



*The feeling's mutual : excitement, dread and trust in adult learning and teaching*

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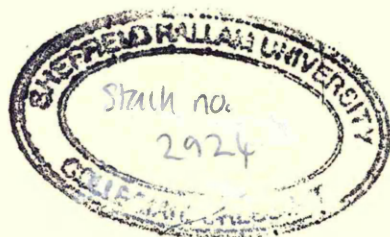
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# **The Feeling's Mutual: Excitement, dread and trust in adult learning and teaching**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of  
Sheffield Hallam University for the degree of Doctorate in  
Education

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# Abstract

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This thesis has developed out of a longer term action research project relating to a work based programme of study for adult learners in the field of Estates and Facilities Management. Through an investigation of barriers to learning experienced by these students, evidence was emerging of an emotional dimension to the learning experience. At the same time, I was becoming increasingly aware of an emotional quality in my own experience as a teacher.

This cohort study of 22 part-time, work-based, adult returners to education uses group and individual interviews, written reflections and logs to examine their emotional experiences during participation on a two-year undergraduate Certificate course. The study takes a diverse approach that links with traditions of action research, grounded theory and critical theory and an inductive approach to the analysis of qualitative data. Data are presented first as narrative biographies, telling the stories of four of the students, second, as thematic accounts, reflecting the experiences of all 22 students, and then finally as an account of my own experience as tutor over the same period of time.

Four principal themes emerged from this data. These themes are based on two dimensions; first that of the individual and second that of the context for learning; and then on the binary distinction between positive and negative aspects of the learning/teaching experience. The data offer some confirmation that work based and returning adult students suffer high levels of anxiety and that these students require concomitantly high levels of support to counter this anxiety. At the same time there is also a deep and positive sense of anticipation and excitement before and during their engagement in higher education. The thesis introduces the notion that student and tutor are linked symbiotically in a mutual learning experience whose essential foundation is trust. One implication for practice is how a student support infrastructure can be developed to build this trust over time.

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# Acknowledgements

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I had almost abandoned all hope of finding a home for my Certificate in Estates and Property Management when the Facilities Management Graduate Centre adopted me. The support of the whole FMGC team enabled the development and re-launch of this work based learning initiative as the Certificate in Facilities Management and everyone played a part in this. But special thanks are due to Jill as my critical but tolerant and supportive friend and reader, and to Sarah who played a big part in the early stages of the evaluation. Neither must I forget Lana who has done a brilliant job in transcribing interviews and Ian who has shown uncommon patience over my technical incompetence with some of the more sophisticated features of word processing.

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These are just some of the people who have supported me professionally but, in addition, and just like the students who are the subject of this investigation, I also have been heavily reliant on 'Friends and Family'. This includes Mum who struggled to carry

home the two massive volumes of the Shorter Oxford when I asked her to buy me a dictionary for Christmas, Jenny who provided a final reading, and finally, special thanks to my wife, Sue, who, over the last four years, has not only never questioned my absence whilst I pursued my 'obsession' but also provides a proof reading service which is both excellent and cheap.



# Chapter One: Introduction

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## Background and Rationale

Twelve years ago as a university validation panel member I was confronted with a proposal that seemed very different; the Certificate in Estates and Property Management<sup>1</sup>. For some reason it caught my imagination. There was something innovative about the way it collaborated with the employer, its novel approach to delivery, support and assessment and perhaps, most important of all, the second chance it offered to mature students, probably written off by the traditional academic routes, to achieve something they may have thought was beyond them. I was keen to be involved and when, some two years later, the opportunity presented itself, I had no hesitation in taking up the challenge of course leadership.

Real success though proved elusive. I remained convinced of the value of the programme but very few students were completing assignments and even fewer were achieving the Certificate award. Coinciding with the first review of the programme in 1996, I was seconded to the University's Learning and Teaching Institute. This gave me the luxury of time to develop a review methodology that accessed potential students through focus groups. Not only did this generate some valuable feedback, it also set me on the path of educational research. Sadly, political (big and small 'p') circumstances led to the loss of our original partner but, as if by some pre ordained plan, a new collaborator, the Health and Safety Executive, emerged and the course continued to be delivered over the next four years.

At the same time things were moving on in the professional arena. The traditional estates management function was broadening as the relatively new professional discipline of facilities management was beginning to emerge. Then in 1998, for totally unrelated reasons (I was managing a post graduate programme in property valuation at the time) I found myself located within the offices of the Facilities Management Graduate Centre (FMGC).

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<sup>1</sup> A narrative of the history of the development of the Certificate is set out in Appendix A: The European Facility Management Conference paper based on early research into the support needs of adult returners, published in 2002.

My interest in the Certificate in Estates and Property Management was leading me to explore the barriers to learning for adult returners to higher education. Papers were published and conferences attended. Then colleagues in FMGC helped me to see that the Certificate course had some potential in terms of delivery to existing clients, filling the gap in the market for an undergraduate Facilities Management qualification. A further review followed and first Consignia (now Royal Mail) and then NHS Estates agreed to sponsor students. We revalidated the Certificate and re-launched it as the Certificate in Facilities Management<sup>2</sup>. By 2003 the first of those students had actually graduated, we started our 5<sup>th</sup> cohort and we had over 100 students on or having just completed the programme.

On the surface this appears to be a story of success. But questions remain. No one can doubt the motivation and quality of the students on the programme and the work they produce, but they still encounter barriers on the return to study journey. Our continued attempts to address these barriers is really the story of this thesis.

During this time the field of my research has also evolved. In the beginning, this was located very firmly in the realm of work based or workplace learning. This has become progressively refined and focussed through engagement with the educational literatures as well as work in the field. Jarvis notes, 'the education of adults is not one field of practice but many' (Jarvis,1995:260) and within this general field of adult education, my interest became further refined to centre on adult learners who share the common characteristics of being part time, semi distance learners, returning to study. My earliest attempts at field research pointed me, inevitably it now seems, in the direction of the largely neglected affective domain of the emotional relationship between students and tutors.

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<sup>2</sup> A description of the course is provided in appendix E

## Research Aims and Objectives

This study aims to address the following broad research question:

What are the implications of the emotional dimensions of learning and teaching for the support needs of adult returners to study and to what extent are these being met by the existing curriculum?

Sitting behind this question are five tentative propositions about adult learning. These were useful as a guide to my early thinking and helped inform the research design. The five propositions emerged from my engagement with the literatures on adult and work based learning as well as my first tentative forays into field research. Each of these is considered in turn in this next section. The propositions are set out diagrammatically in Figure 1.1.

### **Proposition 1: The Neglect of Feelings**

*The affective domain has moved from total neglect to a degree of recognition and a breakdown of the cognitive-affective dualism. Both learning and teaching are emotional as well as cognitive experiences, containing extremes of anxiety and uncertainty, relief and elation. Both students and tutors have emotional needs that they need to satisfy within the teaching-learning transaction.*

This first proposition reflects one of two key starting points leading me into the research underpinning this thesis. This was the initial realisation of the extent to which learning is a highly emotionally charged activity. This first became apparent during an earlier review of the Certificate course and is well illustrated by reflections and interview data from students (see Appendix B: Early Student Reflection and Appendix C: Pilot Interview Transcript). These make evident both the ups and downs of the learning experience and the pain experienced through the assessment process. At the same time I was also becoming more aware of my own emotional commitment as a tutor through a number of critical incidents.

### **Proposition 2: Addressing Barriers through Support**

*There are many barriers to learning. We need a better understanding of these barriers if we are to provide suitable support for learners. This support needs to reflect the particular problems faced by the individual learner and needs therefore to be multi-dimensional.*

This proposition reflects my second key starting point. It is based on a longer term action research project which is about trying to get the course 'right'. It is about identifying what it is that makes learning difficult for adult returners to study and then responding to this by providing appropriate support that is tailored to the needs of the individual student.

### **Proposition 3: Towards a Theory of Adult/Work Based Learning**

*Theories and purposes of education are highly contested. There are many different models and it is usual to distinguish between the education of adults and children. Distinction is also made between work based and other forms of learning.*

If propositions 1 and 2 emerged, in large part, from early empirical research, proposition 3 is very much about the literature. It seems there is little agreement about theories and purposes of learning and there are many models that attempt to describe and illustrate the process of learning. I even tried to devise my own (symbiosis) model which was seductive for a time. In the post-modern era 'grand theories' of anything seem to be elusive and illusory, so perhaps we should simply stop looking. But some assessment of the thinking surrounding adult and work based learning needs to be made as this is essential background to empirical study.

The final two propositions; 4 and 5, represent the two main strands of the empirical study covered within the thesis (as distinct from earlier work undertaken prior to the study). These propositions focus on the two main dimensions of learning; the individual and the institution.

### **Proposition 4: The Paradox of Existential Discomfort**

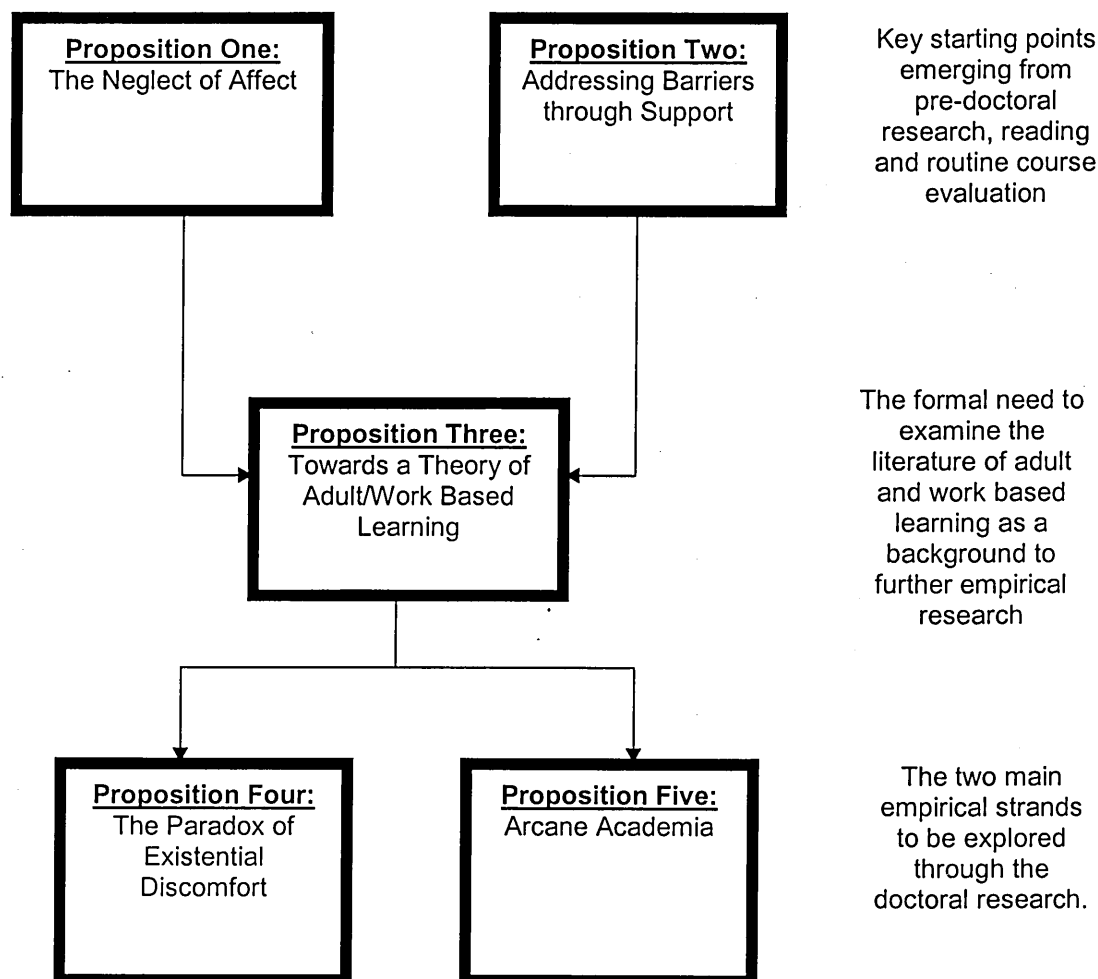
*The demonstration of ignorance is one of the adult learner's greatest anxieties. And yet the very entry into a learning environment is an admission of limitations. The reluctance to admit personal frailty is a significant barrier to learning.*

### **Proposition 5: Arcane Academia**

*The institution of higher education maintains a distance between itself and its students through the language of its discourse, its structures, frameworks and regulations, whether intentionally or otherwise.*

These final two propositions emerge from the data rather than my prior thinking but this is also an iterative process, and so, as issues surrounding the individual and the

institutional learning context began to emerge as important themes in the research, it became increasingly important to examine the literature for other evidence to support them.



**Figure 1.1: The Five Propositions**

To examine these five propositions a longitudinal cohort study was designed to capture the experience of 'Cohort 2', the group of 22 students who enrolled on to the course in November 2001, through to completion of the course just over two years later<sup>3</sup>. Twelve of these students agreed to individual interviews and these were undertaken at the beginning, middle and end of the course. Data were also collected through group interviews and written reflective accounts, completed by all students at the beginning and end of the course. These data were built into four exemplar mini biographies for detailed analysis. At the same time I kept my own research journal recording, among

<sup>3</sup> The demographic details of these students; age, gender, background etc. are set out in Appendix D.

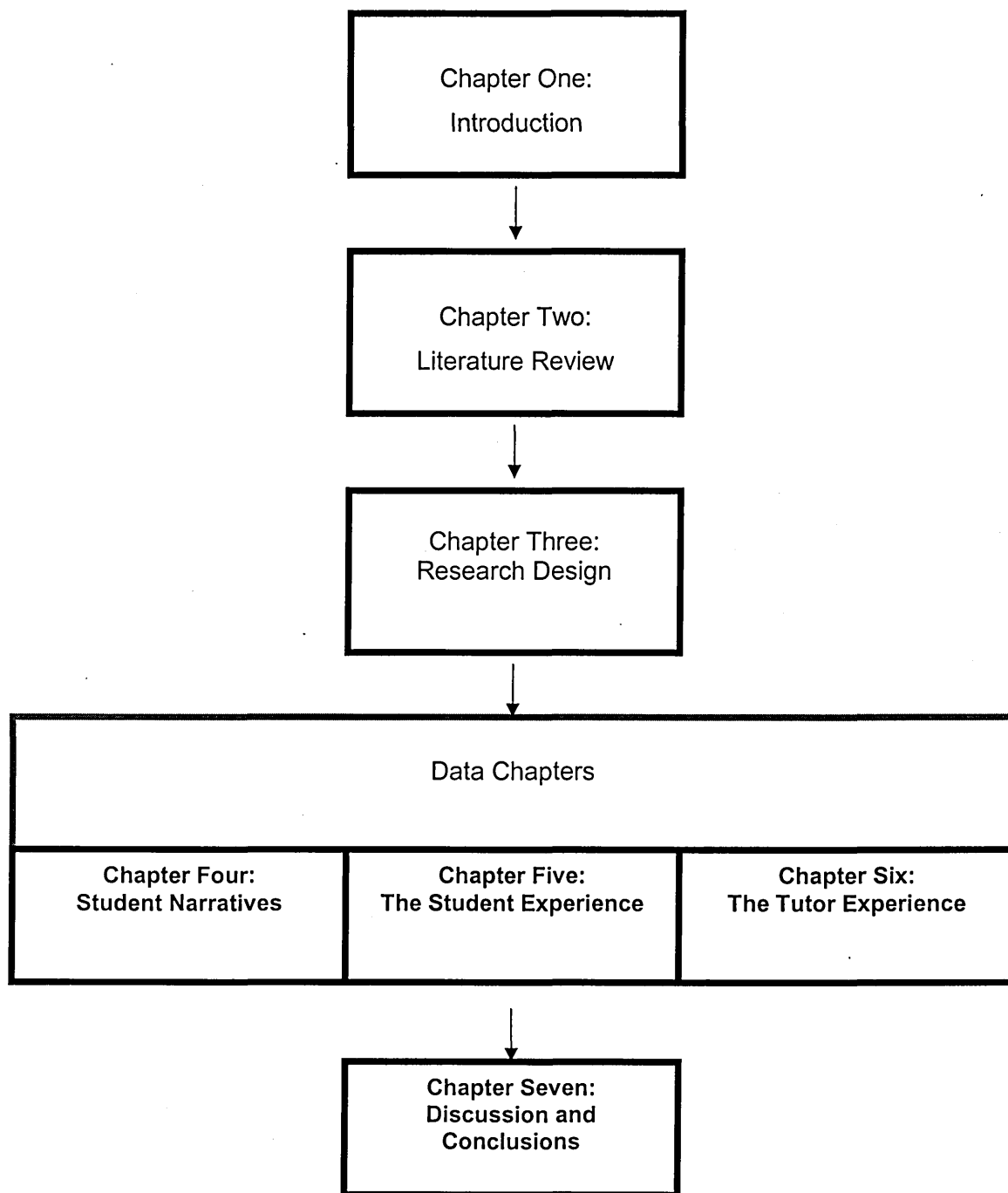
other things, a series of critical incidents which enabled me to access my own experience over the same period of time and compare and contrast this with the experience of the students. These data sets were coded and analysed thematically, using an iterative approach from which a number of key themes emerged.

