn to consider their ideological position and how it affects the nature of their tutoring interaction. Furthermore, by considering this dimension tutors are facilitated in becoming more aware of their feelings and attitudes towards their tutoring so that, as Rogers (1996:115) suggests, tutors are able to understand and manage future learning interactions (see p124).   Barnes and Shemilt (1974) found that *'Contrary beliefs about knowledge, and about what constitutes teaching and learning, seem to underlie these views of classroom communication'*. The contrary views they found are summarised below.

Figure 24: Barnes and Shemilt Transmission and Interpretation Ideologies

TRANSMISSION		INTERPRETATION
Recording Acquisition of Information	*Function*	Cognitive Development Personal Development
Product Task	Awareness	Context Concern for Pupils' Attitude
Assessment No or Minimal Follow-up Corrections	*Responses*	Replies and comments Future Teaching Publish (showing students work)
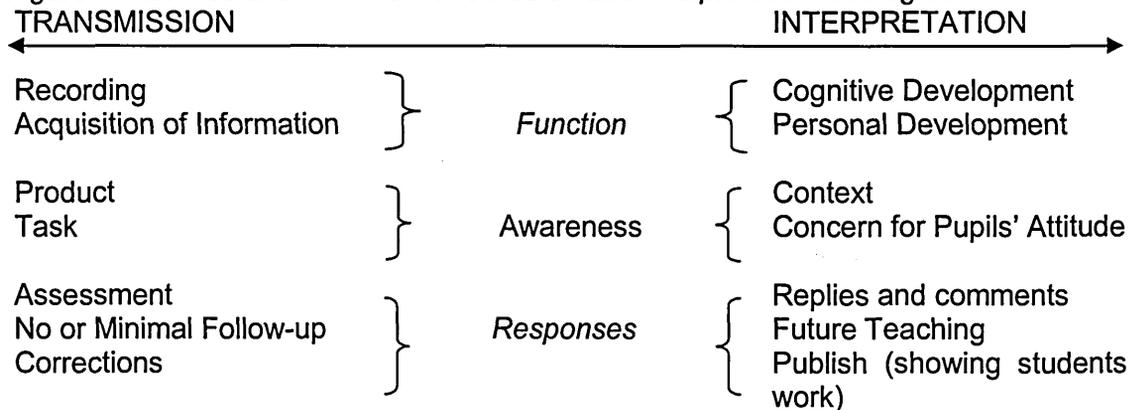
To further illustrate the proposed model Barnes and Shemilt (1974) present a *'hypothetical reconstruction of beliefs'* arising from a summary of their findings, which are presented below.

Figure 25: Hypothetical Reconstruction of Transmission and Interpretation Ideologies

The Transmission Teacher	The Interpretation Teacher
Believes knowledge to exist in the form of public disciplines which include content and criteria performance	Believes knowledge to exist in the knower's ability to organise thought and action
Values the learners' performances in so far as they conform to the criteria of the discipline	Values the learners' commitment to interpreting reality, so that criteria arise as much from the learner as from the teacher
Perceives the teachers' task to be the evaluation and correction of the learners' performance, according to criteria of which he is the guardian	The teacher's task to be in setting up of a dialogue in which the learner can reshape his knowledge through interaction with others
Perceives the learner as an uninformed acolyte for whom access to knowledge will be difficult, since he must qualify himself through tests of appropriate performance	Perceives the learner as already possessing systematic and relevant knowledge and the means of reshaping that knowledge.

Barnes' and Shemilts' (1974) description of a Transmission ideology suggests an outcome driven approach by proposing that the teaching 'Function' shown in Figure 21 is, in part, about product and task. It is an interesting aside to note that the term 'Function' has also emerged from my own research into the tutoring role (Appendix 23). Describing the Transmission tutor as '*guardian*' of the criteria suggests a balance of power heavily weighted on the side of the tutor whereas the model describes the Interpretation tutor as '*setting up a dialogue*' and believes that '*knowledge* [is created] *through interaction with others*'. During this study I found that students want to feel that their tutors are engaged in the tutoring activity (see p105) and that the students can enjoy an equal relationship with their tutor (see p119), which implies that the students' preference is towards personal tutors who demonstrate an interpretation ideology. In addition to the findings that students' desire engagement and a democratic relationship with tutors, the significance of communication, or more specifically, dialogue also emerged from the exploration of feelings and emotions at play. Dialogue has been described by Bohm (cited by Dixon, 1998:30) as a flow of meaning between two people (see p105), and Williamson (1998:188) clarifies the difference between dialogue and conversation by explaining that dialogue is an extension of conversation as it has the added dimension of commitment from those engaged to reach a shared understanding. In order to bring to the fore the importance of personal tutors' ideology and their method of communication the conceptual idea for this exploratory model encompass these two aspects.

I began the process of formulating the exploratory tool by considering how I could present tutor ideology and tutor interaction in a clear and logical format that tutors would understand and relate to (Figure 21). In order to do this I started with the Transmission and Interpretation ideologies presented by Barnes and Shemilt (1974) to capture the essence of tutors' attitudes based on opposing ideological perspectives of

what teaching and learning is. I started here because my research thus far has found that tutor 'Attitudes' influence their perception of what the tutoring 'Function' is (see p120).

Figure 26: Conceptual Model of Tutoring Styles

	Autocratic	**Democratic**	
Focussed on Outcomes (Transmission) ↕	Functional Problem Solver Motivator Leader	Developmental Mentor Guide Sounding Board	↕ **Focussed on the Learner (Interpretation)**
	Directive Manager Authority Figure Role model	Facilitative Advisor Facilitator	
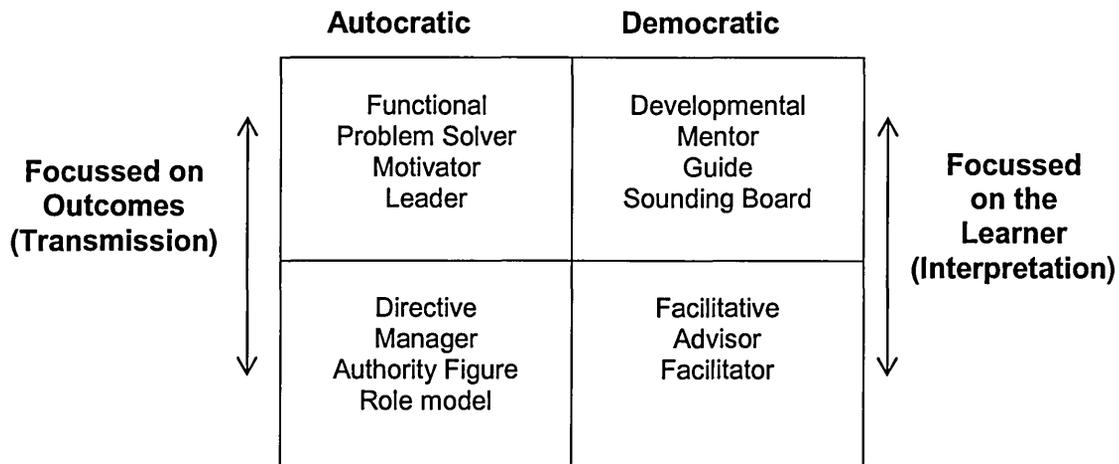
In the conceptual model above I chose to present the Transmission ideology to mean focussed on outcomes, and the Interpretation ideology to mean focussed on the learner as this was the overall theme I drew from Barnes and Shemilts' (1974) hypothetical descriptions of the two. The other key aspect I considered was the style of interaction for which, from the exploration of the tutor role and subsequent descriptions of 'Function', I found there to be two extremes, Democratic and Autocratic. The use of the term 'Democratic' is of particular importance to the tutors' exploration of their tutoring skills as this study has found that democratic interaction is essential to positive tutoring (see p105). The four quadrants in this model represent four 'Styles of Tutoring'. The 'Functions' tutors identified with during the exploration of the tutoring role (see p116) were placed according to how I perceived them to best fit the ideology and style of interaction in each quadrant. For example, the model suggests that a tutor adopting a Developmental style of tutoring would demonstrate an interpretation ideology, which is focussed on working in partnership with the learner using a democratic style of interaction. The tutor adopting this style is likely to relate to the Function descriptions of Mentor, Guide and Sounding Board. The model works well up to this point but then, when considering the Facilitative quadrant the model fails to work as it could be argued that the Developmental quadrant shares the same ideology and interaction as the Facilitative quadrant, suggesting that there was no difference between the two. Being aware that the model was flawed I set out to make amendments.

The second stage in developing the exploratory tool was to reconsider the layout so that more permutations of the tutor ideologies and tutor interaction would work together and so that a clear difference could be seen between each of the four quadrants representing separate tutoring styles, which resulted in the following model.

Figure 27: Revised Model of Tutoring Styles Incorporating Teacher Ideologies and Styles of Interaction

```
                              Facilitative
                                  |
              Facilitator       | Friend
               Motivator        | Sounding Board
            Problem Solver      |        Mentor
  Functional  _____  Developmental
  (Transmission)              |                          (Interpretation)
               Leader         |             Advocate
               Manager        |          Advisor
                Authority Figure | Guide
                                  |
                              Directive
```
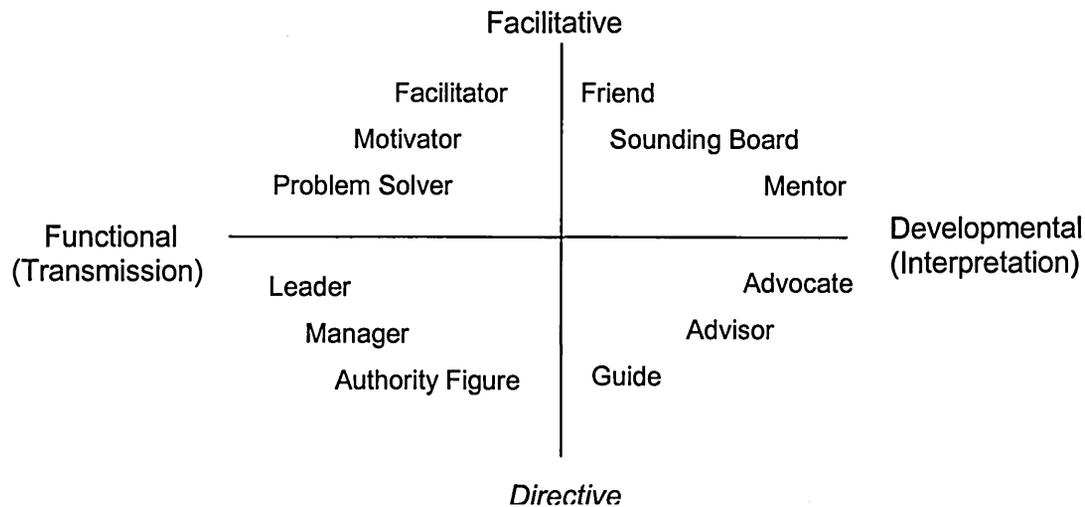
This model illustrates two aspects, one based on tutor ideology, the other based on interaction:

Ideology:
- **Functional**: The purpose of tutorial is to develop academic and/or vocational competence
- **Developmental**: The purpose of tutorial is the learners' holistic development

Interaction:
- **Directive**: An autocratic, didactic style where the tutor sees themselves as a manager, organiser and role model
- **Facilitative**: A democratic approach where the tutor sees themselves as a mentor, advisor and advocate

In this model I have moved the four 'Tutoring Styles' previously shown in each quadrant to the outside of the model. The 'Function' descriptors are left within each quadrant and this time they have been arranged to demonstrate a continuum within each quadrant. To explain further we will look at the quadrant between Developmental and Directive (bottom right). The model suggests both Advisor and Guide both subscribe to a developmental ideology however the 'Function' of Advisor is shown as being more facilitative in approach than Guide and Guide is more directive in approach that Advisor, due the positions in which they are set. The presentation of this model works better than the previous one shown in Figure 26 as it allows a greater combination of the tutor ideologies and tutor interaction. However, by moving the four styles to form the structure of the model I have lost the use of democratic and autocratic interaction. This was a concern as I had already stated that democratic interaction is an important element for the exploratory tool (see p132), therefore it was necessary to revise the model further.

The final model (Figure 28) returns to the use of Barnes' and Shemilts' (1974) terminology in relation to Transmission and Interpretation ideologies as I came to the

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conclusion that, rather than imposing my own interpretation on these opposing ideologies, it would be more useful if tutors were introduced to the Barnes and Shemilt (1974) model as a means to encouraging them to explore their tutoring ideology rather than to be simply presented with a choice. I also returned to the use of democratic and autocratic styles of interaction in order to re-introduce the term democratic back into the model, as democratic interaction was highlighted as an important aspect of the tutoring relationship. In addition, the model has been simplified by removing the Function descriptions as they overcomplicated the diagram by adding too much information. Instead the Functions have been added to the descriptions of the four emergent tutoring styles, Functional, Developmental, Facilitative and Directive, which follow the model diagram. The tutoring style descriptions provided alongside the model have emerged from merging the inductive findings of this study (see p115-119) with the concept of the Transmission and Interpretation ideologies as presented by Barnes and Shemilt (1974). For each Tutoring Style therefore the five components of the tutoring role i.e. Function, Attitudes, Personality, Skills and Knowledge (see p120) have been considered within the descriptions.