## **Dissertation Structure**

The remaining part of this introductory chapter summarises the thesis on a chapter by chapter basis using the structure set out in Figure 1.2.

Chapter 2 is a review of the literature. Having identified adult education as my broad field of study, I recognise that the literature is both diverse and voluminous. Diversity stems from the interdisciplinary approach to educational theory and the need to cross boundaries into business and management, training, economics, politics, psychology and sociology at the very least. Some focussing down was required and I finally settled on principal sections emerging from the five propositions.

Thus the first section of the review considers 'feelings' and the 'neglect of affect'. Here, as elsewhere, definitions are problematic but 'feelings' seemed to represent the best label examining the affective or non-cognitive dimensions of learning and teaching. Here anxiety is seen as an unavoidable part of adult learning and teaching but this is balanced by excitement. Generally, feelings, or the emotional dimension of teaching and learning, have tended to be backgrounded and the main focus in much of the adult education literature is the predominance of the cognitive. But teaching and learning are emotional experiences and there is some recognition of this non-cognitive dimension within the educational literature of the 1960s and 1970s. Later though this appears to have been submerged by more a more instrumental view of the purpose of education which remains dominated by the human capital perspective. More recent thinking, recognising an explicit emotional dimension to learning, seems to be located mainly in the field of management training but, interest in emotions in the wider context of popular psychology seems to have stimulated a return to a debate in education literatures of a reconsideration to the point where there seems to be growing acceptance that the cognition/emotion dualism is untenable.



**Figure 1.2: Dissertation Structure**

The second section of the review examines barriers to learning and the support needs of adult returners. I make reference here to a number of empirical studies that provide an insight into the complexities of problems faced by adult and work based learners and how an understanding of these issues is central to the development of appropriate support.

In the third part of the review, I examine the search for a 'Theory' of adult and work based learning. This examines the andragogy/pedagogy distinction popularised by Knowles in the 1970s along with some of his more recent critics. It considers the emergence of social learning theories as well as attempts to deconstruct and model adult learning. This leads to a discussion of changing and contested views of the purpose of adult education.

The fourth section of the literature review examines identity. This is the individual dimension of learning and teaching and in part is an examination of the problems, characteristics, capabilities and fragilities of the adult returning to study after a period of absence from formal education. Issues include the existential anxiety experienced by adult returners and their inhabitation of the different discourses of work, home and study. Student characteristics are a complex mix of mainly positive experience at work balanced by more negative recollections of formal education. This part of the review also examines the motivations encouraging adults to return to study.

The final section examines the context of learning and teaching. This is manifested in three distinct dimensions; the institutional, the political and the theoretical. The institutional perspective views both the institution of higher education and higher education institutions as a hostile environment that is marginalizing adult learners. The second manifestation, the policy context, is dominated by the rhetorics of lifelong learning and the learning society. Adult education, it seems, has always been a contested domain with tensions between social reproduction and social transformation and in modern terms between human and social capital theories. At the present time, the dominance of human capital and social reproduction seem taken for granted in the policy domain although there are some notable dissenting voices currently challenging their hegemony. As for the theoretical dimension, I examine the ongoing andragogy/pedagogy debate and touch upon the arguments for and against the existence of a distinct theory of adult learning.

Chapter 3 is a detailed examination of the research methodology. In this chapter I examine a number of broad traditions which seem to have something to offer in terms of consistency with my own ontological and epistemological position. I adopt a critical theory position with regard to adult education that attempts to challenge dominant ideologies. I set out my ontological position by challenging positivist assumptions of objectivity, value neutrality and predictive generalisation. As researcher I am part of my

own research and I trace support for this position from post-positivist commentators as well as classical emancipatory educationalists.

In epistemological terms I follow a tradition supporting the practitioner approach to research which leads to praxis and change. This, in turn connects with action research. This practitioner/action research fit is only partial but it does provide a starting point for a more formal definition of my own methodology. I also recognise a partial fit in the grounded theory tradition, at least in terms of a broadly inductive approach to the data, and I do draw something from the general writings of Corbin, Glaser and Strauss, as well as more specifically from the constructivist approach of Charmaz (1998). This later variation on the grounded theory theme recognises the existence of a subjective reality co-constructed by observer and observed.

The decision to undertake a cohort study was taken at an early stage. This was very clear because I wanted to capture the experience of a group of students as they progressed through their course over a two year period. I wanted to see how they changed and developed but also how I changed and developed with them. In terms of instruments, the desire for 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) and the small sample size made a qualitative approach obvious and I decided to use multiple methods to identify individual and collective voices, using both the spoken and written word in the hope of 'crystallizing' the data from a range of sources.

All data were transcribed and then analysed electronically using Nvivo software to carry out open coding. This involved a simple thematic content approach starting with the data and progressively working back to more abstract categories from which meaningful themes eventually emerged. This was an iterative process, shuttling back and forth between data and abstraction with a constant reconfiguration of a hierarchy of categories. Periodic summaries of themes, categories and codes and analytic memos were written up and even these were treated as meta data and coded in their turn. As themes crystallized, significant ones were returned to group and individual interviews for respondent validation. Full details of the analytical process are set out in this chapter along with examples of other studies which proved helpful as sources of inspiration.

Resulting data are presented in three separate chapters; Four, Five and Six. The rationale for this is my desire to capture different voices as authentically as possible; the individual student voice, the collective student voice and my own voice as tutor.

Thus Chapter 4 sets out narratives of four of the students involved in the study. Although all 22 students were engaged to some extent in a range of instruments, it soon became evident that data were reaching saturation point. The four students were chosen not as a representative sample but as exemplars whose cases would cover the full range of experience enjoyed by the larger group of students.

As far as possible these narratives are the actual words used by each student, taken from tapes, transcripts and their own writings. Each narrative traces the experience of the student over the two years spent studying on the Certificate. Although I take sole responsibility for the construction of these narratives, in each case they have been validated by the student concerned. Only names and any other identifiers have been changed to protect anonymity.

Chapter 5 presents the collective student experience as reflected in the full data set based on all 22 students in the cohort. This presents the data thematically in terms of both positive and negative experiences, focussing on the learning context and the individual. This gave rise to four principal themes:

1. The Obstructive Context;
2. The Supportive Context;
3. The Fragile Identity; and,
4. The Capable Identity.

This thematic structure is mirrored in Chapter 6 which presents the tutor data based primarily on the Critical Incident part of my own Research Diary. Like the student narratives this begins in 2001 with the early stages of the evaluation of the Certificate in Facilities Management and continues over the next two or so years, recording routine and non-routine events relating to the course, to my research and to the broader contexts of work, life and study.

Chapter 7 provides the final discussion and conclusion of the thesis. In it I return to the propositions set earlier in this chapter and examine the extent to which these are supported by and grounded in the data from the study. Firstly the data support the contention that teaching and learning have a significant emotional dimension. Secondly there does seem to be an important link between barriers to adult learning and lack of trust. Trust needs to be grown organically and takes time to develop. Paradoxically the point at which trust appears to be recognised, is the point at which students find they

are able to begin to withdraw from support. Thirdly the existence of any theory of adult learning appears to be illusory and existing models offer very little assistance in trying to understand the experience and needs of the individual student. Fourthly there is some evidence to suggest that past educational experience can often result in increased levels of self doubt and reduced perceptions of academic capability. Furthermore, negative conceptions of self lead to increased anxiety, demotivation and a further decline in confidence. This negative reinforcement seems partly to explain why students are unable to take full advantage of academic support on offer. Finally, the existence of the hostile environment of arcane academia is partly supported by the data and I do suggest links here with the concept of 'communities of practice' and the way in which academics act (albeit unwittingly) as gatekeepers, restricting student access to the academic community. There is however a danger that this is over-played and there is evidence in the data that the existence of arcane academia is more significant for tutors than it is for students.

# Chapter Two: Literature Review

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It has been observed that the literatures on the related themes of learning, work and professional practice are dispersed over many discipline areas. They do not 'sit within existing areas or fields of enquiry' (Boud and Garrick, 1999:7) and there is a need to cross boundaries between the literatures of management and business, education and training, economics, politics, psychology and sociology. In Chapter 1 I outlined the emergence of my interest in work related adult education, as a broad field of enquiry for this thesis, and set out how previous empirical work, and early examination of the literature, led me to my five propositions. I have used these propositions to provide a framework for this review which is divided into the following five sections:

The Neglect of Affect;  
Addressing Barriers to Learning through Support;  
Towards a Theory of Adult/Work Based Learning;  
The Paradox of Existential Discomfort; and  
Arcane Academia.

Each of these is now considered in turn.

## **The Neglect of Affect**

I have adopted the word 'affect' with a degree of hesitation because it is a generic label embracing abstract concepts such as emotions and feelings as well as the idea of the affective or non-cognitive domains. These terms seem to have similar meanings but each carries its own particular connotations. As I suggest in Chapter 1, my earliest encounters with affect in adult education were with the level of anxiety associated with the return to study. According to Averill, anxiety is an emotional reaction which results from any threat to a person's sense of identity and worth. One of its main symptoms is a degree of cognitive disintegration. This is hardly conducive to a state of learning. Anxiety can be brought about by novel experience, and, it is suggested, whilst a slightly novel experience can result in curiosity and exploration (presumably a necessary prerequisite for learning), too strange an experience can lead to fear and withdrawal (Averill, 1976).

If my own experiences as a tutor/facilitator suggested to me that anxiety was an unavoidable dimension of adult learning, the educational literature seemed to indicate

that this and other emotions, had received comparatively scant attention. Van der Zee (1996) notes the concentration on cognitive development as the dominant educational trend, whereas the aesthetic, social, moral, emotional and physical dimensions are regarded by western culture as more or less peripheral to education. Boler notes that few if any texts on education 'systematically explore, or even mention, the significant role of emotions as a feature of the daily lives of teachers and students'. (Boler, 1999:xxii)

Similarly Brown suggests that although learning has been examined from almost every conceivable perspective, little has been said about learning and emotion:

I suggest that the existence of emotion as an intervening or confounding variable in the academic investigation of any concept is omnipresent and, by an unwritten consensus unacknowledged. (Brown, R. 2000:275)

And yet, he continues:

It is obvious that the process and activity of learning is imbued with emotional resonance. In an academic context, learning is mainly an intellectual activity, but its emotional-cognitive component is often ignored. (p. 283)

Even where emotion is evident it often passes without comment. In an examination of Wenger's widely quoted empirical work on social learning and communities of practice, Turnbull makes the following observation 'Throughout, his [Wenger's] accounts are laden with emotions to which...he pays little attention' (Turnbull, 2000:455). Like Turnbull, other writers note that the cognitive/emotional separation is artificial, or like Conway (1999) suggest that it is impossible now to separate out the cognitive and emotional as distinct domains. These though are exceptions to the general rule so that, not only does this cognitive/emotional 'dualism' remain strongly embedded, the cognitive dimension prevails. Some, like McLaughlin, challenge this 'false polarity of reason and emotion' in setting out the case for the importance of emotion in research (McLaughlin, 2003:65), but the essentialist view of mainstream psychology treats individuals as 'rational, autonomous, unified, consistent' beings (Malcolm and Zukas, 2001:39).

The emotional side of human experience does appear to assume greater prominence within the management (and training) literature than the literature on adult education. Fineman, who has written extensively on the subject of emotions within organisations, refers to emotions as 'dramaturgical devices [which] can be used strategically as a

political resource in interactional settings' (Fineman, 2001:220). Or, they can be feigned as social engineering where the 'outward display of feeling is sold for a wage' (Hochschild, 1983:7). Parkinson (1995) challenges the view that emotions are inner private events and suggests that emotional reality is fundamentally interpersonal in nature. Emotions are a form of communication whose function is to inform others that change is necessary. Fineman suggests that 'Splitting cognition from emotion serves the notion that learning can be rational' (Fineman, 1997:15) and that this conspiracy has enabled learning to become tightly specified and compartmentalised.

Fineman here is writing about organisational learning and management rather than education but he suggests that, rather than being seen as a by-product or interference, emotion should be at the centre of the learning process. As it is, it has become sanitised and separated out so that learning appears to be a singularly rational undertaking which is tidy, can be planned and tightly specified with predictable outcomes. Also writing from an organisational context, Hopfl and Stephen note that the relative neglect of emotional issues in organisational life follows Weber's concept of bureaucratic rationality. Despite this however, emotion:

becomes something which we are forced to deal with because, regardless of the steps we take to suppress it, it will continue to bubble up and interrupt normal behaviour, often when we least expect it. (Hopfl and Stephen, 1997:6)

Ciarrochi, et al (2001:xii) note the explosion of interest in emotional intelligence and the belief (once widely held) that emotions are irrational 'may be destined for extinction'. It may be the case that Goleman (1996) has stimulated some of this interest through his best selling book on emotional intelligence. Goleman's central thesis is concerned with the emotional/rational dichotomy. He traces the development of the human brain examining neurological processes and how these are now better understood and interrelated. 'Emotional hijacking' as he terms it, occurs when an initial emotional reaction takes place before full information is available but is a primitive necessity to ensure a fast reaction to perceived danger. We need to be aware of the relationship between rationality and feeling:

The predominant models among cognitive scientists of how the mind processes information have lacked an acknowledgement that rationality is guided by - and can be swamped by - feeling. The cognitive model is, in this regard, an impoverished view of the mind, one that fails to explain the Sturm and Drang of feelings that bring flavour to the intellect. (Goleman, 1996:41)

The idea of emotional intelligence seems to be attracting wider credibility. Brown and Lauder for example, make the point that the gender division of labour is changing and this is leading to a redefinition of personal intelligence as being important not just for women homemakers - the keepers of the emotions, but for everyone:

A well rounded personality is one in which the emotional or personal intelligence is as important an attribute as logical and mathematical intelligence. Since the enlightenment, emotions including fear, anger, sadness, love, and happiness have been bracketed off as expensive, and therefore seen as irrational in an age of scientific rationality. (Brown and Lauder, 2000:232/233)

They also argue that this labelling of emotions as feminine, has been used to demonstrate female inferiority in a male dominated world.

It has to be noted however that not all in the fields of education and management are totally at ease with emotional intelligence. Boler, (1999) for one, expresses considerable concern over Goleman's concept of the Emotional Quotient (EQ) and where this might lead. She welcomes his raising of the profile of emotion and even concedes that programmes that seek to educate for emotional sensitivity might have some value. But they are also problematic. Hopfl et al (1997) also express reservations. They are comfortable with Goleman's scientific explanations but like Boler, less so with what he does with them.

The place of emotion is perhaps more readily recognised within the recent literature on adult education. In this the profound influence of Carl Rogers and humanistic psychology in adult education and self-directed learning is acknowledged (Foley, 2000:47). Self-directed learning has developed in spite of the largely hostile structure and culture of 'institutionalised education'. Its success is dependent upon understanding learning and teaching from the learner's perspective, upon clear procedures and support and honest and caring interpersonal relationships. Honesty, compassion, humour and passion are identified as the characteristics of real teachers. To Rogers, good facilitators have the capacity to be themselves, to accept and trust in the other person and offer 'a sensitive awareness of the way the process of education and learning seems *to the student*' (Rogers, 1993:233) (original emphasis).

Facilitation is often seen as the appropriate teaching methodology for the promulgation of adult education, self-directed and student centred learning. More recently however Miller et al have expressed concern about the conceptual baggage attached to the term:

We suggest the term animation, rather than facilitation, to describe the function of the person who works with the experience of others... [animation] requires attention to the relationship between animators and learners; to the significance of feelings and emotions in the learning process; to context and discourse; and to relations of domination and subordination in learning relationships. (Miller, 1997:488)

I remain unconvinced that animation is necessarily the more appropriate term but it is relevant that Miller and her colleagues give prominence, within their definition to 'relationship', 'feelings' and 'emotions'.

The adult educator as facilitator can be traced back to Freire (1972) who suggested a model of teaching and learning as *dialogue*. This is a dialogue that brings tutor and student together in a potentially symbiotic relationship where the two roles overlap, having the potential to be mutually beneficial. Darkenwald and Merriam refer to this as the reciprocal relationship between the teacher and learner and suggest that feelings and emotions play an important part in any learning activity (Darkenwald and Merriam, 1982:56). But recognition that there is a significant affective dimension in the teacher/learner relationship has implications:

Whether we like the question or not, and whether we agree that teachers are in fact sometimes like therapists, emotions are a significant feature of the educational transaction and process. (Boler, 1999:17)

Her concern is that the teacher/student dynamic may well 'parallel the therapist/client relation' but the teacher is not trained as a therapist.

Once the emotional dimension of the learning transaction is admitted, it is necessary to face up to a number of other manifestations of any number of problems hitherto buried under the veneer of rationalism. Salzberger-Wittenberg et al describe the emotional complexity of the relationship between tutor and student where both have aspirations and fears. The aspirations of the tutor might be to pass on knowledge and skills to enable students to succeed. Their fears will include fear of criticism, loss of control and hostility. At the same time the student will have certain expectations of the teacher. The teacher is a source of knowledge and wisdom, a provider and comforter, an object of admiration and envy, a judge and authority figure. A Freudian interpretation might see learning/teaching relationships as fraught with emotional turmoil because of these reciprocal expectations (Salzberger-Wittenberg et al, 1983).

Boler suggests that teachers' emotional needs are constantly attended to in the classroom through authority and power and 'the complex ways in which teachers take

the last word, or use students' questions or insights to develop their own thinking cannot be separated from one's own emotional needs (Boler, 1999:149). This unsettling view is supported by More:

'I have seen an adult teacher develop very positive attitudes to certain students because they responded positively to his need to be needed...The sensitive teacher will often see his [sic] sensitivity as a millstone around his neck, simply because he may not be in full control of it.' (More, 1974:24)

Finally, as Zembylas (2001) puts it, teaching is inextricably linked to the personal life of the teacher and they invest their selves, identity and sense of self-esteem into their teaching. Such emotional investment is regulated by rules, disguised as ethical codes, designed to maintain existing power relations.

Although this section of the review started by suggesting that the affective domain had suffered relative neglect in the literature on adult learning, it does seem to be the case that the importance of feelings or emotion is becoming much more readily recognised. Thus Gregory refers to the establishment of a human relationship between facilitator and participant as equals where 'both share themselves emotionally, behaviourally, spiritually and cognitively' (Gregory, 2002a:87), Collin writes of emotional motivations for learning in terms of 'mystery', 'passion' and 'desire' (Collin, 2003) and Ottewill sees teaching and learning as 'emotionally charged activities' which appeal to 'hearts as well as their heads' (Ottewill, 2003:194).

Both learning and teaching then are, in some significant part, emotional experiences. To me this is well summarised by Salzberger-Wittenberg and her colleagues who focus on the emotional experience of mature students at the beginning of a course of study. They talk of the combination of 'wondrous excitement and anxious dread' involved in starting anything new, and how we manage such psycho-social transitions. They describe how we feel lost and confused; have hopes and fears in relation to the teacher and the institution and to other members of the group as well as feelings of success. There is an unavoidable affective dimension here and they liken the tutor perspective on starting a new course to the parenting experience:

The course members do not remain still: they need to be nourished; they make demands on us; they cry out and complain when frustrated or in some mental pain. It dawns on us that the work has only just begun that our ability to provide the right environment and mental food for the students is yet to be tested. Compared to the tasks ahead, the labour pangs of giving birth to a new venture seem in retrospect, if severe, at least quickly over. We wonder what process we have set in motion, what

we have taken on and whether we will be able to sustain the effort over time.  
(Salzberger-Wittenberg, 1983:23)

This section of the literature review is based on the proposition that the role of feelings in learning have been largely neglected. What is clear is that the Cartesian dualism of cognition and emotion is no longer tenable. In fact as early as 1986 Martin noted the reintegration of the cognitive and affective domains in adult education. Martin goes back at least a decade earlier by quoting Freire and describing adult education as embodying:

genuine communication and a fresh approach to the teacher-student relationship in which both become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. (Martin, 1986:49)

## **Addressing Barriers to Learning through Support**

This second section of the review is at the heart of my own empirical work and this in turn reflects the pragmatic response to the problem of how to establish the support needs of particular groups of students. There is much in the adult education literature about the pressures on students resulting from the need to perform multiple roles as well as the particular problems resulting from earlier negative experience of education. Studies have been undertaken into motivation and participation and the different types of barriers faced by prospective students. Barriers, motivation, participation and support do seem to be inextricably linked. Understanding the nature of the individual student is important because it helps to explain the different ways in which learners are motivated and the barriers to learning they face. Understanding motivations, the positive drivers, and barriers, the things that get in the way, helps to define support requirements.

There is a substantial literature on barriers to learning. Cross (1981) made the distinction between situational, institutional and dispositional barriers. Brockett and Hiestra (1991:166) define situational barriers as those arising from one's life situation. These include, for example, lack of time resulting from job and home responsibilities. Institutional barriers are defined as practices and procedures that exclude or discourage adult participation and, finally, dispositional barriers are those related to attitudes and perceptions about oneself as a learner. Whilst the mere codification of barriers will not alleviate them, their identification does represent a first step towards understanding their impact.

One of the main barriers standing in the way of the return of the adult into part time education has been identified as 'role strain' (Dowswell et al,1998:1331). Adding a new role (that of student) may lead to a re examination of existing roles (spouse, parent or worker). Role expansion or personal role redefinition requires a change in the behaviour of self and significant others such as partners and children. The strain and tension of learning tends to impact on home rather than work life. All this, it would seem, has greater consequences for women. In a study of training provision in the NHS, for example, Hewison et al (2000) found evidence that those with domestic responsibilities, especially those with children, do not put themselves forward for training because the costs of doing so outweigh the benefits. These costs are social and psychological as well as financial. Engaging in training has a negative impact on family life and relationships and even results in guilt associated with asking for favours and support from other family members.

Studies into motivation and participation in education have also shown that women experience 'a combination of powerful constraints' (Maguire et al, 1993:13). This differential impact is multi-dimensional. Situational constraints include time; money, transport and child care needs. Dispositional effects include the cultural pressures to perform to gender role, the lack of social and spatial autonomy and relatively low levels of self confidence and low expectations. What makes matters even more difficult is that most women returners are entering educational institutions with a prevailing male ethos. It comes as no surprise that Maguire's study also found that women were more likely to be motivated by personal satisfaction and self development than by job related reasons.

Blaxter et al recognise the time management problems faced by adult learners. They identify three possible responses to the problem of balancing work, family and social life. You can give up other activities to pursue education, you can give up education or you can combine them all and somehow cope. This last strategy they refer to as 'managing the triple shift' (Blaxter et al, 1997:144) of family, work and education.

One response to the existence of barriers is the provision of support but, paradoxically those individuals and agencies best placed to provide that support can unwittingly or intentionally add to the barriers that already exist. In a study of participation in lifelong learning in Scotland and Northern Ireland, one of the ESRC projects under the direction of Coffield; Field and Schuller (2000:110) note the importance of peer and family influence but also comment that this can be an inhibiting factor. In a similar fashion, in

the context of work based learning, Karakowsky and McBey (1999:194) see the worker's organisation as both facilitator and inhibitor of adult learning. Others go as far as to suggest that the individual and the organisation represent opposing interests. The needs of the individual cannot be allowed to transcend those of the employer whose interests are not served by encouraging the challenging of 'the hierarchical, top-down authority models...upon which their own authority depends' (Cornford, 2000:83).

In a study of students in further education, Gallacher et al (2002) noted the importance of support from family, friends and peers in the process of reengagement with learning. There is a tendency to trust supportive social relationships from within one's own social milieu and to distrust institutional support from the 'alien culture' of FE. They stress the importance of word of mouth and the significance of social networks as a source of information. These are sources drawn by students from their existing social milieu and are thus 'trusted in ways that more official information from the colleges was not'.

The adult learner then has to live with the consequences of balancing different roles. At the same time they can be distinguished from other learners in terms of the extent and nature of their life experience. White (1998) has suggested that it is important to take account of structural experiences informed by social class and gender as these inform the perceptions of the individual about self and education. These perceptions impact upon motivation and influence the decision to return to education.

The characteristics of adult returners have been seen as a complex mix of taken for granted qualities and anxieties (Elliot, 1999). There has been a tendency to overplay the importance of the experience and capabilities of mature learners but, more recently, an increasing awareness of their fragility. Cornford, for example, refers to adult learners as 'refugees from learning' (Cornford, 2000:83) with negative experiences of past learning which leaves them poorly equipped with learning to learn skills. Pratt (1998:152) makes a similar reference to what he calls "wounded learners"; the result of adverse experiences of teaching which fell some way short of the ideals of nurturing and support. Maguire et al (1993:8) found that past negative experience of education and training resulted in negative attitudes and stereotypical assumptions that education is formal, inflexible, exam orientated and standards driven. Knowles (1984:9) suggested that many adult learners have been conditioned by their schooling to continue to assume a role of dependency so that they 'demand to be taught'.

On motivation, Blaxter et al make the obvious point that education is easier to sustain where it is complementary, voluntary and relevant (Blaxter et al, 1997:145). Britton and Baxter make the distinction between instrumental and self-fulfilment orientations to education but that 'this dichotomous approach oversimplifies' (Britton and Baxter, 1999:180) and they call instead for analysis which is complementary rather than oppositional. The distinction between instrumental and self-fulfilment is also made by Gherardi who claims that most explanations of motivation are instrumental and students use learning to solve specific problems and to gain 'competitive advantage'. But there is another dimension and that is learning 'driven by a love of knowledge for its own sake' and that this 'motivates people and organizations' (Gherardi, 2003:352). This is knowledge as 'mystery driven' and is defined as:

A journey whose meaning lies in the travelling itself and not just in reaching the destination. ...passion, shared experience, collective identity - and the pride that accompanies it - pleasure and fulfilment and their opposites, pain and frustration...knowledge as a desire that takes us far from the realm of necessity, structuring and cognition as expressions of mental activity, and brings us closer to pleasure, play and aesthetic knowledge...a knowledge journey across terrain where the distinction between cognitive and emotional no longer makes sense. (Gherardi, 2003:353-355)

These are purely emotional drivers for learning and the antithesis of the more typically recognised instrumental approach to organisational learning. This is a significant if unsettling set of motivations.

But the championing of the non-instrumental motivation might be seen as elitist (Haggis, 2003). Ottewill poses the clearly rhetorical question 'What's wrong with instrumental learning?' He defines instrumental as learning that is extrinsically rather than intrinsically motivated, such as, for example, learning to improve one's career prospects rather than a deep love of the subject. This he closely relates to surface and strategic learning which is viewed by some as inevitable and even desirable. Those who support instrumentalism see it as rational, pragmatic and reasonable, based on informed choice and the concept of opportunity cost. Ottewill's view is clearly the contrary and if this smacks of the elitist approach identified by Haggis at least he does suggest that:

Teaching and learning are, or should be, emotionally charged activities. If they are without passion then something vital is missing. It is therefore entirely appropriate to engage students by appealing to their hearts as well as their heads. (Ottewill, 2003:194)

It was noted earlier how White demonstrated that social background and experience might shape values, attitudes and perceptions influencing the decision to return to education. She also suggests that barriers to learning are very much a matter of perception 'related to the structural and social position held by individuals to their class and gender position in society' (White, 1998:4).

Boud and Walker (1993) take a similar position. They set out a model for learning based on critical reflection on experience and see barriers as working to 'inhibit or block learners' preparedness for the experience, their active engagement in it, and their ability reflect rationally on it, with a view to 'learning from it'. They confess to being overwhelmed 'by the number and diversity of blocks to learning'. These impact on each stage of the learning process. Some are 'external impositions' others are self-imposed. External barriers include the learning environment, people, context, social forces, culture and class. Internal barriers 'stem from the unique personal experience of the learner'. Sometimes internal and external barriers are combined, becoming even more powerful constraining forces.

Hanson (1996) sees experience itself as a potential barrier. She suggests that experience is both 'a resource for learning' and at the same time 'a gatekeeper for learning'. For experience to act as a resource, new knowledge needs to build on and relate to existing knowledge. Where new knowledge challenges existing mental models, this can inhibit learning. A similar position is taken by Durkenwald and Merriam who refer to experience as both a 'reservoir' and an 'impediment' to learning. (Durkenwald and Merriam, 1982:86). Collins (1998) also notes the tendency of experience to block learning.

## **The Search for a Theory of Adult/Work Based Learning**

Theories of adult learning and teaching appear to be highly contested and inconclusive. A range of models exist, none of which are really adequate as satisfactory explanations of what really happens in the classroom.

Throughout the latter part of the twentieth century, one of the most significant themes in the literature on adult education centred on the debate over the need for a separate theory of adult learning. Knowles (1998) is usually regarded as the father of andragogy, which is based on, among other things, the fact that adults have more experience than children and have different learning needs. One of the key precepts of andragogy is the

need for learners to maintain control and responsibility. But this widely accepted need for a separate theory of adult learning has been contested. Hanson (1996) postulates that there is really no difference between adults and children. What is more important is a focus on the individual, their contexts and settings. She dismisses Knowles's self-direction as a 'normative educational Utopia'. Expectations are at odds with experience and the ideal of autonomy is curtailed by the political reality where the institution retains control over the curriculum. She also argues that andragogy is of equal relevance to adults and children. True, adults have experience but then so do children. Adults may have more experience but this is not necessarily better. Furthermore, as was noted earlier in this chapter, this additional experience may actually serve to block learning. Brockett and Hiestra (1991:104) suggest that Knowles admitted a mistake in presenting pedagogy and andragogy as dichotomous. The subtitle of the 1970 version of his book was *Andragogy versus Pedagogy*. It is claimed that he subsequently suggested the subtitle should have been *From Pedagogy to Andragogy*.

The debate about adult learning theory has moved on in recent years. Coffield for example calls for the development of a social theory of learning to counter the prevailing orthodoxy of human capital theory. Such a social theory would shift the focus from 'individual cognitive processes to the social relationships and arrangements that shape...learner identities' (Coffield, 2002:191). It could be argued that support for social theories of learning is gaining ground. Wenger (1998) explores social theories of learning and communities of practice. He suggests that all learning takes place in social contexts and this is at odds with the assumption, upon which our teaching institutions are based, that learning is an individual process, separated from other activities. Learning should be placed in the context of lived experience and participation in the world, part of human nature 'life sustaining and inevitable'. Thus learning is 'a fundamentally social phenomenon reflecting our deeply social nature as human beings capable of knowing' (Wenger, 1998:3).