Figure 28: Exploratory Model of Tutoring Styles

Democratic

Functional   **Developmental**

Transmission ——————|—————— **Interpretation**

Directive   **Facilitative**

Autocratic
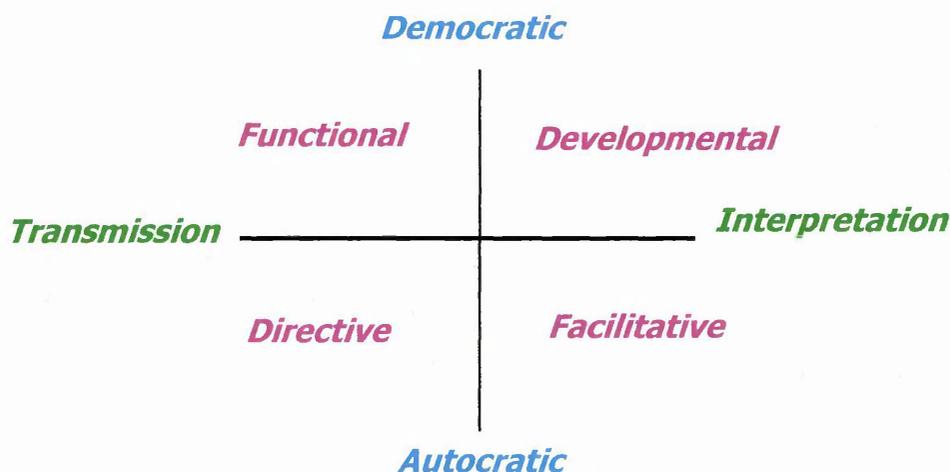
Key

Tutor Ideology (based on Barnes & Shemilt 1974)

Style of Tutor Interaction

Style of Tutorial Relationship

The Developmental Tutor: This style of tutoring relationship is based on mutual respect. The tutor values the learners' ability to interpret and internalise information, which is demonstrated by allowing the learner freedom to make their own choices and decisions. The tutor therefore engages in a democratic style of interaction with the learner, perceiving knowledge to be developed through dialogue. The agenda, aims and objectives are negotiated as the balance of power is shared. The tutor draws on his/her own life experience and self-awareness and engages in appropriate openness to identify potential problems and explore alternative solutions. A holistic approach to the learners' development is taken and the tutor is likely to support personal issues as

well as academic and professional development. When tutors adopt this style of tutoring they often describe themselves as *Mentor* or *Counsellor*.

The Facilitative Tutor: This style of tutoring relationship is also based on mutual respect, and the tutor values the learners' ability to interpret and internalise information. Again the learner is allowed the freedom to make their own choices and decisions however the facilitative tutor is more likely to lead the learner towards what they believe to be the 'best' solution. The tutor engages in an autocratic style of interaction with the learner, perceiving knowledge to be developed through dialogue. The agenda, aims and objectives are negotiated but tutor led. The facilitative tutor will share their professional life experiences to identify potential problems and explore solutions but is less likely to engage in this activity on a personal level. A holistic approach to the learners' development is taken and assistance given relating to professional and academic matters. The tutor is likely however, to refer the student to 'experts' where support for personal issues is required. When tutors adopt this style of tutoring they describe themselves as *Facilitator* or *Guide*

The Directive Tutor: This style of tutoring relationship is based on respect for authority and it is expected that the learner will demonstrate respect towards the tutor. The directive tutor will resist engaging in negotiation of the tutoring conversation preferring to set the agenda and adopt an autocratic style of interaction. The directive tutor assumes the learner is without knowledge therefore the problem solving approach is to illicit information from the learner about the problem, and then to propose a solution that they expect the learner to follow. The directive tutor perceives the tutoring role to be a means of monitoring and ensuring the student is adequately supported in terms of their academic and professional development. They are not likely to engage in discussion relating to the learners' personal issues and assume that learners will seek help elsewhere if they need it. When tutors adopt this style of tutoring they often describe themselves as *Manager* or *Problem Solver.*

The Functional Tutor: This style of tutoring relationship is based on shared respect however the level of respect is weighted towards the tutor. The agenda for the tutoring conversation is tutor led with student engagement as the tutor adopts a democratic style of interaction. The Functional tutor assumes the learner is without knowledge therefore the problem solving approach is to illicit information from the learner about the problem, proposing a number of solutions for discussion to achieve a joint decision. This tutor perceives the tutoring role to be a means of monitoring and ensuring the student is adequately supported in terms of their academic and professional development. They are not likely to engage in discussion relating to the learners' personal issues and assume that learners will seek help elsewhere if they need it. When tutors adopt this style of tutoring they often describe themselves as *Leader or Advisor*

I presented this model to a focus group comprised of nine tutors on 19th June 2006 for critique. I was seeking to ascertain whether the proposed model was clear enough for tutors to understand on seeing it for the first time. I also sought to ascertain whether or not the tutors felt that the model would a have a purpose in supporting reflection on their tutoring practice. Tutors were invited to comment on the tutoring styles descriptions and whether the 'Functions' identified earlier sat well against the descriptions. The participants remarked that they understood the descriptions and that the use of 'Functions' helped in that understanding.

During this activity a discussion occurred regarding how the tutors envisaged the model being used as some tutors were attempting to identify themselves as 'being' a particular 'type of tutor' whereas other tutors were considering the 'style of tutoring' they 'adopted'. From this discussion it was concluded that the model encapsulated differing styles of tutoring and that the proposed model therefore represented the tutor 'as a whole' and that it is appropriate for different styles to be adopted by the tutor depending on the task being undertaken, the needs of the student being supported and the level of importance placed on the outcome for the student. This brought into play the significance of 'situational appropriateness'. Tutors argued that it is sometimes necessary for example to be didactic in their approach to ensure that a student understands clearly the steps that can be taken to complete an essential piece of work at the end of the academic year. Tutors also suggested that there are some situations when it is necessary to spend time with a student in helping them to explore an issue so that they are able to draw on their own internal resources and strategies in order to resolve a problem. The consensus was therefore that the model should be presented as an exploratory tool to enable tutors to examine their attitudes and interactions by considering each style in turn, rather than saying that one style is 'better' than another. Furthermore, the participants concluded that a skilful personal tutor would have the ability to speedily assess the situation, the needs of the student and the student's coping abilities in order to adopt the appropriate style for that situation. The proposal is therefore that the personal tutor is multi-faceted and possesses the aptitude to draw on a range of skills and abilities to suit the circumstances, the subject matter being discussed i.e. personal or academic and the individual student's level of autonomy.

8.2   Verifying and Expanding the Model of Tutoring Styles

Having explored the perceived usefulness of the emergent exploratory tool by encouraging a tutor focus group to test its 'workability' the model was presented to a number of personal tutors in five separate focus group meetings for further verification and development. The first three meetings took place on 19th 20th and 21st June 2006 and were carried out as part of the institutions' personal tutor professional development activities. The fourth and fifth focus groups were held in workshops at the National Association of Managers of Student Services (NAMSS) Annual Conference on 3rd July 2006.

During the first focus group meeting in which the model of personal tutoring styles was presented seven tutors were in attendance. They were each provided with a copy of the model and a description of each of the four tutoring styles. They were asked to consider each of the styles in light of their own practice and identify which style they felt they had a propensity towards using. I hoped that by setting the task in this manner it

would encourage a level of reflective practice. The tutors were then provided with a handout listing desirable skills, knowledge, personality and attitudes identified by tutors and students, which were arrived at during previous explorations of the tutoring role (see p115-119). Tutors were requested to identify which of the aspects within the Skills, Knowledge, Attitudes and Personality) related to their chosen style of tutoring by marking each with a tick at the side. When analysing the results of this exercise it was interesting to find that all seven tutors had chosen 'Facilitative' as their preferred style and collectively all aspects except for 'detached' had been marked. After considering possible reasons for this anomaly I drew two conclusions. Firstly, by making the activity personal to each individual tutor by asking them to consider their own tutoring style, I had unwittingly introduced the potential for personal judgements to be made about what was believed to be 'good' or 'bad' tutoring which the tutors were either implicitly or explicitly aware of, which implied that this was how others would see them. Secondly, that in order to achieve a more objective view of how the aspects could be related to the styles, a different approach needed to be taken whereby tutors would distance themselves from the evaluation.

The second focus group consisted of eight personal tutors in total. The activity was carried out in a similar way to the first with two minor changes instigated by the first group findings. The first change was to allow tutors to work in pairs. The first group had voiced the opinion that it was a difficult task to do alone and would have preferred to work with a partner so that they could discuss their choices. As the purpose of this research project is to arrive at some consensus of opinion I deemed it appropriate to allow discussion to occur. The second change was to de-personalise the activity so each pair of tutors were randomly allocated a tutoring style to consider. This also allowed the activity to be managed so that each tutoring style was considered an equal number of times. The outcome of this session was very different to the first as each style was evaluated and the responses for the Facilitative style did not tick all the boxes on this occasion, which confirmed my initial suspicion that the previous findings had been skewed. Based on this finding I decided to discount the data from the first focus group activity to avoid tainting the overall results. I repeated this activity in the same way for the third focus group in which eight tutors participated.

The fourth and fifth focus groups were convened as conference workshops to explore the tutoring model. A total of twenty-four delegates participated in two consecutive workshops (twelve in each workshop). The delegates were all involved in personal tutoring and therefore understood the concept of tutoring in post-compulsory education. A brief presentation was given to the participants to show how the model had emerged before proceeding with the exercise. Again, the styles were randomly assigned but this

time the participants worked together in groups of three to ensure that an equal number of responses for each tutoring style were obtained i.e. four groups of participants evaluating one tutoring style each within each workshop. The purpose of this exercise was to give an opportunity for the personal tutoring community to critique the model by commenting on the content, language, terminology and perceived usefulness. This approach managed to include participants from a broader range of Further Education Colleges geographically which in turn contributed to reducing bias as the research participants thus far had been recruited from a limited number of sources (Morgan, 1997:35-37). Participants had an opportunity to discuss and change the titles of the tutoring styles and only one comment was received. The participant commenting felt that by using the word 'Facilitative' as a named style of tutoring there may be a danger that the term would be misconstrued and that the model was suggesting that personal tutors were facilitators. Other participants however put forward the view that the model is clear that a personal tutor adopts (or, in their words '*should*' adopt) all of these styles at appropriate times and that a personal tutor would be all of these things in varying circumstances. I made a point of acknowledging the participant's comment, accepting that by presenting the model in written form without the opportunity to offer additional explanation it does, as with any other writing, leave it open to the reader's own interpretation, which may not always meet with the writer's intended meaning. However, on consideration of this comment following the event I chose to stay with the original wording as the participants' general consensus was that the model was clear as presented.

I analysed and collated the second, third, fourth and fifth focus groups' responses together. I did not include the first focus group data to avoid skewing the overall findings (see p137). The collective analysis includes one set of responses for each tutoring style from focus group two, and three sets of responses for each tutoring style from focus groups three, four and five. The format used to display the findings in Figures 25-27 inclusive was designed to allow patterns to emerge in relation to the Skills, Knowledge, Personality and Attitudes that tutors collectively consider to be attributable to each style. The numbers represent the number of group responses therefore a maximum of four can be achieved for each style. The 'scores' range from nought (no tutors believe that aspect to be attributable to the particular tutoring style they are considering), to four (all tutors believed that aspect to be attributable to the particular tutoring style they are considering). I envisaged that this additional information would add depth to the original descriptions of the tutoring styles.

In attempting to make sense of the data, I have taken the position that the scoring indicates a level of importance attributed to each aspect (Skills, Knowledge, Personality

and Attitudes) within the individual tutoring styles, i.e. where all participants identified an aspect in relation to a particular style, the strength of consensus implies that it is highly important that that particular aspect would be demonstrated by the personal tutor adopting that style of tutoring. In contrast, a lower level of consensus would indicate that the aspect is less important to effective engagement in that particular tutoring style. In applying this theory the term 'important' is allocated to aspects receiving a score of 4 or 3. The term 'less important' is allocated to aspects receiving a score of 2 or 1. Those aspects receiving a nil result are deemed not to be important to effectively engaging in that tutoring style. When participants were undertaking this activity the mindset was such that without exception they would refer to 'essential', 'desirable' and 'not essential' in their evaluations. As I had committed at an early stage to stay true to the data (see p60) the descriptions that follow the tables below present the participants' perceptions using their terminology.

The numbers presented in the following tables refer to each pair of participants, for example 2 represents four participants working in two pairs.

Figure 29: Analysis of Skills Attributable to Tutoring Styles

Skills	Directive	Functional	Facilitative	Developmental
Reflective listening, questioning & speaking skills	0	2	1	4
Persuasive and influential as an advocate	1	2	3	1
Ability to create concrete positive outcomes	4	4	2	1
Ability to relate to others	0	2	1	4
Counselling skills	0	1	0	4
Ability to advise without imposing	0	2	3	3
Ability to draw things out during one-to-one discussion	0	2	2	4
Observant - ability to identify problems and pick up less obvious signs	0	2	1	4
Mentoring Skills	0	1	2	3
Organisational skills	4	3	2	2
Negotiating skills	0	1	1	2
Time management skills	4	3	1	1
Creative thinking	0	1	2	1
Leadership skills	4	3	1	0
Clarity of thought	3	3	2	1
Ability to facilitate group discussion	0	2	3	2

Directive Style: The data suggests that a tutor adopting a Directive style would be expected to demonstrate leadership, management and organisational skills and have the ability to create positive outcomes. The majority of respondents believed that clarity of thought was essential for this style of tutoring but only one group of respondents believed there to be a need for the Directive style to incorporate persuasive and advocacy skills. It was not expected by any respondents that the Directive style of tutoring would need to engage in any interpersonal skills such as mentoring skills,

being observant to pick up signs indicating potential problems, being able to relate to others or reflective listening skills.

Functional Style: The data suggests a broader range of skills are demonstrated in the Functional style in comparison to the Directive style however as with the Directive style, all the participants perceived the ability to create positive outcomes to be important to this style of tutoring. All but one of the pairs of respondents envisaged leadership and time management skills as essential to this style. The ability to facilitate group discussion and demonstrate interpersonal skills was only considered to be necessary by half of the respondents. Only one out of the four pairs of respondents thought there to be a need to engage in mentoring skills, counselling skills or creative thinking.

Facilitative Style: This style was the only one where the respondents did not agree totally on any aspect of skills. The nearest to consensus reached was 3 of the 4 pairs of participants believing that it is necessary for tutors adopting a facilitative style to have persuasive advocacy skills plus the ability to facilitate discussion and to advise without imposing. I have also noted that the only skills not deemed by all the participants to be necessary were counselling skills, which is in stark contrast to the Directive style where only five of the skills listed were deemed essential.

Figure 30: Analysis of Knowledge Attributable to Tutoring Styles

Knowledge	Directive	Functional	Facilitative	Developmental
Understand potential problems and alternative solutions	2	4	2	3
Know when to refer on to internal or external support agencies (understand own knowledge limitations)	2	4	4	1
Know and understand course structure, required outcomes and assessment	4	4	3	0
Knowledge of additional support available	0	3	4	1
Know the student and how they are doing at College	1	4	2	2
Understand how to apply current professional requirements to course	2	3	2	0
Life experience and self-awareness	0	2	4	4

Directive Style: The only essential knowledge identified for the Directive style of tutoring is related to the course structure, outcomes and assessment. The participants were split in relation to understanding potential problems and agencies for support suggesting that some tutors felt that Directive tutoring includes support for personal and welfare issues. Tutors were also split in relation to understanding the broader professional requirements in relation to the course implying that, for some tutors, the focus is on the student completing their course of study rather than a holistic preparation for the vocation they are planning to enter.

Functional Style: The participants agreed that in order to undertake the Functional tutoring style effectively it is necessary to know the students and how they are progressing on the course, to understand problems that may occur and have the knowledge to help them refer students to appropriate internal or external agencies for support. They did not feel that it was necessary to bring life experience or self-awareness to this style of tutoring.

Facilitative Style: All the participants evaluating the Facilitative style of tutoring believed that this style requires tutors to bring their life experience and self-awareness to the relationship and to understand what internal additional support and external support agencies were available and when it is appropriate to refer students on. However it is not suggested that understanding potential problems and possible solutions is essential or that the tutor need know the student or how they are doing at college. The participants also deemed it essential here for tutors to understand the course structure, outcomes and assessment but that does not extend to professional requirements beyond the course remit.

Developmental Style: Considering the holistic approach to tutoring suggested in the Developmental style it is surprising that that the only essential elements appear to be an understanding of potential problems and the knowledge brought about by the tutor's from life experience and self-awareness. No participants identified a need for tutors adopting this style to understand the course structure or related professional requirements. Furthermore I am concerned at the perception that tutors adopting the Developmental style need not be aware of additional support and external agencies available to students, suggesting that it is not expected for referral to take place which may hinder meeting the level of expert support an individual student requires (see p118).

Figure 31: Analysis of Personality Attributable to Tutoring Styles

Personality	Directive	Functional	Facilitative	Developmental
Genuine/credible - acknowledges human imperfection	1	2	2	3
Humorous – good sense of humour	0	2	2	1
Kind, caring, compassionate	0	2	2	2
Honest, truthful	3	1	3	3
Confident	4	4	4	2
Understanding, empathetic	0	2	2	4
Patient	0	2	2	3
Friendly	0	3	2	2
Trustworthy	2	2	3	3.
Have an emotional side/emotional intelligence	0	1	2	4
Tactful	0	1	2	3

Directive Style: It was found that being honest, truthful and confident were perceived to be the most essential personality traits for the Directive style of tutoring. Trustworthy

was also identified as desirable however none of the traits you would attribute to emotional intelligence were identified as remotely necessary.

Functional Style: Being confidant and friendly featured as essential in the Functional style. Desirable personality traits include being genuine, credible, trustworthy, kind, humorous, patient and empathetic, suggesting the potential for positive interaction.

Facilitative Style: Trustworthy, confident, honest and truthful were considered to be essential personality traits for Facilitative tutoring. Desirable traits were the same as for the Functional style with the addition of emotional intelligence and tactfulness.

Developmental Style: The participants considered the most important personality traits to be understanding, empathetic and emotionally intelligent. Essential personality traits for the Developmental style of tutoring to be Genuine and credible, honest and trustworthy, patient and tactful. It was found to be desirable for tutors adopting a Developmental style to be confident, friendly, humorous, caring and compassionate.

Figure 32: Analysis of Attitudes Attributable to Tutoring Styles

Attitudes	Directive	Functional	Facilitative	Developmental
Supportive, sympathetic and understanding	0	1	1	4
Being willing to be there, willing to engage	0	1	3	4
Flexible/adaptable	0	1	2	4
Organised, disciplined	4	4	1	1
Respect for confidentiality - not to share information with other students and tutors	2	2	4	4
Welcoming, approachable, receptive	0	1	1	2
No barrier between tutor and student	0	2	3	3
Pride in the role	2	2	3	1
Not superior, mutual respect	0	1	3	4
Easy to talk to, friendly approach	0	2	2	4
Allow students to maintain self-respect	0	2	4	4
Do not display favouritism, treat everyone equally	3	3	4	3
Prepared to negotiate	0	1	1	3
Helpful	1	2	3	4
Clean and tidy/good presentation	2	3	2	0
Offer alternatives not direct instruction. Allow students freedom to make own choices/decisions	0	1	1	3
Be able to work with the person as a partnership	0	1	2	3
Assertive but not aggressive	4	4	1	1
Respect students' wishes to keep things to themselves	2	3	4	2
Punctual	4	1	2	2
Determination to make you do well	3	1	1	1
Formal but caring	1	2	4	1
Non-judgemental, Objectivity	1	0	2	3
Detached	3	1	2	0
Desire to help	1	2	2	2
Ownership and responsibility	2	2	3	0
Competent	4	3	2	2

Considerate, diplomatic	0	1	2	2
Realistic expectations	0	2	1	2
Appropriate openness	0	1	1	3
Student-centred	0	1	2	3
Firm but fair	4	2	4	0

Directive Style: Participants focussed on being organised, punctual, competent, assertive, detached, firm but fair and treating everyone equally as essential to the Directive style. Desirable attitudes included taking a pride in the role and being well presented, being objective, taking ownership, being helpful and being formal but caring. Many of the attitudes that suggest an equal and democratic relationship were not identified as necessary to the Directive style of tutoring.

Functional Style: The participants' main focus in relation to attitudes for the Functional style were: organised, disciplined and assertive. Treating students fairly and equally, respecting their privacy being competent and well presented also featured highly. All other aspects were deemed to be desirable except for being objective, which was not identified by any of the participants for this style.

Facilitative Style: The participants identified an importance in respecting students confidentiality and self-respect and found it to be essential that when adopting this style tutors are mindful to treat students equally in a formal and caring manner. All other aspects were considered to be desirable despite some potential conflict between certain aspects such as being detached and being willing to be engaged.

Developmental Style: For tutors adopting the Developmental style it was not considered to be necessary for tutors be to detached or firm and personal presentation did not appear to be important. What was considered most important was to be engaged, flexible, helpful, friendly and respectful. It was also considered important to be sympathetic, supportive, easy to talk to and respectful of students' confidentiality. The significance of relationship came through in the importance of tutors' attitudes for there to be no barrier between student and tutor and being prepared to share appropriate openness so that they work in partnership, being student centred and allowing students to make their own decisions.

This exploration of how the Skills, Knowledge, Personality and Attitudes sit with the four tutoring styles identified by this research has identified a number of points:

- The participants' view of the Directive style of tutoring sets it aside from the other three styles as the range of skills for the Directive style appears limited in comparison and any skills or attitudes relating to personal interaction are not deemed necessary in the Directive style.
- The Directive and Functional styles share similarities in relation to leadership, management and organisational skills and being able to create positive outcomes
- The skills for the Development style have a focus on understanding the individual and creating positive interaction in order to engage well with students

- on equal terms and empower them to draw on their own experiences to support decision making
- The Developmental style stood aside from the other three styles in relation to expectations of knowledge base. It was found that tutors felt it necessary here to bring their own life experience and self-awareness to the relationship in order to understand potential problems and possible solutions. The Functional style shares the importance of understanding problems and the Facilitative style shares the importance of life experiences.
- The Directive, Functional and Facilitative styles share the importance for understanding the course structure, outcomes and assessment.
- The Directive style stands apart from Developmental style in relation to personality traits sharing only the need to be honest and truthful
- The Developmental style and Directive style share only the need to be fair and equal with students and respecting students' wishes.

The findings from the exploration of tutoring styles in relation to Skills, Knowledge, Attitudes and Personality were drawn together in a list for each style set out in relation to the ratings achieved from the previous exercise (Appendix 28). I organised two further tutor focus groups, the first on 12th February 2007 with ten participants and the second on 14th February with eleven participants, each session was split into three working groups to allow for discussion. The purpose of holding these groups was to present the final exploratory tool together with the additional analysis of Skills etc to find out whether the additional information contributed further to the tutors' understanding and use of the exploratory tool. The tutoring model was presented along with lists of the rated Skills etc, identified in the previous round of focus groups, without the related tutoring style being shown. Once the tutors had been taken through the concept of the exploratory tool the participants were asked to consider each list and attempt to identify which tutoring style the list represented. In all cases the Directive and Developmental styles were found to be easily identifiable however in each session one group of tutors had difficulty deciding between Functional and Facilitative. The main confusion appeared to stem from the tutors' own interpretation of the term 'Facilitative' where they perceived facilitating to engage in an democratic rather than autocratic style of interaction. The groups played with swapping the Functional and Facilitative styles around in the model but felt that this did not work. After this process both focus groups concluded that the importance in understanding the exploratory tool lies in understanding the tool as it is presented rather than placing one's own interpretation on it.

The tutors participating in these two final verification exercises perceived the exploratory tool to be useful in helping them to reflect on their tutoring practice. It was felt that the model directed them towards considering the perceptions they brought to the tutoring relationship and how these were played out in their general approach. They commented proposed that the contribution this model makes to personal tutor development is in raising awareness of how their ideology and interaction impacts on

their tutoring relationship and felt that this was missing from general teacher education. The tutors also noted that as they considered the model they revealed to themselves that they had a propensity towards adopting certain styles of tutoring and, in some cases, an avoidance of certain tutoring styles. One tutor shared her evaluation and explained that she had not previously realised that she did not engage in what the model refers to as a 'Directive' style of tutoring. Furthermore she acknowledged that having given this some consideration she had come to the realisation that she avoided situations with students that may be construed as confrontational which she believed was the reason for staying with a democratic style of interaction. Furthermore whilst looking at the Attitudes related to each style of tutoring she concluded that she lacked assertiveness which the model suggests is significant to undertaking the Directive style effectively. To this end she chose to undertake training to develop her confidence and assertiveness.

8.3 Summary

I conclude from the validation exercises that the teaching ideology and method of interaction that each style is designed to represent is evident in the allocation of the various Attitudes, Skills, Knowledge and Personality. I propose however, that in the case of the Directive and Developmental styles the findings represent a caricature of these styles. I have based this assumption on the polarised views for example that a Directive style would not require a tutor to be patient or friendly and that a Developmental style would not require the tutor to possess any leadership skills or have the ability to create positive outcomes. I consider therefore that these findings are useful in providing an insight into tutors' perceptions of what is required of the tutor to undertake any one of these styles. I do not propose however that these findings should be translated into a list of competencies required for each style to be effective because the research was not designed with the intention of producing a competency framework. This activity also highlighted how the styles may be related to particular learning situations and 'types' of students e.g. confident and autonomous or anxious and dependant and I propose that the model should be further explored against the backdrop of student typologies and case study scenarios to give practical examples of when the various tutoring styles may be most appropriate.

The tutors' evaluation concluded that the model encapsulated differing styles of tutoring and that the proposed model therefore represented the tutor 'as a whole' and that it is appropriate for different styles to be adopted by the tutor depending on the task being undertaken, the needs of the student being supported and the level of importance placed on the outcome for the student. The consensus was therefore that the model should be presented as an exploratory tool to enable tutors to examine their attitudes

and interactions by considering each style in turn, rather than saying that one style is 'better' than another. The proposal is therefore that the skilled personal tutor is multi-faceted and possesses the aptitude to draw on a range of skills and abilities to suit the circumstances, the subject matter being discussed i.e. personal or academic and the individual student's level of autonomy. It is interesting to note however that the students' preference is towards personal tutors who demonstrate an interpretation ideology, as they desire engagement, a democratic relationship with tutors and positive dialogue (see p105). Furthermore the Skills and Attitudes that underpin these activities are not present in all the tutoring styles.

In summary, it was found that the tutors perceived the exploratory tool to be useful in helping them to reflect on their tutoring practice, as the model directed them towards exploring the perceptions they brought to the tutoring relationship and how these were played out in their general approach. Tutors also found it useful in raising self-awareness of their ideology and interaction in relation to their tutoring relationship and noted that they had a propensity towards adopting certain styles of tutoring and, in some cases, an avoidance of other tutoring styles. Furthermore, tutors raised their concerns that this self-reflection in relation to tutoring was not addressed through general teacher education and considered the use of this exploratory tool to go some way towards addressing this concern.

This chapter has concluded the presentation of my empirical research and subsequent grounded theory. My final task in bringing this thesis to a close is to give an evaluation of the implications and limitations of the inquiry in the final chapter.

Chapter 9:   Implications and Limitations of the Study

In this final chapter I discuss the implications and limitations of the study. The chapter is presented in three parts. In the first section I provide a summary of the research findings. Within this section I will discuss the conclusions I have drawn, the contribution the study makes and the implications and recommendations for managing tutorial provision in post-compulsory education, based on these findings. In the second section I will discuss and evaluate the research methodology and methods employed to undertake the inquiry. Finally, the summary draws together the contributions of this study and draws the thesis to a close. But first, I will give a brief overview of the research.

I designed the inquiry to inductively explore two aspects of tutorial provision in post-compulsory education. First of all the nature and purpose of tutorial provision was explored by students and tutors in order to ascertain their perceptions of tutorial needs and expectations. The rationale for this was to address the low profile tutorial provision suffers at national and institutional levels across the sector, and because the confusing range of definitions imply a need for the objectives of tutorial provision to be more clearly articulated. Secondly, the personal tutoring role was explored in order to understand what students' and tutors' perceived the key aspects of the role to be, and to understand the value placed upon it by the students, the tutors and the institution. The rationale behind this aspect was to address the lack of confidence and commitment many tutors demonstrate when undertaking the role, due in part, to arbitrary recruitment and insufficient personal tutor training. Finally, a third aspect emerged during the inductive inquiry, which led to the exploration of feelings and emotions at play within the tutoring relationship.

9.1   The Research Findings, Contributions and Recommendations

The National Improvement Strategy places a responsibility on post-compulsory education to prepare young people to make a positive contribution to the country's economic stability. The Government also looks to the sector to develop young people's vocational and employability skills on the basis of locally and nationally identified skills shortages (see p21), which it has been argued will *'more closely aid social reproduction'* (Walford; cited by Olssen et al, 2004:200). Whether or not we agree with this sentiment, we cannot ignore the significance this has for tutorial provision in relation to the development of employability skills and the co-ordination of individual students' personalised programmes of learning (see p22) an integral part of the new specialised diplomas (see p29). Paradoxically, despite there being an implicit acceptance within the post-compulsory education sector that tutorial provision

contributes to student retention and achievement, this is not explicitly reflected in the resources attributed to the provision as the demands on tutorial provision grows. Furthermore, the research has found that the system of student support has been regressive and a disincentive to widening participation (see p17).