Bonk and Kim (1998) follow this line by exploring the social situations where learning takes place. They argue that the range of situations increases with age. They comment on the need for learner control, respect and sensitivity to students' prior knowledge and experience. The focus should be on collaboration and there is a need for teaching techniques:

that dignify and respect adult learners with self-directed learning opportunities wherein learners take as much control as possible over the design, process, and evaluation of their learning. (Bonk and Kim, 1998:73)

Writing about the need to relocate adult learning back into the workplace, Taylor makes the point that learning, whether within academic institutions or within the workplace, is contextually and socially situated within particular cultures. Thus context, culture and the social environment 'all interact to create, condition and constrain the learning that takes place' (Taylor, 1999:3). This is supported by Harrison et al who see the situated as one of three<sup>4</sup> 'frames of understanding' where 'it is the social situation and its attendant social practices that create the possibilities for learning' (Harrison et al, 2001:5).

Tennant (1997), writing from a psychological perspective, provides an overview of humanist, behaviourist and psychoanalytical learning paradigms. His critical analysis of learning theory and research draws on a range of disciplines but one of his key themes is the nature of the relationship between the person and the social environment. Malcolm and Zukas, in a review of pedagogic literature in teaching and learning in higher education, note that the adult emphasis stems from the authors' belonging to the adult education community of practice. One of their chief conclusions is the need for dialogue across different educational communities to address some of the weaknesses of teaching and learning development within higher education. One key theme is the psychologisation of teaching and learning, especially through humanistic and cognitive models. This provides generalisable explanations and prescriptions and is encouraged by policy makers because of its apparent ability to predict and control what is learnt and how (Malcolm and Zukas, 2001:35). Thus the scope and inquiry of pedagogy is limited to techniques and processes. This takes no account of the extent to which psychology has moved on to a discourse of procedures rather than explanations. They refer to the cafeteria approach to the way in which theory is utilised to produce a set of 'rules for professional behaviour' (Malcolm and Zukas, 2001:36). Despite increasingly learner centred approaches in educational policy and practice, the learner remains anonymous, decontextualised and degendered. Thus history and culture are stripped away to reveal universal truth, seemingly ignoring the fact that it is situatedness that distinguishes teachers and learners.

Jarvis (1985) starts from the premise that there are two competing schools of thought in sociology, one which views the individual as the creation of a social structure and the

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<sup>4</sup> The other two 'frames of understanding' identified by Harrison et al are the Constructivist, 'in which learners take on the central role as meaning makers' and the Critical which focuses on social institutions and power relations.

other which views the social system as the outcome of human action. From this he develops the idea that there are two educations, education from above and the education of equals. Billett (1996) attempts to bridge the gap between these two apparently contradictory theoretical approaches to learning. Cognitive psychology sees learning as realised through cognitive structures, the internal processes of the mind. The socio-cultural approach accentuates the social and cultural genesis of knowledge and the importance of external contributions. Billett argues that cognitive structures cannot be isolated from social situations and that Jarvis's two views of education can be reconciled. His position is that there is a growing interest in situated learning, that is learning in the situation where that learning is to be deployed. He claims that as yet we know little about the impact of situations on learning.

In a significantly different approach, Pratt advocates a general model of teaching based on the components of the teaching/learning dialogue and the relationships between them. He examines 'Teacher, Learners, Content, Context and Ideals' (Pratt, 1998:7) as the main elements which are related together in different ways. From this he derives five different learning perspectives: transmission; apprenticeship; developmental; nurturing and social reform. He acknowledges the likelihood that there are many more.

Usher et al (2001) examine a number of different traditions in adult learning, including training, andragogy, learner centred or humanistic learning and critical pedagogy. They suggest that each of these approaches has the potential both to emancipate and oppress, and each one contains its own conflicts, tensions and ambiguities.

The idea of challenging oppressive social formations through critical pedagogy is popular. However, Ellsworth sees this as both abstract and Utopian. It is largely repressive and only serves to perpetuate the relations of domination. She argues:

That key assumptions, goals, and pedagogical practices fundamental to the literature on critical pedagogy - namely, 'empowerment', 'student voice', 'dialogue', and even the term 'critical' - are repressive myths that perpetuate relations of domination. (Ellsworth, 1989:297)

Ellsworth identifies the alternative concept of emancipatory authority. The authoritarianism of education, she claims, is inevitable and it is wrong to make judgements about the power imbalance between teacher and student as being either good or bad. Imbalance is acceptable where it is maintained through respect and trust and is made explicit. As Johnson-Bailey and Cervero demonstrate in their study of

different approaches to facilitation, the classroom is not a neutral educational site and even teacher perspectives are 'visually impaired by their own viewpoint' (Johnson-Bailey and Cervero, 1997:8).

Just as there are a range of views (and little consensus) on theories of adult learning, the purpose of adult education is similarly contested. This moves from a simply theoretical perspective into the policy discourse which also includes concepts such as the learning society and lifelong learning. Fieldhouse notes a confusion of roles and purposes of adult education as a result of evolutionary economic change during the 19th and 20th centuries. There is an ongoing 'tension between the social concern to put 'really useful' knowledge to practical use in social action, and the liberal emphasis on individual, personal development and fulfilment' (Fieldhouse and Associates, 1996:399). Likewise Carr and Hartnett suggest that 'questions about the social, economic and cultural purposes of education have always been the subject of continuous political debate' (Carr and Hartnett, 1996:17). They review the social upheavals of the 19th century where there was conflict between education for the needs of industrialised society and liberal education. Liberalisation was in the ascendancy after World War Two as the adverse effects of selection slowly gave way to the comprehensive ideal and its emphasis on equality of opportunity. Then in the 1970s the economic crisis gave rise to the necessity for education to respond to economic needs. They conclude 'there is, at any one time, always the unavoidable tension in education between social reproduction and social transformation' (Carr and Hartnett, 1996:34).

Field, (1996) in a historical review of adult education since 1979, provides some insight into the direction of current higher education policy. The then Conservative government's radical liberalism was characterised by minimal intervention, individual initiative and regulation by the market. However, as unemployment rose so the search for training solutions gathered pace, matched by raised public spending. Later in the 1980s the emphasis shifted more to standards based approaches, such as NVQ's, which were supposed however to be employer led and self financing. But, the expansion of the training market, with its increase in private sector involvement, has resulted in increased fragmentation of provision. Training is seen largely as the management of unemployment and the role of the government is minimised and that of the employer maximised. Within this political environment, lifelong learning 'has become little more than a catchphrase within the conventional discourse on education' (Collins, 1998:45).

Coffield (2002:175) refers to this discourse as the 'existing consensus' whose central thesis is the 'prevailing orthodoxy' of human capital theory. He suggests that the weakness of the current policy rhetoric is that it is strong on culture but weak on theory. Coffield (2000a) had earlier noted the fixation of policy with economic competitiveness and skills growth. Wolf (2003) argues forcefully that the link between education and the economy is now taken for granted, despite the lack of evidence to support any link, to the point where we have forgotten that education has any other purpose beyond the promotion of economic growth. Some observers, such as Ecclestone, are able to identify a shift from Conservative 'economic instrumentalism' to the current New Labour emphasis on social inclusion. She is forced to conclude, however, that despite:

espoused commitments to diverse purposes for lifelong learning the policy focus remains learning for economic competitiveness...there is an emerging moral authoritarianism in the guise of liberal intentions (Ecclestone, 1999:332)

and the link between skills and motivation and economic survival and social cohesion are being reinforced through instrumental criteria.

This is echoed in a recent review of the literature by Edwards et al (2002:1) who see lifelong learning as a rallying cry rather than a specific policy. Its purpose is to unite various stakeholders around the need for change resulting from economic, technical and social shifts which demand continuous learning to deal with uncertainty. They identify two strands within this literature. The first is economic globalisation that sees lifelong learning as 'a key instrument in developing a competitive, multi-skilled workforce.' In the second strand, the effect of globalisation on social, political and cultural lives predominates. Here lifelong learning is seen as a means of combating social exclusion. Harrison (1993:2) refers to this as the 'dream ticket' comprising social justice, equal opportunity, fulfilment of potential and a flexible workforce.

Lifelong learning is one element of the policy discourse and this is seen as a part of the wider ideal of the learning society. Hughes and Tight (1995:300) though dismiss this as a 'Utopian ideal' and the government's commitment to its creation has attracted considerable criticism. In reviewing the 1996 White Paper, Elliot (1999) concludes that the government role is limited to 'bland policy commitments with few resource implications'. Coffield (2000b) suggests that the burden for resourcing lifelong learning is being placed largely on the individual. Hughes and Tight refer to the learning society as a myth whose purpose 'is to maintain false consciousness about the structural

positions of labour and capital.' It blames the powerless members of the community for failure. It draws together an alliance of disparate groups seeking different outcomes and:

We may conclude that the function of the learning society myth is to provide a convenient and palatable rationale and packaging for the current and future policies of different power groups within society.' (Hughes and Tight, 1995:301)

This has little real impact but makes it seem that things are improving. It serves ideological purposes. Jarvis (2001:223) also refers to the learning society as 'Utopian' and as a mirage of a 'good society' that provides freedom for adults to assume responsibility for their own learning.

Jarvis examines the policy rhetoric by revisiting Illich and Verne's paper *Imprisoned in a Global Classroom*. He concludes that education does not necessarily signify inadequacy but it does reproduce social structures. Education is becoming industrialised (and commercialised) which widens participation if you can afford it but weakens personal contact between teacher and learner and between learners. Education is used for the benefit of the 'capitalisation of knowledge' (Jarvis, 2001:3) and the need to develop a competent workforce:

The rhetoric of much lifelong learning implies that individuals are free to assume responsibility for their own learning, although there is no real emphasis on the outcomes of such learning except in terms of employability. (Jarvis, 2001:201)

And lifelong learning is about learning for work rather than learning for life, or, as Jarvis puts it; 'worklong learning'.

This section of the review is the central theoretical context for the empirical parts of my study. This is unsatisfactory to the extent that both theories and purposes of adult education remain contested with much current thinking sitting well outside the post modern policy context. The final two sections of this review consider adult education from two different perspectives that of the individual learner and that of the institutional context.

## The Paradox of Existential Discomfort

Education has been noted as a 'key site for the construction of identity' (Britton and Baxter, 1999:179) for the mature student. With specific reference to work place learning, Illeris suggests that we need a different insight based on the perspective of the learner. He is concerned that current trends such as 'situated learning' and 'communities of practice' 'more or less explicitly deny or exclude the individual dimension of learning.' (Illeris, 2003:169). The ways in which the individual learner constructs his or her identities and how these identities are constructed by others are significant for our understanding of motivations, barriers to learning and the support needs of adult returners. These identities are fragmented, contradictory, change over time and change with context. Identities are multiple constructs that emerge through history, experience and all those other dimensions of the individual's biography. According to Giddens, the modern self, has to be 'routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual' (Tucker, 1998:180).

Work based, mature students will enter higher education with a readily constructed identity based on their work role and this may be in conflict with the new student identity. Barnett suggests the adult who chooses to leave one life world to enter the intellectual world of learning, faces the 'existential anxiety' (Barnett, 1999:38) of 'inhabiting two discourses at once' (Elliot, 1999:24). Furthermore, the admission of being in a state of learning can amount to an unsettling disclosure of lack of knowledge, especially to one's organisation and work colleagues. In such circumstances, according to Barnett, learning opportunities can be perceived by the individual as threatening.

Constructing identity is not just about taking on new identities. It is, at the same time, concerned with the retention of existing identities. It is about the contradictions flowing from being an adult and a student at the same time. Rogers suggests that 'Being a student is a deliberate act, the adoption of a temporary identity for the purpose of fulfilling one's potentiality. This does not mean that the student drops all other identities' (Rogers, 2003:17). The contradiction is that the one identity is autonomous, responsible and mature whereas the other is incomplete, dependent and in deficit. Being a student is the temporary laying aside of adulthood.

A similar set of contradictions arises between worker and learner. Boud and Solomon suggest 'that having an identity as a learner may not be compatible with being regarded as a competent worker' (Boud and Solomon, 2003:326). Their project

focussed on four occupational groups; trade teachers, office staff, strategy planners and workplace trainers, to examine how learning in work could be used more effectively. They concentrated on how learning is 'spoken about' and examined the 'identity tensions' of being both worker and learner. They suggest that the problem of 'naming oneself as a learner' is complex and contains issues relating to position, recognition and power.

This is further illustrated by Boud and Middleton who refer to Hughes (2002) who notes the problem of generating trust between work place supervisors and learning staff because of the potential role incompatibility between formal surveillance and learning support. There is also the overriding 'need for individuals to portray themselves as competent workers' (Boud and Middleton, 2003:194) and this can be incompatible with the learner role. Boud and Solomon note the way in which students used metaphor to distance themselves from being learners because to construct oneself as a learner suggests incompetence. Furthermore 'Being a learner is a risky business as it can position one apart from the group'.

Rogers identifies something similar in the conflicting identities of child and adult. Childhood and adulthood are social constructs and 'When adults come to adult learning, they also construct themselves as students' (Rogers, 2003:55). He sees these roles in terms of 'hybridities' rather than dichotomies:

The roles which the student participants expect their chosen or accepted teacher to adopt both as being in authority and 'an' authority (Peters 1966) will be complex and varied, based on prior experience and on already accepted norms. (Rogers, 2003:57)

He introduces the concept of hybridity as a way of explaining these constructions. So the adult is a hybrid 'made up of adult and student' (Rogers, 2003:58) and teachers also have constructs 'norms which they expect the learners...to conform to.' (Rogers, 2003:59) A wide range of possible hybridities exists because of the incongruities in the perceptions of adults and students.

Examples of the ways in which adult learners form different conceptions of the self include Britton and Baxter (1999) who, in a longitudinal study of mature access students on an undergraduate programme, used narratives based on preliminary interviews to build biographical accounts of a number of students on entry to higher education. From these accounts they construct four narratives with different

conceptions of the self. Hughes makes reference to examples in the literature of returning to education, literally and metaphorically, as leaving behind aspects of their lives to have a better view of the future. She quotes Edwards about how returning feels unusual and even deviant and out on a limb. Such students do not see themselves as proper full time students; they are different and outside and this invokes metaphors of 'exile and nomad' to illustrate the process of the (woman) returner being 'located and dislocated within the culture of origin and the host culture' (Hughes 2002:419).

If constructions of identity are a function of role, they also vary over time. Gallacher et al (2002) undertook empirical research on further education students reengaging in education. It is possible, they suggest, to identify 'Learning Careers'. These however are not smooth trajectories and often involve the reconstruction of social identities over time. This, they suggest, can involve the transition from one 'social milieu' to another, through participation in 'communities of practice'.

A further important variable is the level of self esteem. Workers with an established identity in the work place may well enjoy high levels of self esteem, based on status and experience, but this is not necessarily transferable to their new location in education. James (2003) for example makes reference to Alexander (2001) who identified different dimensions of learner self esteem. Learners may well suffer 'unconditional self-acceptance' of certain traits in relation to being a learner, such as the self concept of 'being thick' in terms of 'academic' matters. Experimental research by Young measured students' self esteem as high, medium or low and then examined the differential effects of feedback on students in each of the three categories. Students with low self esteem were far more likely to perceive feedback comments as negative than those with high levels of self esteem (Young, 2000). Self esteem is also understood to vary with gender. Stanley and Burrows found that women in the work place are more likely to experience negative emotional states and anxiety, low social status, poor health, low self esteem and stressful life events, than men (Stanley and Burrows, 2001:10).