This research has found that tutorial provision suffers from a low profile and is not valued at national level on three counts. Firstly, the inspection regime does not allow for fair representation of the contribution tutorial provision makes to students' personal and professional development. The system relies heavily on statistical data to evaluate impact and does not take account of the narrative evidence provided by students' individual experiences. Furthermore, tutorial provision is lost amongst the various key questions during inspection (see p27) and the format of the questions do not fully acknowledge all the areas in which tutorial makes a contribution. Secondly, the managerialism of education has resulted in a 'stifling and de-motivating educational bureaucratic system' in which the tutor role has become 'deprofessionalised'. This has resulted in suppressing tutors' creativity and depleting the value of tutors' professional judgement (Bottery, 2000:57). Thirdly, there remains a concern over the lack of definition and shared purpose which was identified at least as far back as 1977 (Bramley, 1977:29) and according to Lang and Marland (1985), Earwaker (1992), Best (1995) and Calvert and Henderson (1998) has not been addressed adequately since, which implies that research such as this is long overdue.

From the exploration of the nature and purpose of tutorial a heuristic framework inductively emerged (Appendix 19). The framework encapsulates the nature and purpose of tutorial provision as perceived by the research participants. It is presented as a tool to support the design and planning of tutorial provision that meets students' needs and expectations. The framework provides clarity in relation to the broad objectives of tutorial provision to contribute to the current lack of shared understanding in relation to its nature and purpose (see p9). The framework also provides a brief description of each element of tutorial to facilitate discussion during the planning process and to contribute to the debate on the nature of tutorial provision in the current post-compulsory education environment. The framework stops short however at giving a prescriptive scheme as this would frustrate attempts to achieve flexible and differentiated provision that I have found, during this research, to be essential to providing adequate and appropriate personalised learning (see p23). Furthermore a single definition of tutorial provision is not provided for two reasons. Firstly, because a single definition did not inductively emerge from the data and secondly, because a single definition would not reflect the complex nature of tutorial provision (see p96). The heuristic framework however, does illustrate the complexity of provision and

serves as a framework to support institutions to develop tutorial provision that meets the needs of their student cohort and fits with their organisational values and objectives.

From the exploration of the personal tutoring role a definition of personal tutoring emerged, being described as a learning relationship for which democratic interaction and positive dialogue are essential components. This is particularly significant when considered in light of the students' expectations that their tutor will be a willing and engaged partner in the tutoring relationship (see p118). I found that personal tutors can hold one of three attitudes towards the tutoring role. There are those that do not want to engage in personal tutoring, those who undertake the role because they are instructed to as part of their overall teaching commitment and those who enjoy and value the role (see p113). These attitudes have implications for recruiting to the personal tutoring role, for example in relation to the level of commitment that can be expected from a tutor who does not wish to undertake the role. I propose that to ensure that the personal tutors assigned to the role are committed to it; attempts should be made to move away from the current arbitrary arrangements of allocating the role on the basis of tutors' availability and look to identifying tutors who demonstrate a willingness to engage in tutorial practice. During this aspect of the inquiry an archetype of the personal tutor role and attributes emerged (Appendix 27) showing that the tutors' skills, knowledge, and personality influence their attitudes towards the role. The model draws together the students' and tutors' expectations of the role and a summary of their perceptions of desirable Skills, Knowledge, Attitudes and Personality. It provides an insight into the perceptions of the personal tutoring role to contribute to clarifying its nature and purpose, but should by no means be considered as a competency framework or person specification for the role (see p145).

The significance of the tutorial environment and tutor engagement arose on a number of occasions throughout the inquiry, particularly in relation to individual tutorial where the tutorial relationship was found to directly impact on the students' academic achievement and personal wellbeing (see p126). The Further Education students expressed a desire for tutors to be engaged during both group and individual tutorial whereas Higher Education placed the importance of tutor engagement in the context of individual tutorial. I suggest that the contrast in perceptions over tutor engagement during group tutorial stems from the Further Education students' expectations for group tutorial to be fun and informal which is not a perception shared by Higher Education students. The type of group tutorial environment that Further Education students' desire meets the requirement for students to enjoy the learning experience for which evidence is sought during the inspection process (see p27). The students' perceptions

also sit well with the value tutors place on experiential learning. It was also recognised however that tutors are anxious over the tensions between engaging students in experiential activities and employing a didactic teaching approach. The tutors' harbour concerns about ensuring that their work is measurable under the terms of the inspection regime and they gain solace from a directed approach to curriculum design that enables them to 'tick the right boxes'. Paradoxically, as the approach to inspection requires the measurement of specific outcomes to *'enable themes of national significance to be pursued and reported'* (HMI 2651/2006:5) the Government's objectives to develop a creative, inventive and enterprising workforce (see p22) through education, is stifled by de-professionalising the tutors' role (see p15) to a point at which tutors themselves are not afforded the freedom to be inventive or to take risks. To address this tension I propose that the inspectorate should work with tutorial managers and practitioners to investigate possible methods of assessing the quality of tutorial provision whilst allowing tutors to be responsive as well as proactive in their tutorial curriculum design. And in addition, I suggest that in order to address the weakness in the inspection key questions, these are revised to take account of the full contribution tutorial provision makes not only to retention and achievement but also to the students' learning journey and their personal development. As well as addressing the low perceptions of tutorial provision within individual institutions, this will contribute to raising the profile of tutorial provision at national level. It will also support the case for the level of tutorial funding to be reviewed to reflect the growing complexity of tutorial activities and the increasing demands on personal tutors and their time.

An exploration of students' experiences and emotions in a learning context revealed that undemocratic and negative tutor interaction can lead to long lasting unhealthy perceptions of self and others and furthermore I found that, sadly, teacher anger is not uncommon (see p108). On the basis of these findings I propose that the value and significance of 'relationship' should figure highly in personal tutors' professional development, particularly in light of this being a weakness in teacher training (see p109) and there being a lack of in-house training offered by post-compulsory education institutions. Following this insight it is proposed that methods to raise tutors' awareness of the potential to unwittingly create a negative environment and approaches to address and modify detrimental behaviour should be further explored. I also propose that research should be undertaken to shed light on how students' interactions with tutors is affected by previous experience, the measures that can be taken during the tutoring relationship to enable students to be aware of and manage transference of displaced thoughts and feelings, and for tutors to be able to recognise and support where students have a propensity towards misconstruing interaction with others. Furthermore, this study highlights the importance of appropriately recruiting to the

personal tutor role in order to support the development of positive tutoring relationships (see p108). The current staffing for tutorial provision is based on an arbitrary process that is dependant on tutors' availability rather than what they can bring to the role in relation to Skills, Knowledge, Attitudes and Personality. Based on the premise that relationship is significant to the tutoring role this study strongly suggests that greater consideration is given to the selection of personal tutors than currently exists. This proposal is further supported during the exploration of the tutoring role when it was found that tutors' Attitudes, arising from their Personality, Skills and Knowledge, influenced the function they believed to be undertaking as a personal tutor (see p127). The findings in relation to the personal tutoring function identified that some tutors refer to themselves as 'mentor' or 'counsellor'. Counselling is a recognised profession and the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy provides the profession with a quality and ethical standards framework. Mentoring also has its ethical standards and a competency framework provided by the Standards Committee of the European Mentoring and Coaching Council that offers guidance to practicing mentors. I suggest that in order to secure national support for tutoring in post-compulsory education the profile of personal tutoring as a developing profession would benefit from the introduction of professional and ethical standards and appropriate professional development. Furthermore, it would be helpful to contrast the roles of tutoring, mentoring and counselling to clarify the boundaries of the tutoring role (see p128). The study's inductive exploration of the personal tutoring role and attributes resulted in students and tutors identifying a range of Skills, Knowledge, Attitudes and Personality traits that they would expect to see demonstrated in 'good' personal tutoring. I do not suggest that these findings can be transferred directly into a general competency framework as this data relates only to this study's participants' perceptions and it is not claimed that the findings represent the whole post-compulsory student and tutor communities. I do propose however that the methods employed to explore this aspect of the research can be replicated on a larger scale, which would examine my understanding that theoretical saturation had occurred before moving to develop an emergent competency framework.

The importance for tutors to create a positive tutoring relationship identified by this study (see p108) together with confirmation that teacher training and insufficient in-house tutorial training does not prepare tutors well for the personal tutoring role (see p126), led me to consider ways in which this study could contribute to personal tutor development. The research has shown that democratic dialogue is essential to positive tutoring (see p105) and that tutors' Attitudes, shaped by their Skills, Knowledge and Personality, affect what they perceive the purpose of the tutoring role to be, and the Function they believe they are fulfilling (see p120). On this basis I designed a

theoretical model of tutoring to incorporate the two key aspects (dialogue and attitudes). I also made use of the participants' terminology in the descriptions of the emergent tutoring styles. The model does not suggest that tutors adopt a particular tutoring style. What I am proposing is that the model illustrates various styles of tutoring that tutors move between to suit the individual student's needs and the issues being addressed (see p136). The theoretical model is not presented as a prescriptive guide as to how the tutoring role should be undertaken, as this would remove the tutors' professional judgement from their tutoring relationship. It is presented as an exploratory tool to facilitate tutors' reflection on their tutoring practice, to understand how their practice impacts on the students, and to identify related personal or professional development. A number of validation activities were held to test out the 'workability' of the model. During these activities it occurred that some confusion emerged for a small number of participants in relation to the names of the tutoring styles. It was found that the term 'facilitative' used as a tutoring style created difficulties where the participants referred to their interpretation of 'to facilitate' rather than referring to the description of the tutoring style provided as part of the model. During these focus group meetings, alternative names were considered after which the general consensus was that the name 'facilitative' was a best fit. I have subsequently discussed this issue with my current tutorial team and the names of the styles were considered in more detail. Again the consensus was that nothing more appropriate could be found however I confirm that the model is presented at this stage as a work in progress (only in relation to the aspect of the 'facilitative' title) until I have explored more alternatives and resolved the issue to the satisfaction of potential users of the model.

9.2   Evaluation of the Research Methodology

I have chosen to undertake grounded theory, a paradigm that recognises the validity of socially constructed meaning. I must acknowledge that interpretivist research is held up as not being scientific on a number of counts of which the notion of socially constructed meaning is one. This is in opposition to a positivist researchers position, which subscribes to the notion of knowable truths. The interpretive nature of social science research and the potential for the researcher's pre-conceptions to influence the research are also held up as criticisms against it by researchers of the positivist tradition. The positivist paradigm argues that a researcher should be 'value neutral' (see p34). This expectation is refuted in the social sciences as it is argued that in order for the researcher to undertake effective analysis their previous experience and observations in the field, and interaction with the research participants offers a valuable theoretical basis for analysis. Walliman (2006:24-25) supports this stance by suggesting that developing theoretical ideas without some prior theoretical standpoint

is hard to achieve. Respondents in positivist research are considered to be 'objects' of research rather than part of it. Human characteristics and attributes may be used as variables so long as they are observable, therefore opinions, feelings and emotions are not considered to be acceptable data. In positivist research therefore subjective data is avoided whereas in interpretivist research subjective data is valued. Two arguments are put forward in defence of the criticisms levelled against social science research. Cohen and Manion (1989:43) argue that '...*when we speak of social research, we have in mind the systematic and scholarly application of the principles of a science of behaviour to the problems of man within his social context'*. So although social science researchers do not subscribe to the same notion of 'knowable truth' that positivist researchers claim, systematic and scholarly principles are still applied. Furthermore, Baudrillard (cited by Norris, 1990:169) provides a defence against the criticism arguing that '...*'science' itself is just a name we attach to certain modes of explanation'* therefore, I suggest that it is unreasonable to assume that interpretive research is not 'scientific'. I would also ask whether we need to be concerned with the term 'scientific' at all or whether we should be more concerned with valuing the appropriateness of the research methods to its purpose and the rigour with which it is undertaken to evaluate the validity of the research findings. I assert that this study is scholarly and rigorously systematic.

As well as the criticism that may be levelled at this research in relation to the interpretivist paradigm, grounded theory also has its critics. It has been accused of suffering epistemic-dualism. This is particularly levelled at the methods of coding and categorisation which, it is suggested, appear to be indicative of a pragmatic, positivist approach (see p40). In response to this accusation Glaser and Strauss (1967) do not deny the pragmatic influence, but instead draw attention to how the practical benefits derived from grounded theory are in effect due to its pragmatic approach. As well as those that stand against the grounded theory methodology, there are also tensions amongst its supporters. The tension stems from a difference of opinion between the two originators of grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss, and relates to the question of theoretical sensitivity. Glaser (1998:3) insists that '*being honest and true to the data is paramount'* as it is the basis for theoretical sensitivity. Strauss and Corbin (1998:182) however claim that macro and micro conditions should be brought into play, using their conditional/consequential matrix as a tool for analysing these conditions. Glaser (cited by Goulding, 2002:88) condemns this approach suggesting that this is '*forcing the data'*. I resolved this tension for myself by agreeing that the consideration of external factors may be helpful to contextualise the emergent theory and its potential for practical application. I am not alone in this belief and find comfort in Bruner (1990: 32-33) when he states '*....scientific psychology will fare better when it recognises that its*

truths about the human condition are relative to the point of view that it takes forward that condition....The central concept of human psychology is meaning and the process and transactions involved with the construction of meaning'. In essence, meaning is constructed by a process where patterns inherent in the culture's symbolic systems *'its language and discourse modes, the forms of logical and narrative explication, and the patterns of mutually dependent communal life'* (Bruner 1990:33) are embedded and learned by the society's participants. I have concluded from my personal experiential introduction to grounded theory that it is a complex methodology and that any researcher adopting this approach will need to resolve this issue for themselves.

I have previously mentioned in this section that I do not claim that the research findings are generalisable as they represent the participants' socially constructed meanings. They do, however, represent a social consensus derived from the participants. Another contributing factor is the limitations of the sample, which cannot claim to be representative in a traditional sense. However, as Denscombe (2003:110) suggests, there is no need for representative sampling (referring here to a representative population sample of respondents traditionally found in quantitative research) in order to support the claim for generalisability. Furthermore, random sampling is rarely useful in selecting focus group participants (Morgan, 1997:35) and therefore not deemed necessary for this study. Instead, grounded theory calls for theoretical sampling as described by Strauss and Corbin (1998:214) who propose *'When building theory inductively, the concern is with representativeness of concepts and how concepts vary dimensionally'.* They go on to say *'We are looking for events and incidents that are indicative of the phenomena and are not counting individuals or sites per se, each observation, interview or document may refer to multiple examples of these events'.*

In theoretical sampling groups are chosen based on need and where the researcher is most likely to find the information relating to the general phenomenon and latterly in relation to the emergent themes or codes as the research develops (Goulding, 2002:67-68). It was appropriate therefore to access participants in the post-compulsory education institutions I worked at as this was the context for the topics being explored. I did however also take the research outside of the institutions by accessing participants through appropriate conferences. This met the recommendation for external reviewers to consider the data and offer interpretations in order to check consistency (Riley; cited by Goulding, 2002:89) as well as returning to the original participants for their opinions on the developing theory in the early stages of collection, interpretation and abstraction.