Having 'multiple identities' carries a number of consequences. Identity change is threatening and we sometimes need to defend how we see ourselves. Illeris makes reference to stable and long term life projects which are embedded. New ideas that are important to these life projects are allowed through the defences; the rest is not and 'we develop our defence mechanisms to be able to counter influences that could threaten the experience of who we are and would like to be'. He suggests that being at

school again recalls defeat, humiliation and other negative experience and mobilises a 'thick wall of defence' which is difficult to break through (Illeris, 2003:174).

## **Arcane Academia**

This final section of the review is about the institutional context within which education takes place. This appears in Pratt's models of teaching and learning (Pratt, 1998). Other authors refer to this as 'environment' or 'setting'.

This refers to the wider institution of higher education as well as to the individual institution. It is identified as a particular and 'alien culture' (Gallacher et al, 2002:503) which takes students out of their own social milieu. Similarly, Foley identifies the structure and culture of higher education as a 'hostile environment' for adult learners (Foley, 2000:47). Notwithstanding the fact that part time adults represent a majority in higher education, the focus remains 'on the provision of full-time undergraduate courses for school leavers.' Adult learners are left 'to fit themselves around these patterns' (Tuckett, 1996:45). Tight (1993) suggests that it makes no sense to seek to increase levels of participation by adults without changing the nature of the higher education experience. It might be argued that this 'hostile environment' extends even further, beyond the level of the institution. Hughes and Tight (1995:292) suggest that the main plank of adult education policy, the Learning Society, is a myth designed to bring together an alliance of otherwise diverse interests, politicians, educators and industry to 'marginalize the interests of the individual in pursuing learning for their own self-fulfilment' (Hughes and Tight, 1995:297).

At the institutional level, we pay lip service to learner centred learning through flexibility, modularity and credit accumulation, whilst the reality moves towards a 'mass product model' where all have to fit in and conform for the sake of efficiency and quality control. This homogenisation is also reflected in what Elliot refers to as 'the over-prescribed curriculum' (1999:14) where knowledge is piecemeal and compartmentalised with no room for discovery, autonomy or connection, and also in Ecclestone's 'minimalist pedagogy' (Ecclestone, 1999:344), characterised by commodification, control, narrow vocationalism, moral authoritarianism, mistrust and prescription. Zukas and Malcolm (2001) refer to the psychologisation of teaching and learning, the cafeteria approach and the decontextualised learner. Finally Brookfield expresses concern about the commodification of learning and the invasion of our emotional lives by the exchange dynamic which serves merely to reproduce existing social structures (Brookfield,

2001:11). Such thinking is hardly new but perhaps the myth of the learning society has now become so pervasive as to exclude all other possible reasons for learning. Illustrating the extent of the difference between the milieu of higher education and the other social environments inhabited by its students, Haggis identifies the 'elite' assumptions academics make about students, their aims and motivations. She points to research that:

challenges the idea that once students have been 'inducted' into the (homogenous) culture of the university (through study skills training, preparatory course etc.) they will be able to use the 'skills' they have learned for the rest of their university education. (Haggis, 2003:100)

Haggis goes on to suggest that one of the problems is that:

there is not one 'academic culture' that students have to be 'inducted' into, but (that) the academy consists of a range of diverse and often contradictory cultures that students have to learn to negotiate and survive and that we have constructed a model of student learning which is based upon a set of elite values, attitudes and epistemologies that make more sense to higher education's 'gatekeepers' than to its students (Haggis, 2003:101).

Boud and Symes suggest these are institutions that:

are badly infected by a legacy of inertia which makes it difficult for them to liberate themselves from the stranglehold of their traditions (and yet) a cult of relevance has begun to sweep through the sometimes **arcane** tendencies of the **academy**. (Boud and Symes, 2000:16) (my emphasis).

*Arcane academia* manifests itself in a number of different ways and seems particularly acute for students not fitting the 'standard' if mythical conception of what a student is. Duke sees the problem as the lack of adequate recognition for 'the learning needs of lifelong learners' (Duke, 2002:25) and the real difficulty is their variety and complexity is such that they do not easily fit into pre-existing assumptions of homogeneity.

There is a natural temptation to seek order and homogenisation but Haggis demonstrates how portraits of students on access courses demonstrate 'richness and complexity' rather than generic principles of learning. This is due to their location in different histories and biographies which can be at odds with simplified academic models. Haggis sees limitations in the tendency to cease analysis with bipolar models such as vocational/instrumental or academic/liberal when framing reasons for learning. The creation of such oppositional dimensions tends to obscure levels of difference and

there are alternative readings where the reality tends to be more complex than the simple either/or. Of this either/or analysis she suggests:

Though the general principle might be useful in this particular context, it is perhaps equally likely to result in a subtle form of stereotyping which could create an effect which is the opposite of that which was intended.' (Haggis, 2003:11)

In an interview study with some 90 participants, Kasworm (2003) addresses how past experiences of adults influence collegiate learning. She comments that adults represent a significant proportion of the undergraduate population but little is known about their 'unique learning differences.' They are more complex and varied and it is well known that they have prior knowledge and skills, histories, motivations, limited time and resources. Most studies though have focussed on adult capabilities and performance, learning outcomes, participation and influences.

Richardson sees mature students as unfairly problematised and stigmatised through 'pejorative stereotypes' (Richardson, 1997:167). We cannot assume that adult learners are deficient in study skills. On the contrary, Richardson argues that mature students are more likely to exhibit a 'meaning orientation' to study, are more likely to be intrinsically motivated and supported by prior life experience. Similarly Beard and Wilson suggest that adults do have some constructive attributes for the positive interpretation of experience including confidence, self-esteem, support and trust (Beard and Wilson, 2002:119).

Lave and Wenger introduced the notion of legitimate peripheral participation as the process by which newcomers become part of communities of practice. But even they concede that there is a problem where access to communities of practice is liable to manipulation and can be denied (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Giddens 'argues that modernity excludes and marginalises particular groups of people who do not easily fit into categories' (Tucker, 1998:142; Giddens, 1991:6) and this idea of exclusion is also inherent in Turnbull who suggests that 'learning involves becoming an insider and learners learn to function in a community and to become 'enculturated'' (Turnbull, 2000: 453). Finally Boud and Symes, writing about the implementation of work based learning in universities, identify a number of specific problems including the incompatible calendar, a lack of correspondence with disciplinary structures and amorphous knowledge boundaries (Boud and Symes, 2000).

## Conclusions

It was the intensity of anxiety experienced by adult learners that brought me to researching the feelings or emotions linked with the return to study for many adults. But emotion does not seem to be well explored in the literature on teaching and learning. Whilst the traditional separation of cognition and emotion in learning is now seen as artificial, the rational world view seems to prevail. An acceptance of the importance of emotion may well be more developed in the management and training fields (especially through the growth in interest in emotional intelligence) although even here it is often sanitised out.

Adult returners face a range of barriers to learning. These include situational, institutional and dispositional barriers. These are things that get in the way of learning, but to appreciate support requirements it is also necessary to understand the positive drivers, the motivators. But a key difficulty is the tendency to see adults in homogenous terms through the lens of our own assumptions. This may be convenient but does not reflect the variety of students and the differences in their needs. These individual identities are a product of individual histories and biographies among other variables. It does therefore seem unreasonable to expect to find homogenous solutions to the problem of providing support.

There are no grand theories of learning and individual models can only, at best provide partial explanations and at worst can be misleading and again lead to unhelpful homogenising assumptions. In any event models are like metaphors and the problem with metaphors is that they simplify and only tell part of the story. The real complexities of learning stem from the combination of a wide range of components including the individual learner and teacher and the contexts within which learning and teaching take place.

We need to understand learning from the perspectives of the individual and the various contexts within which learning takes place. The adult, work-based returner to study faces a number of particular problems in defining an identity where work and study may well contradict and challenge individual perceptions of self. High levels of self esteem in the work place, earned through experience, knowledge and skills, do not necessarily transfer into the classroom. What is more, the context for learning in higher education can be seen variously as hostile, alien and arcane and fails to take account of student

diversity, makes elite assumptions about the qualities and motivations of those students, failing to reflect their unique characteristics and qualities.

# Chapter Three: Research Design

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## Introduction

Research design should reflect the messiness and complexity of the real world with its 'stumbling and missteps' (Merz, 2002) and its mistakes (Morrow, 1995). I use a threefold distinction between the philosophy, operationalisation and empirical grounding phases of research design based on Guba and Lincoln (1998) and Denzin and Lincoln (1998). Figure 3.1 outlines the research design framework and serves as a blueprint for the structure of this chapter. This starts with an overview of the three different design 'phases' followed by a general consideration of the nature of research design. I then go on to examine the range of available options at each phase, focussing on and justifying the choices made.

Phase one of the research design is concerned with the underlying philosophy. The starting point is my own positionality. This is grounded in those aspects of individual history and biography which determine my inclination towards a particular research tradition or paradigm. At the other extreme, Phase 3 is concerned with the data, its analysis, interpretation and legitimation. One point to be noted here is the iterative relationship between data and analysis which is discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Preceding this and linking the philosophy and data phases is Phase 2 consisting of the identification of research strategies, instruments and processes to be used for the collection of data.

The research strategy adopted is that of a cohort study and the instruments or methods of data collection are group and individual interviews, student reflections and logs and my own critical incident log. Each of these instruments is described before considering the data and their analysis.

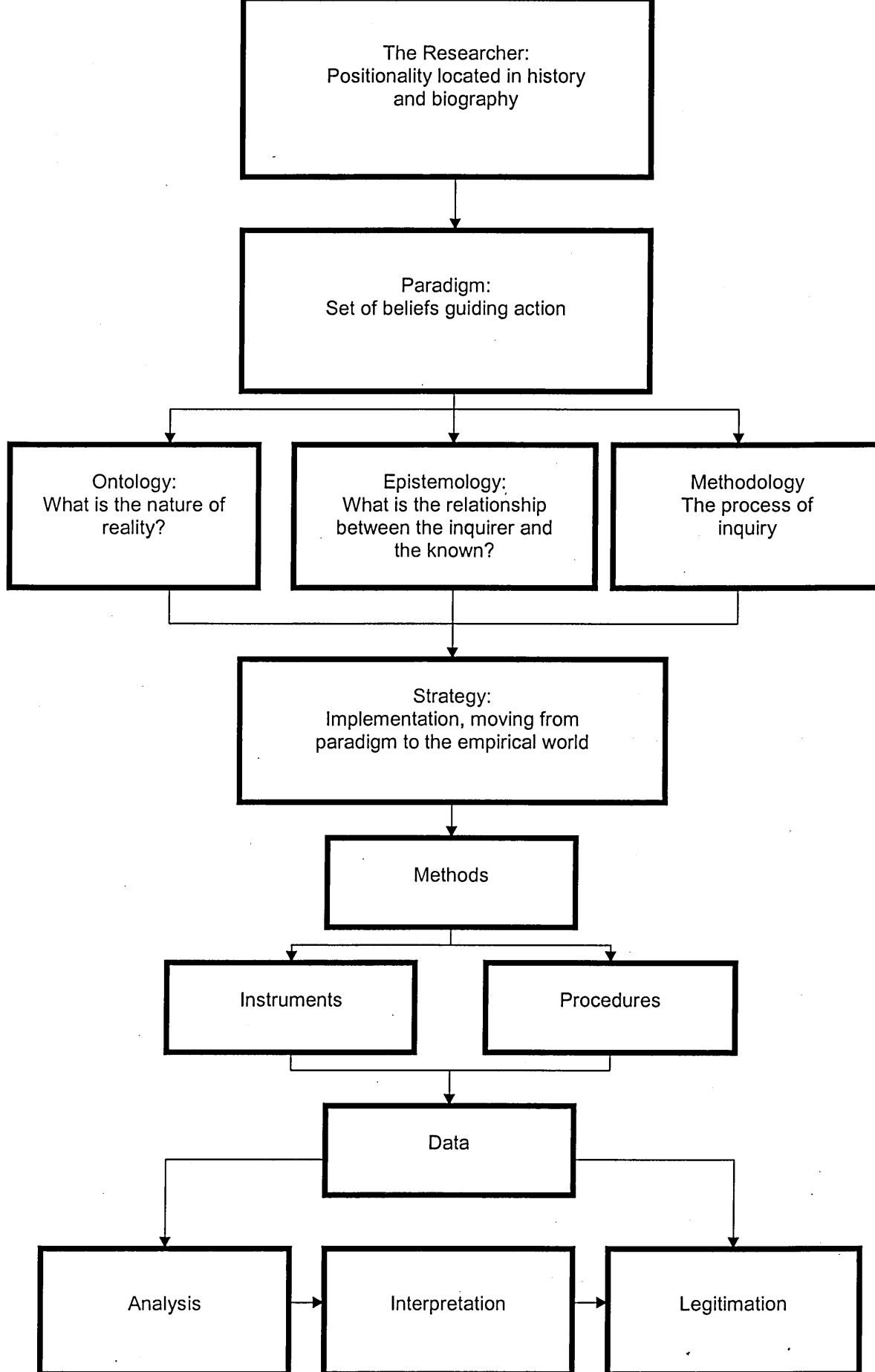


Figure 3.1: Research Design Framework

## Phase One: Philosophy

Given the subjective nature of this investigation, which is in part an examination of my own practice, it is clear 'the scientific observer is both part and parcel of the setting, context, and culture he or she is trying to understand and represent' (Altheide and Johnson, 1998:285). Phase 1 of the design framework; philosophy, begins with an examination of the positionality of the researcher. It is recognised that each individual is located in and influenced by, their own history, beliefs and biography, as well as, according to Denzin and Lincoln (1998), conceptions of self and others as well as the ethics and politics of research. Positionality has been described as situatedness, partiality, prejudice and bias and the identity of the researcher emerges through a process of reflexivity, which is defined as taking account of oneself and one's effect on what is being investigated. At the beginning of Chapter 1, I attempted to set out my own history and biography by providing a full account of my own experiences as a teacher of adults. This had the explicit aim of foregrounding my own agenda.

In addition to this personal agenda it is also necessary to unearth, if possible, all those 'biographical presuppositions' and 'cultural confusions' (Scott and Usher, 1999:119) so that biases such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity and class which are 'ineliminably part of us...can be recognised but not willed away' (Usher, 1996:45). The important elements of my own history and biography and my own agenda include a long term commitment to the objectives of widening access, the struggle to understand and try to remove the barriers to successful participation, an overwhelming desire to take these things forward as an educational project and, finally, against the odds, to 'make it work'.

Methodology, the final ingredient of this philosophical blend, concerns how we set about social research to gain knowledge of the world. This is the process of inquiry. Here the term is used in its classic sense as 'the study of epistemological assumptions implicit in specific methods...methodology includes a way of looking at phenomena that specifies how a method 'captures' the 'object' of study' (Tuchman, 1998:225/6).

The process of combining ontological, epistemological and methodological questions to form alternative paradigms is covered by both Denzin and Lincoln (1998) and Cohen et al (2000). Within social science Denzin and Lincoln identify two alternative paradigms; the normative and the interpretive. The normative sees social behaviour as governed by rules and as predictable and therefore amenable to investigation using techniques based on natural science. By contrast, the interpretive approach sees the world of

human experience as subjective, where investigation is based at the level of the individual. Cohen et al take a similar approach, suggesting two competing views of social science which they define as the traditional view and the interpretive view. The traditional view assumes that social science is the same as natural science and is concerned with the discovery of universal laws which determine behaviour. The interpretive view assumes that people are unique and differ from natural phenomena and from each other.

Cohen et al trace how the two views stem from different assumptions about social reality at four levels; ontological, epistemological, human nature and methodology. The traditional view takes an objective ontology which assumes that social reality is external and is imposed from without. This is a realist position that assumes objects have an independent existence. The epistemological assumption is that knowledge is hard, objective and tangible and as such can be observed. This is a positivist position. It takes a deterministic view of human nature which is assumed to be conditioned by the external environment. In methodological terms the traditional paradigm is nomothetic, in other words it is based on the discovery of universal, general laws. Such a paradigm leads to a normative social science which is rule governed and uses the methods of natural science.