As well as the range of participants in this study being limited, so too was the number of participants. The first questionnaire for example was sent to 300 and 67 were

returned. Out of those responses there were 22 students who agreed to take part in the forthcoming focus groups of which 11 were continuing their studies at the college the following year. Of those 11 students continuing their studies, 5 subsequently attended the focus group meetings. The second questionnaire was made available on the student intranet and had the potential to attract 1500 responses and 73 responses were received. Due to a number of circumstances leading up to the distribution of the questionnaires it meant that in both cases they were sent out (or made available in the case on the online version) at the end of the academic year. The unfortunate timing meant that many students had already completed their academic year and were no longer attending college. Furthermore, in both cases the personal tutors were relied upon to inform students of the questionnaire activity and it is unclear how many tutors managed to do this. However, this inquiry did not rely wholly on data from the questionnaires alone. The questionnaire data was a starting point from which further generative data gathering and theory building began. Additional data from the focus groups continued the cyclical and multileveled approach to data collection and analysis (see p45), until theoretical saturation has occurred (see p42), as required in grounded theory. The focus groups were also limited in number. There were sixteen focus group meetings held during the research activity. As there were only a few highly dispersed participants available to meet at any one time it was better to run several smaller groups (Morgan, 1997:40). Morgan further suggests that projects should consist of three to five groups, claiming that more groups seldom generate new meaningful insights. The focus groups in this study comprised of between 5 and 12 participants on each occasion and it was not guaranteed that the same participants would attend each time as peoples' availability varied. That said, I return to the argument that the grounded theory methodology relies on theoretical sampling and not participant sampling. It is a question of the appropriateness of the participants not the number of them.

A multi-method approach (Morgan, 1997:2) was adopted for this study that combined a number of data collection activities. This approach strengthens the research by balancing out some of the differing strengths and weaknesses of each method (Gray, 2004:33). Social scientists have abandoned the choice between qualitative and quantitative research and instead are focussing on the problem of which methods to use at what point (Cohen & Manion 1989:42). In addition to the questionnaires, data collection methods used in the focus group meetings were discussion, visual exploration and Logo Visual Technology. Individual stories were also used in the exploration of feelings and emotions at play. It could be argued that the individual stories do not create shared meaning through social discourse however Glaser (1998:8) proposes that *All is data'* arguing that pre-supposing what data should be

used restricts the generative aspect of the process. I would not expect the participants who entrusted me with these very personal stories to make them known publicly during a focus group meeting, which is why they were written and shared privately, and why I made a point of presenting the stories anonymously in this thesis. Furthermore, I defend the use of individual personal stories in this study, as without the rich illustration they have brought to the exploration of feelings and emotions in the tutoring relationship, the impact of the tutoring relationship on the student and the importance of recruiting appropriately to the tutoring role would not be as clearly understood. I also acknowledge that the use of the researcher's own personal stories has been criticised as self-indulgent as Mykhalovskiy's (contributing to Hertz 1997:229-251) found (see p58). Megginson (2001:8) challenges, albeit with caution, the criticism of using one's own story in research, proposing that our personal stories can serve as a prime example of the phenomenon we wish to study. Moustakas (1990:17) also supports the value of self-disclosure to enhance understanding. Sharing my own personal story with the participants who engaged in the same personal revelations demonstrated mutual respect, as well as contributing data to the study. The process of writing my story also enabled me to explore facets of my *a priori,* and to contest my prior assumptions as part of my own learning journey during this study.

9.3 Summary

The grounded theory methodology has worked well to explore and articulate the shared perceptions of the research participants. As any type of data is acceptable in grounded theory (see p49) it has been possible for me to use imaginative data collection methods such as visual exploration and Logo Visual Technology (see pp55-56), which I used to enthuse participants taking part in focus groups activities. The freedom to use any type of relevant data allowed me to explore the importance of the tutoring relationship through personal stories. This aspect had not featured in the inquiry's original objectives but was an emergent theme I discovered and subsequently explored, due to the inductive nature of grounded theory. The grounded theory methodology has also worked well to originate inductive theory that has practical relevance to managers and practitioners in the field due, in part, to the practical experiences and professional understandings participating tutors contributed to the research and to the developing theory.

Three contributions to knowledge have emerged from this inquiry:

1)   The 'Heuristic Framework for Tutorial Provision' (Appendix 19) contributes to bringing clarity to the nature and purpose of tutorial provision, whilst acknowledging its complexity.
2)   The 'Archetype of the Personal Tutoring Role' (Appendix 27) acknowledges the various 'Functions' tutors believe they are undertaking as personal tutors and the attitudes that underpin their view of the personal tutoring role.

3) The 'Theoretical Model of Tutoring Styles' (see pp134-135) provides a means by which tutors can understand the impact of their tutoring practice by exploring their ideology of teaching and style of interaction.

The theoretical contributions arising from this inquiry are presented 'as it is today'. Furthermore, based on the interpretive nature of this inquiry, the findings are presented as the research participants' shared perceptions, arrived at through socially constructed meanings. It is not claimed that this research provides conclusive answers, nor should it, for as Garvey and Alred (2000) point out, in a complex system there may not be a 'right' answer. A number of previous researchers referred to in this study (see p66) have cited the lack of definition of tutorial provision for holding back tutorial development. This study has found however that due to the complex nature of tutorial provision, to seek one definition would be reductionary and does not allow for flexibility or differentiation in design. This would negate attempts to meet the needs of different student cohorts in varying post-compulsory education institutions. In other words, a 'one fits all' approach arising from a fixed definition would not serve to meet the objectives of tutorial provision. For this reason the 'Heuristic Framework for Tutorial Provision' clarifies the objectives of provision without prescribing how those objectives should be met. The same ethos applies to the Model of Tutoring styles. The importance for tutors to retain ownership over their professional judgement in managing tutoring relationships is acknowledged in the way tutors are encouraged to use the model as a reflective tool. The objective is not to impose how tutors *should* undertake the role, but to recognise that tutoring is a socially constructed relationship and therefore different approaches or 'Styles' *could* be adopted. For this reason the model is presented as a tool for tutors to explore their current practice, the potential impact their current practice may have on students, and how their tutoring practice may be further developed.

I fully expect that as the tutoring community debate these contributions they will be adapted to reflect newfound insights. Saying this however is not to detract from the value of these contributions in bringing together and making sense of what the participating students' and tutors' current expectations are, and in providing the theoretical models for the tutoring community to test and modify.

It is my hope that the findings from this research will move tutorial development forward from its current hiatus and contribute to raising the profile of this important and complex provision. I also hope to see this research instigate debate around professionalizing the personal tutoring role and developing ethical standards, to benefit both students and tutors alike.

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Table of Figures

List of Appendices

Higher Education Students' Tutorial Questionnaire

1. **Name:** (Optional)…………………………………… **Male** ☐ **Female** ☐

2. **Course Title:** ………………………………………………………………………

3. **HNC** ☐ **HND** ☐ **Degree** ☐   **4. Current Year of Study:** 1st ☐ 2nd ☐ 3rd☐

4. **Have you studied at ******* College prior to your present HE course?**

    FE   Yes   ☐ No ☐   **HE**   Yes   ☐ No ☐

6. **Have you previously enrolled to a HE course and not completed?**

    At ******* College Yes ☐ No ☐   **At another Institution** Yes ☐ No ☐
    If No to both of the above please go to Q8

7. **What was the main reason for not completing your previous HE course?**
    Financial circumstances   ☐
    Personal circumstances   ☐
    Difficulties with the course   ☐
    Wrong choice of course   ☐
    Insufficient personal support at the institution   ☐
    Other, please specify……………………………………………………

8. **Age at start of present course**   Under 21   ☐   21+   ☐

9. **Mode of Attendance:** Full-time ☐   Part-time ☐   Distance Learning ☐

10. **Place of Origin:**   **Great Britain**   ☐
                            Living in home district   ☐
                            Living away from home district   ☐
                            International ☐   **EU**   ☐
                            Please specify Country……………………………………

11. **Qualifications on Entry:**   GNVQ Advanced   ☐
                                    A level   ☐
                                    BTEC National Diploma ☐
                                    International Equivalent ☐
                                    HNC   ☐
                                    HND   ☐
                                    Access Qualification ☐
                                    Other   ☐

12. **Do you have a Personal Tutor?**   Yes ☐   No ☐

13. **Do you attend Individual Personal Tutorial sessions?**
    All ☐   Some ☐   None ☐
    If 'None' please go to Q20

14. **Do Individual Personal Tutorials have an effect on your study experience?**

Yes generally a positive effect ☐
Yes generally a negative effect ☐
No effect ☐

15. **How often are the following aspects discussed during your Individual Personal Tutorial?**

	Often	Sometimes	Never
Academic progress	☐	☐	☐
Study skills	☐	☐	☐
Special needs	☐	☐	☐
Career progression	☐	☐	☐
Work experience	☐	☐	☐
Self improvement	☐	☐	☐
Financial problems	☐	☐	☐
Personal problems	☐	☐	☐

Other, please specify…………………………………………………………………

16. **Are you offered support for the problems identified during Individual Personal Tutorial?**

	Yes	No	Sometimes
Academic progress	☐	☐	☐
Study skills	☐	☐	☐
Special needs	☐	☐	☐
Career progression	☐	☐	☐
Work experience	☐	☐	☐
Self improvement	☐	☐	☐
Financial problems	☐	☐	☐
Personal problems	☐	☐	☐

Other, please specify…………………………………………………………………

17. **Did you accept the support offered?** Yes ☐   No ☐

18. **If you could make one change to Individual Personal Tutorials what might it be?**

………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………

19. What do you think is the best aspect of Individual Personal Tutorials?

………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………

Now please go to Q21.

20. **Why do you not attend Individual Personal Tutorials?**

I did not know they were available ☐
I do not know what they are for ☐
I do not find them useful ☐
Other, please specify …………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………

21. **Do you attend Group Tutorial Sessions?** Yes ☐   No ☐
If 'No' please go to Q26

22. **What matters are covered during Group Tutorial sessions?**
    Please feel free to tick more than one response.

	Often	Sometimes	Never
Your experience on the course	☐	☐	☐
College-wide activities & information	☐	☐	☐
College-wide support services	☐	☐	☐
Study skills	☐	☐	☐
Career planning	☐	☐	☐
Work experience	☐	☐	☐

Other, please specify:..

23. **Do you feel Group Tutorials have an effect on your study experience?**
    Yes generally a positive effect   ☐
    Yes generally a negative effect   ☐
    No effect   ☐

24. **If you could make one change to Group Tutorials what might it be?**
    ....
    ....

25. **What do you think is the best aspect of Group Tutorials?**
    ....
    ....
    Now please go to Q27

26. **Why do you not attend Group Tutorials?**

    Group tutorials are not held on this course ☐
    I did not know they were available   ☐
    I do not know what they are for   ☐
    I do not find them useful   ☐
    Other, please specify ....
    ....

27. **What do you think is/are the main function(s) of an Individual Personal**
    Tutorial?   Please feel free to tick more than one response.
    Academic Support   ☐
    Pastoral Care (personal welfare)   ☐
    Career guidance   ☐
    To plan for self improvement   ☐
    Other, please specify...
    ....

28. **What do you think is/are the main function(s) of a Group Tutorial?**
    Please feel free to tick more than one response.
    Academic Support   ☐
    Opportunity to discuss aspects of the course as a group ☐
    To receive information about college activities   ☐
    To develop new academic skills   ☐
    To develop new personal skills   ☐

29. **Who do you feel should best undertake the role of Personal Tutor?**
Please feel free to tick more than one response.

	Yes	No
Someone who:		
Has a particular responsibility for tutorial work	☐	☐
Is not a member of the academic staff	☐	☐
Possesses counselling skills	☐	☐
Does not teach you on your course	☐	☐
Is knowledgeable about your area of study	☐	☐
Is not a member of the department in which you study	☐	☐

30. **Identify any particular difficulties you have encountered when joining and during your course and whether they have been overcome.**

	On joining the course	During your studies	Overcome
The application process	☐	☐	☐
Suitability of living accommodation	☐	☐	☐
Financial difficulties	☐	☐	☐
Acquiring course information	☐	☐	☐
Home sickness	☐	☐	☐
Making new friends	☐	☐	☐
Knowing whom to go to with a problem	☐	☐	☐
Social integration with others on the course	☐	☐	☐
Time management	☐	☐	☐
Self motivation	☐	☐	☐
Family commitments	☐	☐	☐
Combining paid employment with studying	☐	☐	☐
Lack of support for a learning difficulty	☐	☐	☐
Lack of support for an individual disability	☐	☐	☐

31. **Which two of the following best describe your feelings when first starting the course?**

Confidence	☐
Trepidation/apprehension	☐
Excitement	☐
Disorientation	☐
Enthusiasm	☐
Anxiety	☐
Emotional	☐

Other, please specify...

32. **Have you encountered any of the difficulties listed below?**
Please feel free to tick more than one response.

	On joining the course	During the course
Could not find classrooms	☐	☐
Late for classes	☐	☐
Inability to concentrate	☐	☐
Considered leaving the course	☐	☐
Impatient with speed of course progression	☐	☐
Held back by fear of making mistakes	☐	☐
Annoyed by others' seeming lack of knowledge	☐	☐
Peaked too early for tests/exams	☐	☐

Tests/exams came "too soon"	☐	☐
Afraid of not coping	☐	☐
Other, please specify...		

33. In retrospect do you feel you were generally well prepared for the academic demands of a higher education course?

Yes ☐   No ☐

If Yes please go to Q35

34. In which areas did you feel particularly unprepared?
Please feel free to tick more than one response.

Subject of study	☐
Essay writing	☐
Report writing	☐
Communication skills	☐
Computer skills	☐
Presentation skills	☐
Level of numerical skills	☐
Spelling and grammar	☐
Organisational skills	☐
Problem solving	☐
Taking responsibility for own progress	☐
Working as part of a group	☐

35 Would you be prepared to take part in a short discussion session based on the outcome of this survey?

Yes ☐   No ☐

If yes, please provide your name...