The assumptions underpinning the interpretive view, on the other hand, start with the ontological assumption that reality is the product of individual consciousness. This is subjective and nominalist. Epistemological assumptions are that knowledge is personal, subjective and unique and that researchers are closely involved with research subjects. It is anti-positivist. It takes a voluntaristic view of human nature, assuming free will and the individual as creator of the social environment. The methodology is said to be idiographic, that is concerned with the understanding of the unique and the particular. It questions the existence of an external reality. It is relativistic.

Within the interpretive view Denzin and Lincoln distinguish the following paradigms; positivist, post-positivist, constructivist as well as a further sub group of paradigms (feminist, Marxist, ethnic and cultural) which seem to fit under the critical theory heading. Guba and Lincoln's approach is almost identical although they use the term 'constructivism'. Cohen et al by contrast, identify just three distinct paradigms; normative, interpretive and critical theory but otherwise seem to be in agreement.

My desire from the outset, was to focus on the lived experience of a small group of students, to develop an in depth 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) of what that experience meant to them and to me. This suggested subjective and individualistic ontological and epistemological positions, pointing either to constructivism or critical theory as the underlying approach to the research.

Schwandt throws further light on the generic family of constructivist approaches to research. These seek to understand the lived experience from 'the point of view of those who live it.' (Schwandt, 1998:221). This is a world which is contextual and constructed by actors and where meaning is embodied in the language and the actions of social actors and interpretation is necessary for understanding. This interpretation is an act of construction on the part of the inquirer where:

'The act of inquiry begins with issues and/or concerns of participants and unfolds through a 'dialectic' of iteration, analysis, critique, reiteration, reanalysis, and so on that leads eventually to a joint construction...' (Schwandt, 1998:243).

Findings of inquiry are a creation (or construction) of the inquiry process.

As for the critical theory paradigm, the literature review (see Chapter 2) has already drawn attention to a number of writers who critique the dominant ideologies of adult education. Critical theory, as an approach to research in adult education is well established by Jarvis (1995), Ecclestone (1999), Elliot (1999) and Brookfield (2001), as well as McIntyre (2000) who notes the tension between the institutional and learner perspectives within adult education. This support within the literature on educational research for a critical methodology can be traced back at least as far as Carr and Kemmis (1986), who suggested the alternative paradigm of critical educational science through action research, that provides a critique of ideology through a dialectical view of rationality. Preece and Griffin (2002) offer an overview of ideology critique as radical pedagogy. Critical educational science is distinguished from the interpretive paradigm in that only the former leads to criticism and praxis. Collins also challenges the predominance of the natural science paradigm and calls for a completely new critical approach which challenges the tradition of 'technical rationality' and engages with 'critical, ethical and political issues.' (Collins, 1996:125). Brookfield traces critical theory through Althusser, Marcuse, Habermas and Merzirow, drawing heavily on Marx and the Frankfurt School and sees adult education as an 'ideological state apparatus' which helps to ensure the 'perpetuation of dominant ideology' (Brookfield, 2001:15).

It is clear from Guba and Lincoln's analysis (see Guba and Lincoln, 1998:207-208), that the philosophical differences between constructivism and critical theory are quite subtle. This helps to explain my own difficulty in deciding my precise position within the interpretive tradition. In reality it was only much later, during the operationalisation phase of the research project that this became any clearer.

## **Phase Two: Operationalisation**

At the beginning of this chapter, I suggested that this second research design phase was the link between philosophy and data collection. This phase is concerned with the implementation of the research. It consists firstly of identifying a suitable research strategy, followed by appropriate research methods. If the subject of research philosophy contains its own terminological confusions, it is a paragon of clarity when compared with the mystification existing over research strategies and methods. It is essential therefore to define how these various terms are being used in the context of this study. By strategy, I mean the general approach taken to implement research undertaken within the given paradigm and which 'provide specific direction for procedures in a research design' (Creswell, 2003:13). I use the term 'method' specifically as the means of collecting data.

In defining research strategies I am influenced by Denzin and Lincoln (1998) and Creswell (1998 and 2003). There is a range of alternatives. Denzin and Lincoln distinguish case study, ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, biographical method, historical method, action and applied research and clinical research as *some* of the major strategies. Creswell selects five strategies: biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case study. These are very similar selections apart from the slightly curious omission by Creswell of action research. Creswell does however explain his selection is based on personal choice, popularity and frequency of use. I ignore those strategies such as clinical research which are *prima facie* inappropriate in an educational setting.

Case study offers a complete 'fit' in terms of its definition as an *in depth exploration bounded by time and activity*. Although possible alternative research strategies are rejected; grounded theory, on the grounds that I do not claim to be concerned with the derivation of abstract theory; and action research, because of a lack of collaboration within my own investigation and partly because of the absence of a continuous action

research cycle; I do consider both very briefly because certain dimensions of each did offer up some useful techniques and ideas, especially at the data analysis stage.

### **Strategy Selection**

The distinctive characteristic of critical theory as an interpretive paradigm seems to be that it leads to praxis. This is defined as informed and committed action for change and appears to connect well with the action research tradition. A number of writers have attempted to define action research or at least to outline its characteristics. These include Ebbut (1985) who emphasises reflection, change and improvement, Kelly (1985) who refers to performance enhancement, Zuber-Skerritt (1992) emancipation, Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) participation and collaboration. These are summarised by Cohen et al as the 'six notions' of action research being; cyclical, reflective, emancipatory, critical, developmental and participatory (Cohen et al, 2000:241).

This thesis was preceded by my own preliminary attempts to explore the barriers faced by adult returners (Askham and Green; 1996, Askham; 2000). This fits with at least five of the 'six notions' outlined above, where only the notion of collaboration is absent. However, if the existence of collaboration is one of the features common to most definitions of action research, this raises the question of whether individual inquiry, such as my own study, can ever be identified as true action research. Kemmis and McTaggart (1992) ask why action research must consist of a group process, suggesting that this undermines the significance of the individual teacher-as-researcher. In these terms there is a partial if not perfect 'fit' between my own study and the formal definitions of action research and I have found some value in using action research as one of the guiding strategies underpinning the research process. At the very least, it is submitted that this study is research that promotes, in Zuber-Skerritt's words, 'a critical attitude, accountability, self evaluation and professionalism' (Zuber-Skerritt, 1992:15).

In the early stages of research design I was also attracted to grounded theory, if not as a complete strategy, at least as offering some guidance in the later stages of analysis. Certainly, at the broader level, here is an enquiry that commences with the data, the student experience, which is to be used to try to develop a model for curriculum delivery. It is a study which aims to exploit the interplay between the data collected and the research and which therefore would seem to satisfy the requirements of Strauss and Corbin in their definition of grounded theory as inductively derived, where data collection, analysis and theory 'stand in reciprocal relationship with each other' (Strauss

and Corbin, 1990:23). Johnson and Christensen propose grounded theory as 'a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed' (Johnson and Christensen, 2000:331).

My own approach has also been influenced by Charmaz (2000) who challenges these traditional definitions and argues that much of grounded theory is still positivist in that it seeks objective reality and the security of validity through sound process. She advocates a more constructivist approach that offers flexible strategies rather than rigid prescriptions. Constructivist grounded theory, she argues, assumes that people construct their own realities and that the researcher becomes part of the story by her engagement with the people, processes and situations under investigation. The admission of a subjective reality constructed by both the observer and observed, acting, if not formally collaboratively, in a close relationship, does come close to the principal characteristics of my study.

But case study is my preferred strategy. I describe my research as a cohort study which charts the development of a group of students over time and where data collection commenced before these students were inducted into their course in November 2001 with the final data collected some two years later, in the winter of 2003/4. This then is a specific instance, a bounded singularity. It is addressing a 'question being asked about a set of contemporary events over which the investigator has little control' (Yin, 1994:4) and seems to accord with Cohen et al's own definition of case study:

'Unlike the experimenter who manipulates variables to determine their causal significance or the surveyor who asks standardised questions of large, representative samples of individuals, the case study researcher typically observes the characteristics of an individual unit – a child, a clique, a class, a school or a community. The purpose of such observation is to probe deeply and to analyse intensively the multifarious phenomena that constitute the life-cycle of the unit with a view to establishing generalizations about the wider population to which that unit belongs.' (Cohen et al, 2000:185)

It is clear that here I have an identifiable unit, the student cohort, and also an overall purpose, that is to probe deeply and subject the emerging data to intense analysis.

## **Methods**

Operationalisation in phase 2 is concerned with methods of data collection as well as strategies. Methods can be subdivided into specific data collection instruments as well as processes used in the application of those instruments. These were designed to

capture the depth of the learning and teaching experience over a fixed period of time. The use of different instruments facilitated the collection of different data, representing the individual and collective student voices, as well as a record of my own experiences as a tutor on the course over the same period of time. Easterby-Smith et al (1991) suggest that the use of mixed methods does provide a range of different perspectives and Richardson refers to the use of multiple data sources as 'crystallization'. A process in other words of slowly building up a body of evidence (Richardson, 1998:358). This combination of methods was also chosen to maximise the possibility of involving all 22 students in the cohort.

Student involvement in the study is shown in Figure 3.2 below. The first column lists the full cohort of 22 students. Subsequent columns are marked to indicate each individual student's contribution in terms of their engagement with specific instruments, starting with the three individual interviews, followed by the group interviews and, finally, the written data. Written data include the optional logs submitted by six of the students and the two mandatory reflective accounts attached to the assessment for units 1 and 6, the first and final units to be completed by the students at the beginning and end of the course. Each of these instruments is described in more detail in the following sections.

### **Group interviews**

Group interviews had earlier been used as review instruments in connection with this course and its predecessors. One major attraction is their cost-effectiveness as a way of gathering data. A disadvantage may well be the distortion which can arise from the group dynamic. The group interviews took place at the commencement of each of the first three workshops, attached to each unit on the course. All 22 students were invited to attend the group interviews. In all 17 of the 22 students attended one or more session. Two students attended on all three occasions, six on two occasions and a further three students attended once. Student involvement in all instruments is set out in Figure 3.2: Student Involvement in Instruments. Each interview took the form of an unstructured discussion around a number of themes. Each lasted for an hour and was facilitated by two of the tutors drawn from the course team. All three interviews were recorded on tape and transcribed verbatim.

Instrument	Individual Interview			Group Interview			Written Data		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	Log	Reflection Unit 1	Reflection Unit 6
Student <sup>5</sup>									
David Lee	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
Gregory Frisby	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓
Alison Jackson							✓	✓	✓
Michael Hancock	✓	✓				✓		✓	✓
Ray Green	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Stan Gill <sup>6</sup>	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	
Helen House				✓				✓	✓
Liz Simmons	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
Josie Wardle		✓				✓		✓	✓
Lucia Wayne				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Christine Stone					✓		✓	✓	✓
Terry Wilford	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓
Murray Park <sup>7</sup>	✓								
Lester Lowe				✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Richard Webster	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓
Steven Johnson				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Daniel Charles	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓
Paul Mansfield								✓	✓
Adrian Trent	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓
Jane Purdy								✓	✓
Maria Shaw	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Ian Rice <sup>8</sup>								✓	

Figure 3.2: Student Involvement in Instruments

Themes and general questions were agreed between myself and the two other tutors involved; Laura, the Academic Support Tutor and Jane<sup>9</sup>, the Course Administrator. To a large extent these questions were based on issues arising from other data sources. The first session concentrated on different facets of student support. In the second session the group reviewed their experience on the course to date with particular reference to issues relating to completion of coursework and feedback, the tutor/student power differential and further discussions surrounding student support. In the third and final session emerging themes from the data were explored. In this way the group interviews helped identify general themes and issues surrounding the

<sup>5</sup> Not real names

<sup>6</sup> Stan was made redundant and left the course after two units

<sup>7</sup> Murray withdrew from this cohort after the first unit due to family illness. He subsequently returned to study with the next cohort

<sup>8</sup> Ian left the course after the first module after being transferred to a new post within his organisation

<sup>9</sup> Not real names

collective student experience and, at the same time, were used to examine data and test preliminary interpretations drawn from the other instruments.

Aside from the well-rehearsed problems associated with group interviews, Johnson provides a critique of the dominant forms of focus group research. Although he suggests that they can be used to challenge traditional understandings of social relations, the dominant forms of the instrument are from market research and politics that 'have been typically embedded in the epistemological and methodological assumptions of positivism, behaviourism and empiricism' (Johnson, 1996:519) where participants are passive objects. But he does claim it is possible to use group interviews to access tacit uncoded and experiential knowledge, opinions, actor's meanings and the individual as part of a collective. He objects however that focus groups will only reproduce the dominant ideology by 'appropriating bits of tacit knowledge, the better to manipulate the providers' (Johnson, 1996:536).

Osteraker (1999) describes the successful use of what she terms 'reference groups' of employees to construct a new motivational survey in the workplace. She found that involving employees generated a sense of ownership, but stresses the need in the workplace context to ensure there is no conflict between different levels of management. McDougall provides further evidence of the use of groups with homogenous membership to encourage coherence and trust. The trust problem did occur in a pilot group interview, where all participants were from the same organisation but at different grades (Askham, 2000), but was not an issue here, possibly because the students were drawn from a wide range of organisations.

Students were invited to attend each group interview which took place an hour before the scheduled start of the first day's teaching on the workshops attached to units one, two and three. At the outset a prepared statement (also provided in writing, see

Appendix G: Interview Protocols) was read out setting forth the purpose of the study, issues relating to confidentiality and other ethical matters. Students were asked to introduce themselves and then prompted into discussion by the facilitator. The full transcript of the first interview is provided in Appendix K.

### **Individual interviews**

Again all 22 students were invited to take part in individual interviews and 12 agreed to be involved. Four students were interviewed three times; at the outset, the half way stage and on completion of the course. Six students were interviewed twice (at the beginning and the half way stage) another student who withdrew temporarily due to health problems was interviewed once and another who was made redundant was also only interviewed on one occasion (this student was replaced by another student who was interviewed on one occasion). First interviews took place in October 2001. These were referred to as 'baseline interviews' because they provided base data on the students concerned. The timing of these first interviews was critical. They took place after the students had accepted a place on the programme but before the induction workshop. The main purpose of these interviews was to capture the thoughts, feelings and anxieties of these students at a point just before their commencement on the programme.

The first interviews were carried out by the same three members of the course team (myself, the tutor responsible for academic support and the course administrator), as were involved in the group interviews. Whilst using three interviewers may have introduced a degree of inconsistency across the twelve interviews, it was critical that these were undertaken prior to the first workshop and so time was of the essence. The interviews were semi-structured to ensure some consistency of coverage. The schedule of questions is reproduced in Appendix F: Individual Interview One: Interview Schedule. Normally these first interviews were conducted in the student's work place and on this first occasion the interviews were not tape recorded, a decision taken on balance to try to create an informal atmosphere. Interviewers took detailed notes during and after the interviews. Each interview was scheduled for one hour. Twelve first interviews were undertaken.

Second, 'mid point', interviews took place in November 2002. This was after the completion of the third of six units, the half way stage. These were one-to-one

interviews divided between myself and the Academic Support Tutor<sup>10</sup>. These interviews were unstructured and interviewers simply encouraged the students to reflect back on the experience of the last 12 months. Second interviews were recorded on audio tape but otherwise protocols<sup>11</sup> were as for the first interviews. Students were provided with copies of the transcripts for the second interviews.

Four of the ten students were interviewed on a third occasion. These were the four 'exemplar' students whose biographies appear in Chapter 4. These final interviews took place between November 2003 and February 2004 to coincide with the successful completion of the Certificate. The main purpose of these interviews was confirmatory; a check on the accuracy and acceptability of the biographies. I undertook all four of these final interviews personally. Again these interviews were taped and transcribed and the transcriptions were made available to the students.

In all, 27 individual interviews were undertaken. The intention at the outset was to interview each of the volunteers on three occasions. The decision to interview only the four exemplar students on three occasions was taken because, by this stage, it was evident that the point of data saturation was being reached, in other words no new information was emerging.

### **Written Data**

If the group interviews were used to tap into the collective experience of the students and the individual interviews, the individual voice, I was also concerned to find some means of exploring the individual experience through the written as well as the spoken word. I used two instruments for this purpose, formal reflections and informal logs<sup>12</sup>.

As part of the assessment for the first module, all students were required to write a short reflective account of the experience of returning to study. This was done for two pedagogic reasons:

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<sup>10</sup> Jane by this time having moved to another Department within the University

<sup>11</sup> Interview Protocols are set out in Appendix G

<sup>12</sup> The Logs were abandoned shortly after the completion of the first unit. This was a pragmatic decision taken on the basis that this was placing too great a burden on the students. However six of the students completed logs over the period up to the end of the first unit, a critical period, and these data are included in the study.

- a) to help students develop the habit of reflection as an important phase of the learning cycle and to help capture the learning taking place; and,
- b) to kick-start their writing process by suspending some of the unfamiliar disciplines of academic writing, such as the use of the third person and the need for a system of referencing, providing a more relaxed starting point and, hopefully, encouragement.

A second reflective assignment was submitted after the final unit, when the students were required to provide an overall retrospective on the course. I had used this instrument before as a course evaluation technique, indeed one such piece of reflective writing, produced by a student on an earlier course, proved to be the catalyst stimulating my own entry into research in the field of adult education (see Appendix B: Early Student Reflection). Brown and McCartney (1995) demonstrate the effective use of reflective writing as a means of course evaluation whilst Brown (2000) describes the use of reflective writing as an assessment tool. There is an issue surrounding the use of assessed work that will be graded, as a research instrument and the practice of assessing reflective writing has also been questioned (Lester, 1995). There must be a danger that the student's desire to report what he or she perceives the tutor wishes to hear may well predominate and this must be taken into account during analysis.

Data emerging from reflective writing then, need to be treated with caution, but it was important to use multiple methods to generate data based on the written as well as the spoken word. It may be stating the obvious to observe that writing is different from speech (interviews) but the two media can be used to complement one another. Written data are more considered and crafted, the recorded voice more immediate. Using the two instruments also helped broaden involvement to all students as well as providing some means of comparison with previous and subsequent cohorts. This helped to promote a degree of ownership over the research.

The initial reflections were supplemented by informal student logs completed by six volunteers covering the critical induction period up to and including the assignment submission for the first unit. These were optional and unlike the formal reflections were not part of the assessment process.

## **Research journal/critical incident log**

Throughout the duration of the cohort study, I maintained my own research journal. This document performed a number of functions. Firstly it provided a chronological research record containing progress reports, memos and other comments. This part of the journal charted the ups and downs of my experience as researcher, student, tutor and colleague. Each of these multiple existences has its own relevance and its own voice. My experiences as an adult student, for example, returning to study on a part time basis, do partially mirror the experience of the students on the Certificate. Among other things, I was interested to explore whether these similarities made it any easier to develop empathy as a facilitator of learning. Janesick (1998) suggests that journals deepen self-awareness and sharpen reflection, thinking and communication, all of which helps to increase the effectiveness of the researcher as a research instrument.

This journal of course is a subjective record. It is my selection and interpretation of the incidents, unmoderated by external influence. Some of this is little more than a cathartic outpouring of short-lived frustration and anger and I was concerned that this was both naive and narcissistic. Whilst the charge of subjectivity could also be levelled at most if not all of the student data, at least this is based on a number of students, using a number of different approaches. This 'tutor data' on the other hand is totally within my control.

Even so the events recorded in the log did occur and the log provides a contemporaneous record of my own feelings, and so, the log as narrative is no less 'authentic' than any of the other data. In short this is a subjective record and interpretation of my experiences. This then is an attempt to gather together a description of my own life world by interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena (the experiences) and understand this world through my own eyes (Kvale, 1996).

The second purpose of the journal was the recording of critical incidents recorded over the whole period of the study. This is based on the work of Tripp (1993) who in turn draws inspiration from Schön's reflective practitioner concept (Schön, 1983). But unlike other authors, such as Woods (1998) who sees 'critical events' as significant created events that are highly charged moments, Tripp's critical incident approach is about recording routine occurrences. These are described as 'Straightforward accounts of

very commonplace events [that] are indicative of underlying trends, motives and structures.' (Tripp, 1993:24-25)

Tripp suggests there are two distinct stages; observation, where the incident is noted and described, and then explanation; to place the incident in a wider context. Individual incidents build into a thematic rather than chronological log. According to Tripp, such an approach is common in many branches of research but little used in educational research. This in part develops into a personal professional autobiography being 'the ongoing recognition, articulation, critique and modification of our values.' Critical incidents can represent 'departure points for our reflection and understanding' (Tripp, 1993:111).

Within the literature there are a number of examples of the use of journals. Conway (1999) provides an example of what she describes as a 'learning journal'. (This is especially interesting in the context of my own research because one of her main conclusions is the impossibility of separating the cognitive and emotional domains). Other examples include Holian (2002); a journal used as part of an action research project, Glaze (2002); the use of a reflective diary and critical incident log as a dialogue with the self. Merz (2002) comments on the value of reflection as part of research design and Usher on 'reflexivity as benign introspection' (Usher, 1996: 41) and Johnson (2001) examines reflective practice and speaking in your own voice through keeping a reflective journal.

## **Procedures**

The main research instruments used in the cohort study were piloted during previous course reviews in 1996 and 2000 (see Askham and Green, 1995; Askham, 1997; Askham, 2000). This provided experience in their use and confidence in terms of fitness for purpose as well as an appreciation of practical and ethical issues and resource implications. In terms of practical problems, as Cohen et al (2000) point out, cohort studies are time consuming, expensive, suffer from sample mortality (students will inevitably drop out) and data overload. In practice sample mortality was not a major issue in this study as only two of the 22 students withdrew although data overload was. The multiple instruments, used over a two-year period, generated large volumes of qualitative data and the management and presentation of that data proved to be a major challenge.

The ethics of the research were addressed by using formal procedures. Anderson (1998) provides ethical standards which were a helpful starting point in framing a statement of ethics that addressed key issues used as a framework for a simple memorandum) given to all students at the beginning of the study. This was referred to at every point of intervention. One early issue to arise concerned respect for participants' time. This impacted on a number of pragmatic decisions about the number, location and timing of interviews.

Acting as researcher-practitioner can lead to role confusion. I was concerned that knowledge gained as researcher might impinge upon my objectivity as a tutor charged with the responsibility for assessing and grading students. However, in the absence of total anonymity (anonymous marking is not yet widespread in this institution); the issue of subjectivity in assessment is arguably a much wider problem. My concern was that personal insights gathered through the research might further impair the objectivity and reliability of assessment. Finally I was anxious that the use of each instrument on each occasion represented an intervention in the learning process with potential to influence the tutor-student relationship.

One further ethical issue concerns the inevitable power differential that exists between tutor and student, researcher and researched. It is tempting to think of this group of students as willing co-researchers. Indeed there is evidence in the data to suggest that this is the way they preferred to see themselves. This may be unique because of their managerial status within the workplace. But such an assumption of equality is perhaps a little naïve and the recognition of subtle compulsion, and its possible influence on the data, must be borne in mind throughout the whole research process.

### **Phase Three: Data**

Phase three of the research design is the interface with the data. Here the main issues are how to present the data once gathered, followed by its analysis and interpretation. The final issue concerns legitimization of the data.

First the data were used to construct a series of mini biographies or narratives for the students. Smith (1998) favours biography as a methodological approach, referring to it as 'life writing' and 'personal accounts', citing its use across a wide range of disciplines. A good example of narrative can be found in Reay, Ball and David (2002) who used the stories of students as a research instrument to explore ethnicity, social class and

gender as issues constraining opportunity for access students in an FE college in London. Another example of the technique provides portraits of students on access courses to demonstrate 'richness and complexity' and diversity (Haggis, 2003). In my own study these stories were to provide a valuable stepping off point into more detailed data analysis. I have selected four of the biographies for presentation and illustration of the full data set and this selection is reproduced in Chapter 4. This selection was not an exercise in sampling, it was simply that there is not sufficient space to present narratives for all 22 students. This would have been possible but repetitive. The criteria for selecting the exemplar students was that collectively they should reflect all the data collection instruments used and that the four taken together were reasonably typical of the cohort as a whole in terms of gender, age, family responsibilities and type of employer<sup>13</sup>. The biographies in Chapter 4 use the actual words from the four students taken from comments made in group and individual interviews as well as material from their written reflections. This is taken from transcripts and only their names and any other identifying features have been changed. Although the material is abridged because of space limitations, it is reconstructed to form a coherent narrative over time. Each of the biographies was approved by the student concerned.

### **Analysis**

Kvale (1996) stresses the importance of emotional tone. If you wish to examine psychological interpretations of interview data this tone needs to be captured within the transcription. This would suggest that every nuance, pause, change in tone and body language display should be recorded using standard transcription conventions. This would have doubled the transcription time and proved impossible. However, much was captured on the tapes, all of which were retained and revisited during analysis for cues on emotional tone. However, non-verbal communication was actually less important in this study, where the purpose of the analysis was the identification of themes rather than close scrutiny of the text. The purpose of the transcriptions was to produce an accurate written record of what was said during the interviews.

The data converted to text are more than just a source of entertaining soundbites to be sprinkled liberally through the research report or to reveal 'people's exciting, gruesome or intimate experiences' (Silverman, 1993:199). Once converted to written form, data need to be organised and presented in ways that help reveal meaning. It was here that I turned to the grounded theory literature for support. Like Charmaz (2000), I am

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<sup>13</sup> see Appendix D for details

concerned that some of the prescriptions offered up by grounded theory have a positivist flavour; however they do represent a starting point for analysis.

Cohen et al (2000) identify several stages in analysis: the generation of units of meaning; classifying, categorising and ordering these units of meaning; structuring narratives and interpreting data. Miles and Huberman (1994) offer no less than thirteen 'tactics' for generating meaning, using coding as a means of reducing the data and Burnard (1991) suggests fourteen distinct stages of analysis. Although Burnard's method of thematic content analysis, used in the context of semi structured, open ended, recorded and transcribed interviews, has a rather positivist obsession with researcher bias and validity, it did prove invaluable as a blueprint for the development of my own approach to data analysis. I was attracted by her broad aim which was to record themes and issues and link them using a category system. The method I developed, based on Burnard's work, is summarised in the following paragraphs. The full set of codes is set out in Appendix H.

The process of analysis started with open coding of the text or transcript, producing a free generation of codes from the data. This was undertaken quickly with limited reflection. This approach was intentional, the idea being to react to units of data within the text, placing each in a descriptive code or node<sup>14</sup> denoted by a single word or a simple phrase. At the same time any irrelevant material (dross) was excluded. Typically, at this stage, the first coding pass, the transcript of a one-hour interview would generate some 60 to 90 separate nodes.

If the first coding pass was intuitive, the second stage of analysis was a more cerebral process. The nodes, and the data sitting within them, were checked for coding accuracy (did the passage of text correspond to the code allocated?) and examined for obvious duplication, similarities and relationships. At this stage some nodes were deleted, others merged and yet others renamed. Nodes were then grouped under higher order (increasingly generic) headings or categories, producing a hierarchy or tree of nodes with the higher order categories. These categories were worked through again to remove duplication and merge similarities, eventually producing a definitive coding scheme with a list of nodes within an ordered hierarchy. The transcripts were

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<sup>14</sup> I prefer the term 'code' to refer to short cut references to small chunks of data although within Nvivo software the term 'node' is used to signify the same thing.

then recoded using this coding scheme. Sections of transcript with the same coding were then collected together and displayed.

A number of points should be emphasised. Every individual decision about coding should be seen as part of the wider analysis. The process described above is nothing more than a re-ordering and re-presentation of the data. The process took place over a lengthy time period and there were many false moves and blind alleys. In essence the final scheme emerged when it became possible to include all the relevant data within a small number of themes, usually between six and 10. Once this robust hierarchy of themes and categories had been established, commentaries on the provisional 'meaning' of the data were written and these meanings linked to other parts of the data as well as to the existing literature.

Data from all instruments were coded in this way. Periodically, summaries of the emerging themes were generated. These summaries were treated as meta data and were themselves coded using the process outlined above. Once themes had become sufficiently robust, when evidence to support them was beginning to emerge from multiple sources, these themes were taken back both to group and individual interviews for discussion. This provided confirmation but also gave rise to a number of challenges that resulted in some reinterpretation. This iterative approach offers a degree of freedom and flexibility in allowing for the pursuit of hunches and the exploration of potential themes.

Periodically memos and other writings were included as part of the broader research journal and these were all treated as secondary data and were subjected to the same process of analysis as applied to the primary data. Morrow and Smith (1995) make reference to this expansion of the 'data corpus' through the use of analytic memos as questions, musings and speculations and in a good example of grounded theory writing, Orona (1997) describes the process of memo writing from a similar perspective as a non-linear stream of consciousness, letting the data 'talk to me' (Orona, 1997:178).

All coding was undertaken using Nvivo qualitative analysis software although, theoretically, the whole of this process could have been achieved using standard word processing software or even a manual cut and paste approach. This in itself was an important decision. The use of computer software as an aid to qualitative data analysis is often contested. Fielding and Lee (1998) for example see risks as well as benefits.

Qualitative data, they suggest, are voluminous (as Miles and Huberman put it words are 'fat' and 'ambiguous' (Miles and Huberman, 1994:56)), unstructured, context specific and recalcitrant. Likewise Wyse (1997) confirms the value of computer based coding and retrieval but is, at the same time conscious of its limitations. Computer analysis can facilitate data management and extend the researcher's capabilities. It can however lead to 'data promiscuity', the accumulation of large quantities of data 'just in case'. A more serious criticism is that it can lead to data fragmentation, taking the data out of context.

I argue however that the same risk exists with manual coding and many of the concerns about computer aided analysis seem to stem from an exaggeration of its capabilities. Coding, whether manual or computer aided, is simply the categorisation of the data. Codes signify potential themes. First level coding produces a working set of codes which is largely descriptive. Then second level coding marks regularities in the data signalling themes, explanatory threads, leads and commonalities. Coding is about reducing the data, identifying themes and organising the data to support and illustrate those themes. This is data management rather than data analysis.

A number of key principles emerged from the literature and were applied throughout the process of data analysis:

- data collection and analysis should proceed concurrently, this allows gaps in the data to be filled and codes 'change and develop as the field experience continues' and 'late coding enfeebls analysis' (Miles and Huberman, 1994:61/65);
- qualitative data analysis is dynamic, intuitive and creative it is also inductive and 'grounded' and applied without pre coding or can start with a provisional list of codes which precede fieldwork (Basi, 2003);
- coding is a step by step process of category creation and linking data and it is essential to move back and forth between the data and emerging categories (Dey, 1993);
- it is a kaleidoscopic process of continuous refinement (Dye et al, 2000);
- it is a 'deeply emotional process' (McLaughlin, 2003);
- it is about staying close to the data and finding the best way to tell the story (Janesick, 1998).

The broad framework for analysis is shown in Figure 3.4. This shows the identification of my field of interest (as outlined in Chapters 1 and 2) which is an examination of the

subjective student experience in terms of the feelings they undergo during the course of their studies. The first link goes directly to the base of the diagram representing the data collected through the instruments described in this chapter because these instruments were designed to capture just that subjective emotional experience. At this level the data are expressed as named codes. These codes were then grouped into broader categories which are simply groups of codes which appear to be connected in some way. By identifying what it is that distinguishes these groups of categories it is possible to identify a smaller number of main themes which are the smallest (most parsimonious) number of abstract concepts that nonetheless cover all of the data contained within the codes identified at the earlier stage of analysis.