THANK YOU

TUTORIAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Your chance to win an HMV Voucher: 1st Prize £25, 2nd Prize £15, 3rd £10

How to enter:
1. **Print out this questionnaire**
2. **Answer the questions as fully and honestly as possible (Please note your reply will be <u>anonymous</u>)**
3. **Hand it in at your Campus Reception by the end of Monday 27th June, the back page will be removed when you hand it in and entered into the draw.**

The draw will take place on Thursday 30th June. Names of winners will be posted on the Student Intranet and at each Campus Reception on Friday 1st July.

1. **Full Course Title:** ....

2. **Current Year of Study: 1st** ☐   **2nd** ☐   **3rd** ☐   **Attendance:** Full-time ☐ Part-time ☐

    Age: 14-15 ☐   16-20 ☐   21+ ☐   **Gender:**   Male ☐ Female ☐

3. **Do you feel Individual Tutorials help you on your course? Yes** ☐   **No** ☐

    Because:..

    ....

4. **What do you think Individual Tutorial is for?**

    Comments:..

    ....

5. **Do you attend all the Individual Tutorials you are offered?**   **Yes** ☐   **No** ☐

    Because:..

    ....

6. **List the sort of things you like to be able to talk about during Individual Tutorial**

    a)...   e)..

    b)...   f)..

    c)...   g)..

    d)...   h)..

7. **Have you talked about additional support during your Individual Tutorial?**
    Yes and I have received some support   ☐
    Yes but I do not want support   ☐
    No but I would like to talk about it   ☐
    No and I do not want to talk about it   ☐

8. **The best things about Individual Tutorials for me are**: ....

    ....

....

9.   **Is it important for you to feel you get on well with your Personal Tutor?**

Yes ☐ No ☐ Because...

....

10.   **If you could change anything about Individual Tutorials what would it be?**

....

....

11.   **Group Tutorials are held: Weekly** ☐   **Fortnightly** ☐   **Monthly** ☐   **One per term** ☐

        and I think this is: Too Often ☐   **Not Often Enough** ☐   **Just Right** ☐

12.   **Do you attend all the Group Tutorial sessions on your timetable?** Yes ☐   No ☐

        Because:..

        ....

13.   **List the kinds of things you would like your tutor to cover in Group Tutorials**

        a)..   e)..

        b)..   f)..

        c)..   g)..

        d)..   h)..

14.   **Do you feel Group Tutorials help with your learning?**
        Yes, they do help   ☐
        No, they do not help   ☐
        They do not make a difference either way   ☐

15.   **What are the best things about Group Tutorials for you?**

        ....

        ....

16.   **If you could change anything about Individual Tutorials what would it be?**

        ....

        ....

17.   **What do you think Group Tutorials are for?**

        Comments:..

        ....

18. **I have had problems these issues whilst at college:**

	A lot	A little bit	Not at all
The application process	☐	☐	☐
Financial difficulties	☐	☐	☐
Getting course information	☐	☐	☐
Making new friends	☐	☐	☐
Knowing who to go to with a problem	☐	☐	☐
Lack of support for an individual disability	☐	☐	☐
Getting on with others on the course	☐	☐	☐
Time management	☐	☐	☐
Lack of study skills support	☐	☐	☐
Getting motivated	☐	☐	☐
Handing work in on time	☐	☐	☐
Family commitments	☐	☐	☐
Balancing paid work and attending classes	☐	☐	☐
Lack of support for a learning difficulty	☐	☐	☐

You can add other things if they are not in this list: ....

....

....

19. **I am/have been worried about these during my course:** (tick as many as you like)

Some subjects on my course	☐
Essay writing	☐
Report writing	☐
Communication skills	☐
Asking for help with course content	☐
Computer skills	☐
Presentation skills	☐
Maths or numeracy	☐
Starting assignments	☐
Spelling and grammar	☐
Getting myself organised	☐
Problem solving	☐
Taking responsibility for own progress	☐
Working as part of a group	☐

Please feel free to add others if they are not found on this list: ....

....

....

TUTORIAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Your Entry into the Prize Draw

THANK YOU for taking part and good luck with the prize draw.

Would you like to join the Student Tutorial Forum next year to influence the type of tutorial college provides.

Yes ☐   No ☐

Name: ....**Student ID No.**........................

Names of the lucky winners will be posted on the Student Intranet on Friday 1st July 2005 and will be available for collection at College Reception on production of your Student Card.

The prize draw entry will be sent to the Tutorial Manager

Your <u>anonymous</u> completed questionnaire will be sent to xxxxxxxx, PA to the Vice Principle of Teaching & Learning

Tutors' Visual Exploration: Perceptions of an Ideal Personal Tutor

Photograph of Tutors Using Logo Visual Technology Boards

Example of Clustered Hexagons on an LVT Board
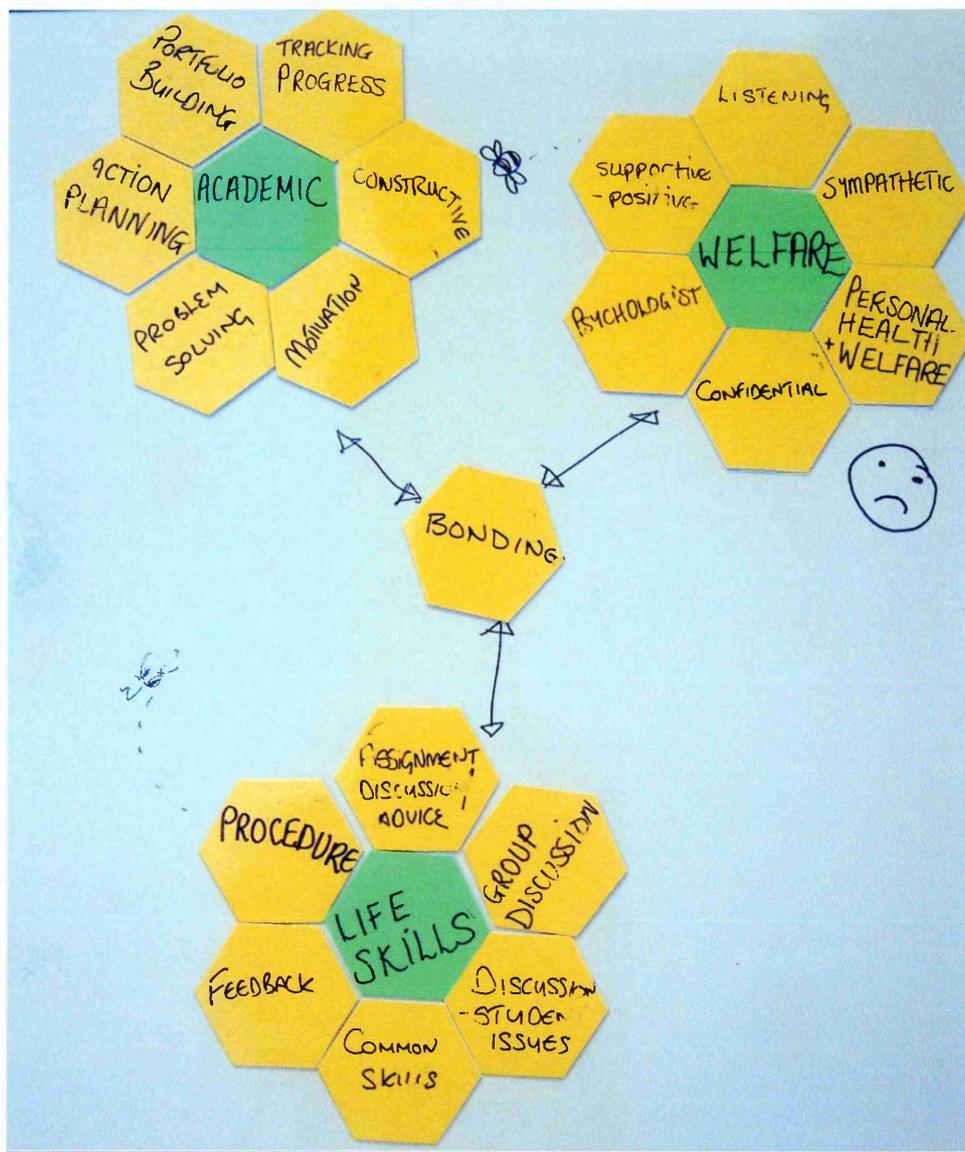
Ref: Earwaker, J. (1992) *Helping and Supporting Students* The Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press, Buckingham

Page No:	Notes & Quotes	Own Comments
Book	Based on HE provision.	It appears from my research that the problems faced by students and the desire to move towards a holistic learning model are no different in HE & FE However, the FE cohort has the additional 14-16 element
6	From the four case studies he explored he concluded that most student problems were complex and that tutors needed time to offer "steady and continuous support". Proposes that HE does not adequately resource student support	One of the main Tutors complaints is lack of time given to the tutoring role. Neither does FE therefore the situation for tutors is similar
8	Students need most support in their first year and dealing with change	Consistent with student feedback
9	Raises the issue of financial difficulties as a result in the decline of the grant and the problems of some students feeling additional stress of indebtedness to parents or partners giving financial support	This is also true of FE students who rely on EMA or have additional burden of work not previously seen in FE
11	Proposed helping and supporting students might be more central in HE than is acknowledged. This is a central theme for the book. Student support is not simply about problem solving, it is more developmental than that. Students should derive maximum benefit from their course and, indeed, from their whole experience of student life	This was back in 1992 and it still remains the same – why no change? I propose a developmental model for tutorial as opposed to what I term a 'deficit' model which is what Earwaker proposes. expand Holistic approach
19	Proposes three developmental processes: General development (development as a person): growing up and growing older and aspects of development related to that age group Development as a student: the cyclical process as students progress through their course Vocational or professional development occupational socialisation' These are interrelated	Key: Notes Quotes Used in the thesis Memo

Higher Education Study Skills concerns by Matriculation

Chart Showing Areas in which Higher Education Students Felt Particularly Unprepared (by percentage of respondents in Course Matriculation categories)

Legend:
- GNVQ Advanced
- A level
- BTEC ND
- Other courses

Categories (vertical axis):
- Subject of Study
- Essay Writing
- Report Writing
- Communication Skills
- Computer Skills
- Presentation Skills
- Level of Numerical Skills
- Spelling and Grammar
- Organisational Skills
- Problem Solving
- Taking Responsibility for Own Progress
- Working as Part of a Group

Horizontal axis: 0%, 10%, 20%, 30%, 40%, 50%, 60%, 70%, 80%, 90%, 100%

Example of Ungrouped Data Transferred to LVT Software

Overview of student progress (or lack of)	Assessment procedures	Study/common skills support	Induction	Personal Health and Welfare	academic support	Recognise Strengths and weaknesses	Personal Problems
Create awareness of college support	Pointing students to less obvious solutions	Academic	Advice/guidance on sexual health, drugs, finance etc	Course related info	Understanding the course	Finding student weaknesses	
Problem Solving	Constructive	Motivation	Listen to student anxieties	Addressing personal/group issues	Careers Guidance	Sympathetic	Career direction and planning
Bonding	Action Planning	Being a fliter for (solvable) problems	Sounding board	First step in Guidance - counselors	To exchange course information	Pastoral	
Academic	Portfolio Building	Assignment discussion & advice	Common Skills	Representing students ideas/problems to academic tutors	Student Employment	Future Employment	To help students understand their progress better (work related)
PPD Personal and professional development	Recognising Strengths and Weaknesses	Creative Development	Ideas?	Feedback	Group discussion	Discussing - students issues	
Understand the student better	To support students to achieve their goals	To practice and develop study skills	General Welfare	Academic Support	Procedure	Psychologist supportive position	To 'hold' students (retention)
Offer support if problems occur	To develop interpersonal skills	To prepare for career/life after college	Feedback	Develop student/staff relationship	Monitoring progress	Listening	
Confidential	To help students in confidence	Confidence Building	Tracking Progress	Personal time for them to talk	Portfolio Building	Develop a cohesive group	To help students clarify their goals

Higher Education Students' Perceptions of Group Tutorial

Group Bonding

- 9. Getting together with other students
- 12. Group bonding
- 16. Different View Points
- 18. Diversity
- 20. Hearing views from others
- 25. Hearing that others share the same problems
- 24. Spending time with the group
- 4. Getting together as a group

Opportunity for Discussion

- 1. Have discussion as a group - express feelings about the course
- 8. Getting the group together and discussing assignments and problems
- 11. Discuss various aspects of the course
- 14. Being able to talk as a group.
- 23. The group can discuss classes and arrange group tasks
- 27. Ability to talk about things in a group
- 15. The chance to discuss things
- 28. Opportunity to talk about things in a group

Receiving Information

- 5. Informative about student issues and gets everything done concerning students
- 2. Information Given
- 17. Keeping each of us informed in areas requested
- 30. Fills in blanks about college

Career Planning

- 10. Career help and College activities
- 31. Career Planning

Problem Solving

- 3. Discussion of primary problems relevant to all
- 6. Help available on a variety of problems
- 7. Solves problems with other students and the group
- 13. To air problems as a group. Gather own classes opinions
- 19. We can air our frustrations about College
- 21. Ability to air our frustrations
- 22. It gets the group together to discuss any problems within the group
- 29. You can discuss work problems
- 26. Unlike personal tutorial, can sort out any problems the group is having

Group Bonding
Problem Solving
Opportunity for Discussion
Receiving Information
Career Planning

Higher Education Students' Perceptions of Individual Tutorial

Personal Support

- 4. Easier to comment on other students
- 5. You have a one-one talk
- 6. Not publicising problems
- 7. Tutor and student get to know each other
- 8a. You get plenty of feedback
- 12a Easy to talk to my personal tutor as I have known her for 5 years
- 18. Having some-one to talk to
- 11. Tutor is sympathetic about personal issues
- 25. Chance to give my views and opinions
- 28. Personal problems
- 14. Focussed, personal attention
- 29. On a personal level
- 33. Tutors help us to get over any stress we have
- 35. To air grievances about how college has let you down
- 36. You get to put your view across
- 24. One-to-One

Academic Aspects

- 1. Talk about work experience
- 15. Solves problems affecting work and studying
- 17. Help with any problems e.g. workload
- 22. Able to discuss essays
- 19. Career development
- 34. Study skills
- 39. Being able to talk to the tutor about work

Attitudinal Aspects

- 22a. Tutor approachable
- 10. Informal place where concerns can be voiced
- 23. Confidentiality
- 16. Very informal and relaxed
- 2. Talk to them when needed
- 37. Friendly approach
- 39. Being able to talk to the tutor privately
- 12. Confidentiality

Personal and Academic

- 20. Having an information providing time
- 32. Identifies problems
- 30. One-one feedback
- 9. Sort out individual problems
- 3. Discuss Problems and solutions
- 2a Get to know your weaknesses and abilities
- 13. Reviewing personal progress
- 21. One-one help and advice. Much quicker action and response
- 22b. Able to be pointed in the right direction
- 26. Enables a focus on solutions rather than just problems
- 27. Discussing progress
- 31. Reflecting on progress
- 31a. Identifying how to improve performance
- 33. Helps us to cope with difficulties we have
- 38. Able to talk about problems

Personal —————— Academic

Attitudinal

Further Education Students' Perceptions of Group Tutorial

Learning and Development

- Learning new skills and about life
- Learning new things about future
- Leaving
- Because I like lessons
- It makes me independent

Discussing the Course and Progression

- Get to talk to friends about subjects
- Discussing the course, getting the chance to discuss any problems I am having
- Receiving Info on HE
- Discussions with fellow students about subjects

Receiving Information About College

- Getting to know things about college
- To talk about student council
- Receiving helpful info

Group Discussion and Problem Solving

- It's fun; solve problems
- You get to know what everyone else is thinking
- Group discussions
- Being able to discuss anything
- Things get solved
- Group talking
- Listening to other people ideas
- Teamwork

Engaging With Tutor

- being able to talk to tutor
- The tutors time to listen and help you

Classroom Environment

- Having peace & quiet
- It's fun
- More laid back than an average lesson

Group Bonding and Socialising

- The group activities helped me to get to know people when we first started
- You get to know people
- They are fun & to get to know people
- Mixing with everybody
- Socialising
- Friends
- I get to see someone a student whose company I enjoy
- You have a good laugh and get to relax

Engaging with the Tutor

Group Bonding & Socialising

Classroom Environment

Learning & Development

Group Discussion & Problem Solving

Receiving Information about College

Discussing the Course and Progression

Further Education Students' Perceptions of Individual Tutorial

Personal Aspects and Problem Solving

Having a personal chat

you get a chance to talk about any problems you may have

Sorting out my problems; they are private

You get to discuss things with your tutor

I get to talk about my troubles

Discussing problems

Clearing the air; getting things out of my head

Social life; my job; my friends; sorting out my problems

The chance to speak what is on your mind

They are private & we can talk about any problems

It provides one to one time to talk about any concerns

Attitudinal & Environmental Aspects

Having a chat alone, being able to chat with no interruptions

They are private confidential

Having time to talk about my problems

Good at listening; eye contact & sit straight – private

Having someone to listen to you

You know they will help as much as they can

Motivation

To get me motivated & ready

Keeps me on track

Academic Support

It helps me with my work

I get help with my assignments

Talking through problems with lessons

Getting the chance to discuss my issues relating to my course or HE

A chance to discuss subjects on a one to one basis

I get a better understanding about my courses

Planning & Monitoring Academic Progress

So you know what work you have left to do

Talking about my progress

To set goals & see how you are doing

To talk about how I am doing with my subjects

Individual Learning Plans

I can look at how I am progressing and what I can do to improve

Setting & meeting targets

I get to evaluate my progress

Reassurance of my choices

Receiving Advice and Support

Helping me & giving me advice

Being able to get help when you need it

Preparation for Progression

Talking about careers

Careers knowing what I can do next

Leaving

Personal Aspects & Problem Solving
Planning & Monitoring Academic Progress
Attitudinal & Environmental Aspects
Receiving Advice & Support
Preparing for Progression
Academic Support
Motivation

Further & Higher Education Students Perceptions of Group Tutorial (merged)

Receiving Information

- To talk about student council
- Getting to know things about college
- Receiving helpful info
- 2. Information Given
- 30. Fills in blanks about college

Discussing The Course

- 11. Discuss various aspects of the course
- 8. Getting the group together and discussing assignments and problems
- Discussing the course, getting the chance to discuss any problems I am having
- Discussions with fellow students about subjects
- Get to talk to friends about subjects

Problem Solving

- It's fun; solve problems
- Things get solved
- 25. Hearing that others share the same problems
- 3. Discussion of primary problems relevant to all
- 13. To air problems as a group. Gather own classes opinions
- 21. Ability to air our frustrations
- 22. It gets the group together to discuss any problems within the group
- 26. Unlike personal tutorial, can sort out any problems the group is having
- 19. We can air our frustrations about College
- 7. Solves problems with other students and the group
- 6. Help available on a variety of problems

Personal Development & Life Skills

- Learning new skills and about life
- Learning new things about future
- It makes me independent
- 20. Hearing views from others
- 16. Different View Points
- 18. Diversity
- Preparation for independant living

Career & Progression

- Receiving Info on HE
- 10. Career help and College activities
- Leaving
- 31. Career Planning
- 29. You can discuss work problems

Group Discussion

- Being able to discuss anything
- Group discussions
- You get to know what everyone else is thinking
- Group talking
- Listening to other people ideas
- 28. Opportunity to talk about things in a group
- 27. Ability to talk about things in a group
- 14. Being able to talk as a group.
- 15. The chance to discuss things

Engaging With Tutor

- The tutors time to listen and help you
- being able to talk to tutor

Tutorial Environment

- More laid back than an average lesson
- It's fun
- You have a good laugh and get to relax

Being Heard and Being Valued

- 17. Keeping each of us informed in areas requested
- 5. Informative about student issues and gets everything done concerning students
- To talk about student council
- 1. Have discussion as a group - express feelings about the course

Group Bonding & Socialising

- The group activities helped me to get to know people when we first started
- You get to know people
- They are fun & to get to know people
- Mixing with everybody
- Socialising
- Friends
- I get to see someone a student whose company I enjoy
- Teamwork
- 4. Getting together as a group
- 24. Spending time with the group
- 23. The group can discuss classes and arrange group tasks
- 9. Getting together with other students
- 12. Group bonding

Legend

- Higher Education Student Responses
- Further Eudcation Student Responses

Receiving Information
Problem Solving
Personal Development & Life Skills
Discussing The Course
Group Discussion
Career Progression
Group Bonding & Socialising
Being Heard and Being Valued
Engaging with the Tutor
Classroom Environment

Further & Higher Education Students Perceptions of Individual Tutorial (merged)

Tutor Engagement

- being able to talk to tutor
- The tutors time to listen and help you
- Tutor and student get to know each other
- talk to my personal tutor as I have known her for 5 years
- Easy to
- Tutor approachable
- Good at listening; eye contact & sit straight – private
- You know they will help as much as they can
- Friendly approach
- Tutor is sympathetic about personal issues

Planning & Monitoring Academic Progress

- So you know what work you have left to do
- Talking about my progress
- To set goals & see how you are doing
- To talk about how I am doing with my subjects
- Individual Learning Plans
- Setting & meeting targets
- I get to evaluate my progress
- Discussing progress
- Reflecting on progress
- You get plenty of feedback
- Reviewing personal progress

Preparation for Progression

- Talking about careers
- Careers knowing what I can do next
- Leaving
- Career development

Individual Tutorial Environment

- Having a chat alone, being able to chat with no interruptions
- They are private confidential
- Confidentiality
- Focussed, personal attention
- Very informal and relaxed
- Not publicising problems
- Confidentiality
- Being able to talk to the tutor privately
- Informal place where concerns can be voiced

Academic & Course Related Support

- It helps me with my work
- I get help with my assignments
- Talking through problems with lessons
- Getting the chance to discuss my issues relating to my course or HE
- A chance to discuss subjects on a one to one basis
- I get a better understanding about my courses
- Able to discuss essays
- Being able to talk to the tutor about work
- Study skills
- Talk about work experience
- Reassurance of my choices

Personal Development

- Identifying how to improve performance
- Get to know your weaknesses and abilities
- I can look at how I am progressing and what I can do to improve

Motivation

- To get me motivated & ready
- Keeps me on track

Personal Support & Guidance

- Talk to them when needed
- Having some-one to talk to
- Able to be pointed in the right direction
- Being able to get help when you need it
- Clearing the air; getting things out of my head
- Helping me & giving me advice
- Helps us to cope with difficulties we have
- One-one help and advice. Much quicker action and response
- Tutors help us to get over any stress we have
- Having an information providing time

Being Heard & Being Valued

- The chance to speak what is on your mind
- Having a personal chat
- To air grievances about how college has let you down
- You get to put your view across
- Chance to give my views and opinions
- Having someone to listen to you

Problem Solving

- you get a chance to talk about any problems you may have
- Sorting out my problems; they are private
- You get to discuss things with your tutor
- I get to talk about my troubles
- Discussing problems
- Social life; my job; my friends; sorting out my problems
- They are private & we can talk about any problems
- It provides one to one time to talk about any concerns
- Sort out individual problems
- Personal problems
- Solves problems affecting work and studying
- Help with any problems e.g. workload
- Able to talk about problems
- Discuss Problems and solutions
- Having time to talk about my problems

Being Heard and Being Valued
Planning & Monitoring Academic Progress
Tutor Engagement
Motivation
Problem Solving
Individual Tutorial Environment
Academic and Course Related Support
Preparation for Progression
Personal Development
Personal Support and Guidance

- Higher Education Student Responses
- Further Eudcation Student Responses

Tutor Perceptions of Tutorial Provision (1st Institution)

Academic Aspects

- Study/common skills support
- Understanding the course
- Portfolio Building
- Monitoring progress
- Common Skills
- To help students understand their progress better (work related)
- Overview of student progress (or lack of)
- Academic Support
- To practice and develop study skills
- Assessment procedures
- Academic
- Feedback
- Assignment discussion & advice
- Tracking Progress
- Creative Development
- Ideas?
- Induction

Receiving Information

- To exchange course information
- Create awareness of college support
- Procedure
- Course related info

Group Bonding

- Develop a cohesive group
- Bonding
- Group discussion

Problem Solving

- Representing students ideas/problems to academic tutors
- Being a filter for (solvable) problems
- Pointing students to less obvious solutions
- Problem Solving

Personal & Professional Development

- PPD Personal and professional development
- Recognising Strengths and Weaknesses
- Finding student weaknesses
- To support students to achieve their goals
- Recognise Strengths and weaknesses
- To help students clarify their goals
- Advice/guidance on sexual health, drugs, finance etc
- To develop interpersonal skills

Personal Support

- Addressing personal/group issues
- Listen to student anxieties
- Student Employment
- Understand the student better
- Personal Health and Welfare
- Personal Problems
- Motivation
- General Welfare
- Confidence Building
- Develop student/staff relationship
- First step in Guidance - counselors
- Sounding board
- Discussing - students issues
- Personal time for them to talk
- Pastoral
- To help students in confidence
- Offer support if problems occur

Career Planning

- Action Planning
- To prepare for career/life after college
- Careers Guidance
- Future Employment
- Career direction and planning

Organisational

- To 'hold' students (retention)

Attitudinal

- Sympathetic
- Psychologist supportive position
- Constructive
- Confidential
- Listening

Tutor Perceptions of Tutorial Provision (2nd Institution)

Personal Development & Social Skills

- Social and Life Skills
- Developing personal skills
- Developing as a person
- Learning but not curriculum

Academic Achievement & Progression

- Future Projection
- Academic achievement and progression
- Study skills and support
- Gaining Knowledge
- Cross curriculum approach including Key Skills

Guidance & Support

- To be more than a teacher
- Counselling
- Helping with issue Outside College

Holistic Learning

- Holistic Learning.
- Looking at Whole picture
- A co-ordinated approach - linking all areas of learning
- Learning which includes a well balanced curriculum.
- Life Experience

Student Centred Approach

- Learning at their level
- A student learning how they want to
- Covering everything that they need
- Learning at their pace
- Using students' experiences, skills and knowledge
- For a student to learn in many ways

All Tutors' and Students' Perceptions of the Purpose of Tutorial (compared)

Personal Development & Life Skills

- PPD Personal and professional development
- Recognise Strengths and weaknesses
- To develop interpersonal skills
- Social and Life Skills
- Developing as a person
- Advice/guidance on sexual health, drugs, finance etc
- Developing personal skills
- Confidence Building
- Creative Development

Tutor Role

- To be more than a teacher
- Psychologist supportive position
- Counselling
- Representing students ideas/problems to academic tutors
- Motivation
- To 'hold' students (retention)

Planning & Monitoring Academic Progress

- To help students clarify their goals
- To support students to achieve their goals
- Action Planning
- Overview of student progress (or lack of)
- Tracking Progress
- Monitoring progress
- To help students understand their progress better (work related)

Problem Solving

- Pointing students to less obvious solutions
- Being a filter for (solvable) problems
- Problem Solving

Personal Support & Welfare

- Addressing personal/group issues
- Personal Health and Welfare
- Personal Problems
- General Welfare
- First step in Guidance - counsellors
- Sounding board
- Personal time for them to talk
- Pastoral
- Offer support if problems occur
- Helping with issue Outside College

Career Planning & Progression

- To prepare for career/life after college
- Careers Guidance
- Future Employment
- Career direction and planning
- Student Employment
- Academic achievement and progression

Tutor Engagement

- Sympathetic
- Constructive
- Listening
- Develop student/staff relationship
- Understand the student better

Group Bonding & Socialising

- Develop a cohesive group
- Bonding
- Group discussion

Group Tutorial Environment

- Fun
- More laid back than the average lesson

Academic Development & Related Course Issues

- Understanding the course
- Common Skills
- Academic Support
- To practice and develop study skills
- Assessment procedures
- Feedback
- Assignment discussion & advice
- Induction
- Study skills and support
- Cross curriculum approach including Key Skills

Holistic & Personalised Learning

- Covering everything that they need
- Learning at their pace
- Learning which includes a well balanced curriculum
- Learning at their level
- A student learning how they want to
- Holistic Learning
- A co-ordinated approach - linking all areas of learning
- Looking at Whole picture

Holistic & Personalised Learning
Personal Development & Life Skills
Academic Development & Related Course Issues
Planning & Monitoring Academic Progression
Career Planning & Progression
Personal Support & Welfare
Being Heard and Being Valued
Group Bonding & Socialising
Receiving Information
Problem Solving
Tutor Engagement
Tutor Role
Individual Tutorial Environment
Group Tutorial Environment

Receiving Information

- Procedure
- Create awareness of college support
- To exchange course information
- Course related info

Being Heard & Being Valued

- Using students' experiences, skills and knowledge
- Listen to student anxieties
- Discussing - students issues

Individual Tutorial Environment

- Private, confidential and uninterrupted
- Informal and relaxed

Legend:
- All Respondents
- Tutors' Perceptions
- Further Education Students' Perceptions
- Tutors & FE Students Shared Perceptions

Students' Suggestions for Group Tutorial Content

Receiving Information
Notices for the week
To let us know what is going on
General college news
Class changes

Career Planning & Progression
How to apply to university
Careers
HE, available courses
Job interviews

Personal Development & Life Skills
Social activities
Life and work
Drugs
Health and Safety
First Aid
Sex Education
Financial management
Going out to work
Employee rights
PAYE

Problem Solving
Problems
Bullying
Problem solving games
Problems; coursework

Being Heard and Being Valued
Speaking out

Academic development and course related issues
Revision techniques
How to approach exams
Essay skills
Assignments
Memory games
How to get more marks
How to achieve milestones (targets)
Improving note taking
Group targets; achievements; outstanding work; assessments

Group bonding and socialising
Students to talk about a subject or hobby
External visitors
Social life

Heuristic Framework for Tutorial Provision

Group Tutorial	Individual Tutorial
Personal Development and Life skills	Personal Development
Holistic and Personalised Learning	Holistic and Personalised Learning
Academic Development and course related issues	Academic Development and course related issues
Problem solving	Problem solving
Career planning and progression	Career planning and progression
Being heard and being valued	Being heard and being valued
Group discussion, socialising and bonding	Planning and monitoring academic progress
Receiving information	Personal support and guidance

Group Tutorial

❑ **Personal Development and Life Skills**: in a social setting and in teamwork, develop interpersonal skills and provide information and guidance on sexual health, drugs, finance etc. as an activity and having an opportunity to learn new skills in order to prepare for the future and for independent living.

❑ **Holistic Learning and Personalised Learning**: Referring to a co-ordinated approach to developing and supporting students, considering the 'whole picture' including life experiences. This includes a balanced curriculum including personal and professional development as well as academic and vocational.

❑ **Academic Development and Course Related Issues**: Including induction, an overview of progress, assessment, guidance and feedback, study skills development, generation of ideas, understanding the course syllabus. This is a forum to discuss course content and objectives, and difficulties with particular subject areas

❑ **Problem Solving**: To develop a cohesive group and enable group discussion. Has a focus on teamwork and sharing ideas for problem solving, talking things over as a group and gaining support from knowing how others feel.

❑ **Career Planning and Progression**: Focus on progression after the course such as applying to enter Higher Education. Also includes planning and preparation for career development, transition to a higher level education and to future employment

❑ **Being Heard and Being Valued:** Being able to express thoughts and feelings and to inform changes to improve the student experience.

❑ **Group Discussion, Bonding and Socialising**: The opportunity to meet with other students and get to know them on an individual basis. This was expressed as a social, relaxed activity.

❑ **Receiving Information**: A forum for receiving course information, understanding procedures and creating awareness of the support services available in college, including information about college-wide student activities.

Individual Tutorial

❑ **Personal Development**: This relates to the opportunity for a personal discussion that includes helping students to clarify their goals, recognise their strengths and weaknesses and is also seen by students as an opportunity to 'clear the air' and 'speak what is on your mind'. It also refers to General

welfare, confidence building, getting to know and understand the student, develop a student/tutor relationship, to offer personal time for students to talk and discuss issues, to listen to students' anxieties, offer pastoral care act as a sounding board.

- **Holistic Learning and Personalised Learning**: Referring to a co-ordinated approach to developing and supporting students, considering the 'whole picture' including life experiences. This includes a balanced curriculum including personal and professional development as well as academic and vocational.

- **Academic Development and Course Related Issues**: This aspect is related to vocational, academic and study skills support, i.e. their core curriculum plus any additional support required to assist with, for example dyslexia, dyspraxia, sight or hearing impediments etc. This is also an opportunity to identify difficulties with specific course related subject areas.

- **Problem Solving**: Supporting students in identifying and discussing potential solutions to problems and to present students' ideas and issues on their behalf where applicable.

- **Career Planning and Progression**: Focus on progression after the course such as applying to enter Higher Education. Also includes planning and preparation for career development, transition to a higher level education and to future employment

- **Being Heard and Being Valued:** The opportunity for students to feel they are listened to. This is a private time when they can air their anxieties and opinions and, where necessary, can voice disappointments relating to college life.

- **Planning and Monitoring Academic Progress**: This is about setting and monitoring targets, to discuss progress and areas for improvement and also to gain some re-assurance or positive feedback. This includes discussion about assignments and individual subjects, understanding the course, problems with particular lessons. It also includes receiving help with college work. Help in being motivated to work and being kept 'on track'.

- **Personal Support and Guidance**: It was suggested that this is about being 'more than a teacher'. It was felt that help with student issues occurring outside the college was part of this activity and counselling was also felt to be part of this role.

Contextual Aspects

- **Tutor Engagement**: This relates to the skills and attributes demonstrated by the tutor, which includes a willingness to engage in a positive relationship and to engage in democratic dialogue.

- **Student-centred approach**: This was partly about tutorial focussing on the student and their needs, ensuring that different styles and levels of learning were accommodated and that a broad range of subjects (other than core curriculum) were covered. It also related to acknowledging and valuing what students bring in terms of their own experiences, skills and knowledge.

- **Group Tutorial Environment (F.E.):** This reflected the students' desire for group tutorial to be different from other academic or vocational classes by having the opportunity for the sessions to be *more laid back* and to be able to have fun in order to create an enjoyment of learning.

- **Individual Tutorial Environment:** A private and confidential one-to-one discussion with the tutor without interruption is essential to enable students to express themselves freely and to disclose support needs.

Tutors' Perceptions of the Personal Tutor Role, Skills and Attributes
(May & July 2003)

Skills

- Good Talking
- Communication skills
- Ability to create concrete positive outcomes
- Good Listener

Personality

- Caring
- Understanding
- Ability to relate
- Empathy
- Patience
- Ability to empathise
- Compassion

Function

- See the bigger picture
- Impartial Advice
- Being there

Knowledge

- Understanding & ability to apply current professional requirements
- Knowledge & understanding of course structure & outcomes
- Knowledge of additional support available
- Area Specific Support

Attitudes

- Objectivity
- Desire to help
- Non-judgemental
- Competent
- Student Centredness
- Objectivity
- Being willing to be there

Function

→ Personality   Attitudes   Skills   Knowledge

Tutor Exploration of Tutoring Qualities 29th June 2004

Group 1

Group 2

Group 3

Tutors Pictorial Exploration of Personal Tutoring Qualities

Tutors' Perceptions of the Personal Tutor Role, Skills and Attributes
(all tutor responses)

Attitudes

Considerate · Realistic · Efficient · Competent · Supportive · Firm · Diplomatic · Appropriate Openness · Respect for individual · Detached · Responsible · Enthusiasm · Ownership · Discreet · Non-judgemental · Understanding · Being willing to be there · Acknowledgement of feelings expressed · Determined · Disciplined · Encouraging · Reliable · Flexible · Objectivity · Student Centredness · Desire to help · Confidentiality · Professional · LPD Committed · Being Receptive · Prepared · Fair · Confidential · Acknowledgment of contribution

Function

Managing the students · Role model · Motivator · Dissemination of information · Keep students 'safe' · Identify potential explosive situations · Advisor · Guide · Being there · Impartial Advice · See the bigger picture · Guidance

Knowledge

Knowledge of support available · Knowledge of course · Understanding & ability to apply current professional requirements · Knowledge & understanding of course structure & outcomes · Area Specific Support · Understanding outside agencies · Self-awareness · Knowledge of additional support available · Life experience

Function

→ Personality
→ Attitudes
→ Skills
→ Knowledge

Skills

Organisational Skills · Good negotiation skills · Time management · Good Communicator · Listening Skills · Reflective Listening · Ability to create concrete positive outcomes · Asking Skills · Creativity · Negotiation skills · Caring Skills · Advocacy Skills · Good Talking · Management skills · Leadership skills · Clarity · Good at managing group discussions · Mentoring skills · Ability to facilitate

Personality

Calmness · Tact · Trustworthy · Confident · Empathy · Friendly · Credibility · Approachable · Honest · Patience · Gentle · Good sense of humour · Honest · Adaptability · Kind · Persuasive · Empathetic · Caring · Compassion · Understanding · Ability to relate

Higher Education Students' Perceptions of the Personal Tutor Role and Attributes

Function

- Source of support
- Be a friend
- Someone to help students come up with their own answers

Environment

- Informal and relaxed
- Quiet room
- comfortable environment

Function

→ Personality

↓ Attitudes

→ Skills

Personality

- Easy to talk to
- Informal and relaxed
- Somebody the students can get on with and feel comfortable with

Skills

- Counselling skills
- Someone trained in picking up less obvious signs
- Be able to draw things out in discussion
- able to listen
- Pick up on silences

Attitudes

- Being assertive not aggressive
- Friendly approach
- Mutual respect
- A tutor who is sympathetic
- Trust
- Willing to engage

Further Education Students' Perceptions of the Personal Tutor Role and Attributes

Function

- To be assuring (confident assurance)
- Offer alternatives not direct instruction to allow student to choose - freedom of choice
- Influential and Informative
- Offer criticism constructive
- Guiding

Skills

- To be able to advise
- To be a good listener
- Persuasive
- Observant - ability to identify problems

Knowledge

- Understand students problem
- Knowledge of course
- Awareness of potential problems/alternative solutions
- Know when to refer on (where knowledge is limited)
- Knowing the student and where they are at within College

Function

→ Personality
→ Attitudes
→ Skills
→ Knowledge

Personality

- Friendly
- Approachable
- Genuine - Human imperfection acknowledging
- Happy
- Be able to work with the person - a partnership
- Have an emotional side/emotional intelligence
- Determination to make you do well
- Humorous
- Smiling
- Caring and Calming
- Kind
- Honest and truthful - even if bad news
- Confidence

Attitudes

- Flexible
- Not superior
- To be welcoming
- Easy to talk to
- Helpful
- Good punctuality
- Negotiable
- Trust
- No barrier between tutor and student
- Clean and tidy/good presentation
- Open
- Organised
- Pride in the role
- Allow students to maintain self respect
- Respect students wishes to keep things to themselves
- Not display favouritism, treat everyone equally
- Confidentiality - not to share with students and tutors

Archetype of the Personal Tutor Role and Attributes

Function

Mentor	Advocate	Psychologist	Role Model
Advisor	Problem Solver	Counsellor	Authority Figure
Sounding Board	Motivator		Manager
Guide	Facilitator		The Boss

Attitudes

A formal but caring approach is sought within a mutually respectful partnership where the tutor is fair, considerate and diplomatic. The tutor should be professional, organised and disciplined whilst working with an element of flexibility and adaptability to suit students' individual developmental and support needs. A welcoming and approachable persona should demonstrate a willingness to be engaged, supportive, sympathetic, and understanding.

Knowledge

Tutors need to know and understand the potential problems and possible solutions to difficulties a diverse cohort of students may face. This should be supported with the knowledge of internal and external support agencies. Tutors need to be able to draw on their own life experiences and self-awareness appropriately. This should include being aware of their own limitations in helping students and when it is best for to refer them for more 'expert' help. Tutors also need an understanding of the course students are undertaking together with any professional standards relating to that course.

Personality

Students need to feel that tutors are honest and trustworthy. Tutors should demonstrate a confident but friendly demeanour and be able to display a sense of humour.   The tutor should be comfortable in acknowledging their own human imperfections and those of others by setting realistic expectations. Tutors should demonstrate an empathetic nature by being patient, caring and compassionate where the need arises. Tutors need to be self-aware

Skills

Tutors need the ability to have positive dialogue with students, relating to them through reflective listening and skilled questioning that ensures meaningful understanding. The ability to facilitate decision-making is required using clarity of thought and creative thinking. Tutors need to be persuasive and influential as a student advocate and display appropriate use of mentoring or counselling skills within the boundaries of the tutoring role. Management and organisational skills are also required to track and support the students' holistic development

Tutoring Styles and Their Respective Skills

The	Tutoring Style

Skills and Competencies with High Rating
- Reflective listening, questioning & speaking skills
- Ability to relate to others
- Counselling skills
- Ability to draw things out during one-to-one discussion
- Observant - ability to identify problems and pick up less obvious signs
- Life experience and self-awareness
- Understanding, empathetic
- Have an emotional side/emotional intelligence
- Supportive, sympathetic and understanding
- Being willing to be there, willing to engage
- Flexible/adaptable
- Respect for confidentiality - not to share information with other students and tutors
- Not superior, mutual respect
- Easy to talk to, friendly approach
- Allow students to maintain self-respect
- Helpful

Skills and Competencies with Less High Rating
- Ability to advise without imposing
- Mentoring Skills
- Understand potential problems and alternative solutions
- Genuine/credible - acknowledges human imperfection
- Honest, truthful
- Patient
- Trustworthy
- Tactful
- No barrier between tutor and student
- Do not display favouritism, treat everyone equally
- Prepared to negotiate
- Offer alternatives not direct instruction. Allow students freedom to make own choices/decisions
- Be able to work with the person as a partnership
- Non-judgemental, Objectivity
- Student-centred
- Appropriate openness

Skills and Competencies with Low Rating
- Organisational skills
- Negotiating skills
- Ability to facilitate group discussion
- Know the student and how they are doing at College

- Kind, caring, compassionate
- Confident
- Friendly
- Welcoming, approachable, receptive
- Respect students' wishes to keep things to themselves
- Punctual
- Desire to help
- Competent
- Considerate, diplomatic
- Realistic expectations

Skills & Competencies with Very Low Rating
- Persuasive and influential as an advocate
- Ability to create concrete positive outcomes
- Time management skills
- Creative thinking
- Clarity of thought
- Assertive but not aggressive
- Determination to make you do well
- Formal but caring
- Know when to refer on to internal or external support agencies (understand own knowledge limitations)
- Knowledge of additional support available
- Humorous – good sense of humour
- Organised, disciplined
- Pride in the role

Skills and Competencies with No Rating
- Know and understand course structure, required outcomes and assessment
- Understand how to apply current professional requirements to course
- Clean and tidy/good presentation
- Detached
- Ownership and responsibility
- Firm but fair

High Rating: all respondents believed these to be necessary
Less High Rating: most respondents believed these to be necessary
Low Rating: some respondents believed these to be necessary
No Rating: no respondents believed these to be necessary