At a fairly early stage of the process of analysis it could be seen that the feelings emerging from the process of coding could be categorised simply through a binary distinction between feelings that were either positive or negative. This distinction also had an impact on the identification of themes. Furthermore, as is evident in much of the literature on learning models and theories identified in Chapter 2, elements of teaching and learning can be seen as pertaining either to identity or context. I refer to these as dimensions. Thus, the final themes have emerged from the data but have also been influenced by the binary distinction of this data in terms of either positive or negative feeling as well as the distinction in the data between the dimensions of identity and context. The themes are as follows:

1. The obstructive context
2. The supportive context
3. The fragile identity
4. The capable identity

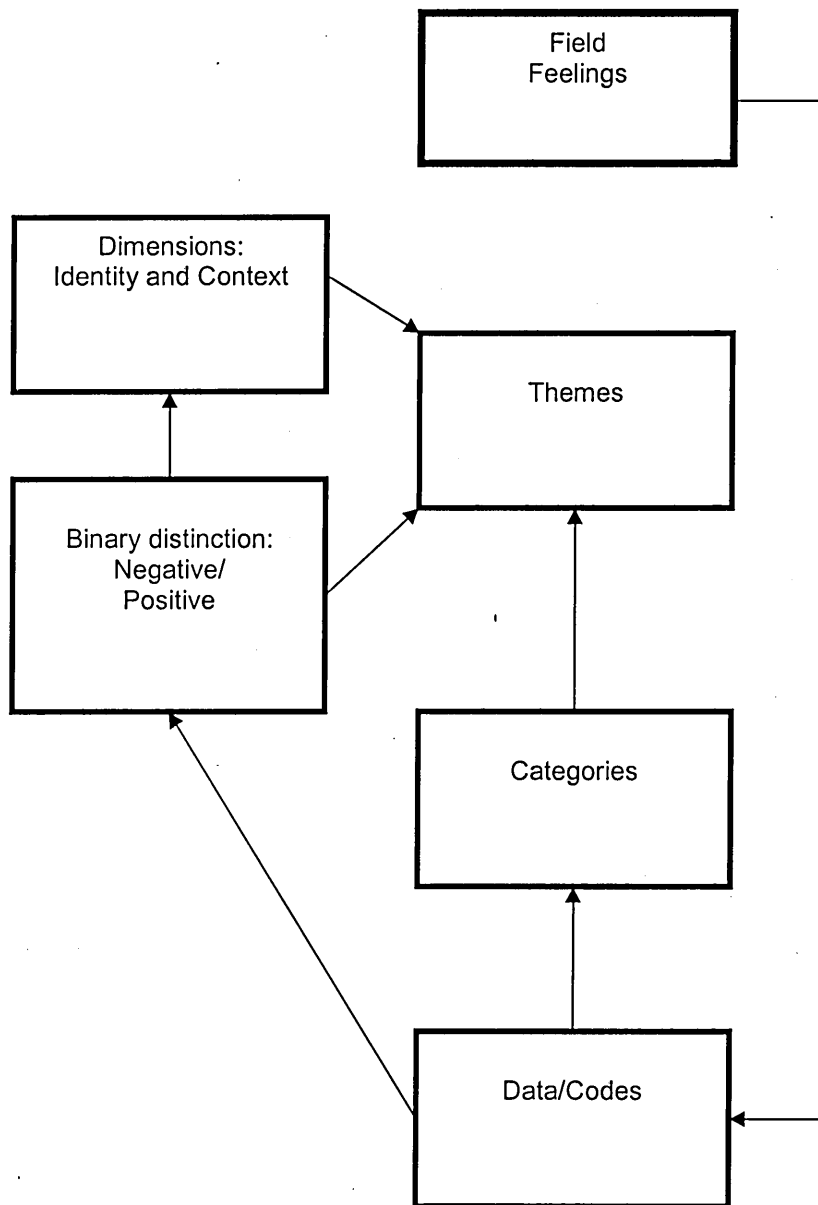


Figure 3.3: Outline Process for Data Analysis

## Legitimation

In terms of phase 3 of my design process the final challenge concerns how to measure the value of research within the interpretive tradition. For Usher, Bryant and Johnson, the positivist concern with generalisation as a means of generating universal theory is now untenable as 'there are few, if any, predictive generalisations that have emerged from educational research.' (Usher et al, 1997:173) This study is part of a research tradition where 'knowledge is concerned not with generalisation, prediction and control but with interpretation, meaning and illumination' (Usher, et al, 1997:181). This is not to be seen as a rejection of the important concepts of rigour, artistry and audit, but recognition that the concepts of validity and generalisability are not necessarily appropriate. There is a danger of using the 'parameters of a positivist paradigm to judge the legitimacy of another paradigm' (Holian, 2002:7). Similar views have been expressed by Maxwell (1992), Creswell (1998) and Gamache (2002).

The authenticity and authority of research in the interpretive tradition cannot be addressed through the 'scientific holy trinity' of 'generalizability, reliability and validity' (Kvale, 1998:229). The problem with these concepts is that they are defined by the agenda of the positivists (Maxwell, 1992). Kvale takes a more extreme position, describing them as 'oppressive'. Within the interpretive paradigm, once it is accepted that knowledge claims cannot be established with absolute certainty, the positivist approach to the legitimation of research findings collapses. Equally the ideal of the elimination of bias is unattainable. There have been two approaches to resolving the legitimation of qualitative research, the first is to seek new and distinct criteria against which findings should be tested, and the second suggests a need for a totally different approach to the whole research process.

One of the principle criteria for testing validity and reliability is the extent to which it is possible to form general concepts, theories or propositions, on the basis of induction, from the sample studied to the population at large. But, as Bassey notes, 'the concepts of reliability and validity are vital concepts in surveys and experiments - but not in case study research' (Bassey, 1999:74). Generalisability, he argues, remains important, in qualitative research, but requires a different formulation, being concerned with what *may be* or what *could be* rather than what *is*. There is a need to shift from scientific to fuzzy generalisations (Bassey, 1999) or, as Yin puts it, from predictive to analytical generalisations (Yin, 1994).

Foster calls 'into question the criteria and procedures by which research findings have been traditionally assessed' (Foster, 1996:85). Cohen et al, rightly conclude that threats to validity cannot be eliminated totally and that for qualitative research 'validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data' (Cohen et al, 2000:105). To the interpretive researcher the key question can be expressed, not in terms of whether findings are true but as, 'are the findings *likely* to be true?' This concept of *truth* is variously represented in terms of authenticity, accuracy, honesty, genuineness, legitimacy, plausibility, consistency, credibility and trustworthiness. But in a way these post positivist criteria for addressing the legitimization of research findings are unhelpful. The terms are circular and synonymous, closer inspection revealing each to be slightly different versions of the same concept. Such variations on the theme of truth do not necessarily move us any closer to a genuinely different approach to establishing the legitimacy of qualitative research within the interpretive tradition.

There is an assumption that using two or more methods of data collection, with convergent results, will surely lead to greater confidence that findings represent the *truth*. But whilst blending and integrating different methods may well be a means of counterbalancing their strengths and weaknesses, thus leading to confirmation, there is a risk that the use of multiple methods can lead to a 'hotchpotch' of methodologies, lacking logical foundation. The use of such triangulation may result in greater richness of data but cannot guarantee the validity of findings. However the use of multiple methods over the two year period of the cohort study did allow for some cross-referencing across the data sources.

There is a central concern with bias. Carr and Kemmis (1986) concluded that action research will always be biased because the researcher analyses his or her own practices. But this does not make the findings unreliable. Such a way of construing bias assumes a 'value free' or 'neutral' medium which itself is an illusion. One other source of bias in this study is that that identified by Wager (2001: unpaginated) who, like me was concerned that 'There might be a bias caused by my too strong identification with the people I am studying.' However, there is increasing support for the view that bias and subjectivity are an inevitable part of qualitative research. Janesick (1998) suggests that subjectivity needs to be acknowledged and that researcher and participants are connected in a relationship founded on trust which allows stories to emerge. The total elimination of bias is seen as both impossible and inappropriate.

Whilst qualitative research can never eliminate bias, a research design that is both transparent and reflexive can explicitly identify potential sources of bias and take account of them. This is what Miles and Huberman refer to as 'a reflexive stance to the conduct of the study that assumes regular, ongoing, self conscious documentation' (Miles and Huberman, 1998:201) and what Olesen calls a 'full account of the researcher's views, thinking and conduct' (Olesen, 1998:314).

Reflexivity then is about a continuous exposure of the position of the researcher. This position, once explicitly recognised and accounted for, far from being a weakness leading to bias and error, can emerge as one of the defining strengths of qualitative and interpretive research. It is clearly dependent however upon the quality of the whole research process. Kvale refers to this as craftsmanship noting that 'Validation comes to depend upon the quality of craftsmanship during investigation, continually checking, questioning, and theoretically interpreting the findings' (1996:241). Likewise Bassey (1999) and others emphasise the importance of the audit trail as a consolidated record of data collected. This was one of the purposes of my own critical incident log.

## **Conclusions**

The purpose of this chapter was to examine the rationale for the research design. This is no simple task. The researcher working within the interpretive tradition is faced with a bewildering array of choices which is not made any easier due to the looseness of terminology often applied in this area. A second issue concerns the presentation, in neat narrative terms, of a process which is messy and iterative, suggesting logic and order which simply does not exist. Even so it is necessary to impose some order and I did this, in the first instance by dividing the research design process into three distinct phases, moving from the abstract to the concrete, dealing with philosophy, operationalisation and empirical grounding.

In philosophical terms, the approach to gathering data in response to the issue being addressed is clearly influenced by the nature of that issue and because the focus of this study was on the subjective learning experiences of a group of students, it was clear from the outset that I would be working with qualitative data within the interpretive tradition. The other significant influence on research design is my own positionality, including personal history and biography. In this respect this research should be seen as part of a larger involvement with the development of the course being investigated which can be traced back over more than ten years. Seen over this longer period my research becomes an extended and continuing action research project which has set

out to address a series of specific and practical problems in terms of curriculum design and delivery. Operationally, it was clear that the bounded nature of the subjects of the study over time, and as a single cohort of students learning together, pointed me firmly in the direction of a case study strategy.

The cohort case study strategy also had an obvious influence on the choice of instruments used for data collection. The smallness of the group made survey methods inappropriate, leaving interviews as the logical choice, but I also made use of existing documentary data in the form of reflective reports, as well as additional data from logs and diaries. I also collected data recording my own teaching and learning experiences over the same period of time. Using multiple sources was an attempt not so much to triangulate sources of evidence as to 'crystallize' the data. The data from all these sources and from all 22 students in the cohort were analysed using a thematic content approach. Data from four of the students were written up as individual narratives and these are presented in the next chapter, Chapter 4, with data relating to the whole cohort of students appearing in Chapter 5 and my own, tutor data in Chapter 6.

# Chapter Four: Four Student Narratives

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The following narratives are based on the data collected from four of the 22 students in the cohort. These four students are not intended as a representative sample as such but as 'exemplars' chosen to provide an insight into the experiences of the students as they worked through the two years of the programme. As far as possible I have constructed these narratives using the students' own words as transcribed from group and individual interviews and from their written reflections. I have selected from the full set of data and reordered the material, where necessary but only in the interests of complete coherence. Each final narrative was approved by the student concerned.

## David

I am 42. I am FM coordinator within an NHS Trust. I have worked as a machine operator, a maintenance engineer, a site manager and an ambulance service car driver. Prior to moving into FM, I worked in security and then transport. I haven't done much recently in the way of formal education, although I do have a NEBS Management Certificate.

I first became aware of FM courses at SHU through my line manager who was on the Post Graduate programme. He was encouraging me to follow in his footsteps. The Trust had already indicated that it would pay my fees. Having made the move from transport into general FM, taking responsibility for commercial contracts, I felt that the course would open up new areas of opportunity for me. It seemed to be the right level, and on reflection direct entry into PG level would have been a disaster as I didn't know enough about FM. I do feel though that I could progress to PG level after doing the Certificate. The thing is this course is about general FM and I am a new boy and know nothing. I hope the course will broaden my horizons as far as FM is concerned. I am very green. This will help me to achieve and to move up the ladder within the Trust. I do have mixed feelings about starting the course. I am happy and content and also a little bit nervous. I'm worried about the standard that has already been set and whether I can match this.

I have experienced some difficulties with the coursework. I do have a tendency to waffle and it was sometimes difficult to get down to the word limit. I found the essay difficult but there were a couple of things I did to help me pull this together. I didn't class it as an essay; I actually classed it as a report as I write a lot of reports. The other thing

that I did was I actually did my index first. I actually started at the top and said right I want to talk about this, this, this and this, so I actually got my headings laid out. OK, I changed them all around later but once I got my headings I then got onto the Dictaphone and I spent two hours and I just waffled onto the Dictaphone. I then just typed it all out took all the waffle out and just spoke about what we needed to do, that's how I tackled the first one and I did exactly same for the second one.

With coursework one of my anxieties is actually getting down in the text what is required to actually obtain a pass mark or a reasonable pass mark. When I got a phone call to confirm that I had passed the first unit I was on a high but I think I'm at my lowest now awaiting for my next result. I've been guessing. I feel nervous because I don't know the result before we have had to come back to the University.

I haven't started the next one yet, but I have done some ground work on it and I have sorted some books out and I'm really ready and looking forward to doing it. But I'm being a bit cautious now; I don't want to get too confident. I'm a bit wary of that now, after being so down before; I just better make sure I'm not over confident with these next ones.

Prior to the workshops I have already read the through the whole syllabus, as I am moving through and I see something I think 'Oh that will fit in' with whatever project it is, and I collect everything to do with this project. For this one I've got two piles of stuff at home, one pile is full of all the HR policy, procedures and everything else. My other one is to do with good and bad management. I went down through a disciplinary case a couple of years ago with the courier drivers and it went all the way at the end of the day to the Chief Exec. And it was upheld in the managers' favour at the end of the day. But I thought, maybe I could have handled one or two things different. What would I do now different to what I did then? So that's in a little pack about this big, ready to go, it is all there ready to go. It's all sitting there, the whole history. It was sitting there before I came on the workshops so I knew what I was doing before I came. My next process is to sit down and read through again the bit which tells you all about what you want out of it all and then what I tend to do is put bullet points down, what I want to get across, what do I want to get out of it, and the other thing I tend to do is do the index first as well. That has come from the head of FM. She used to help me when I first started. One of the best things you can do is put your headings down and work round them. If a heading doesn't fit, change it, and if it still doesn't fit, take it out.

Balancing the course with family life is an issue. I've got a little boy. He demands my time when I come home from work. I get the tea on, sort the boy out, get through his homework first, have a bath, sit down, have tea and it's eight o'clock by the time we have finished all of that, by the time I've sat down and had a drink with the Mrs it's nine and then before I'm sitting down even thinking about any of the projects it's nine-thirty, ten o'clock and I spend a couple of hours on it. At weekends I don't spend any time on it because I spend this time with the family.

We've had a new central heating fitted, we've been doing all the Christmas shopping and then my 8 year old son plays football at JJB on a Saturday morning, he has recently been spotted by Notts. County. He has been invited to go and trial for them so that is going to take some commitment as well, so it is going to be a bit of a juggling act, but there you go.

The biggest positive for me is the feedback that I get from yourselves when I submit a draft for comment and also the final comments that we get when we get our actual assessment forms back, 'yes you've passed'. At the same time I also give my line manager a draft, just so he can make any comments on it. This proves to be useful especially as he can see improvements over time which are not obvious to me. Because I was demotivated with this last one, I just wasn't looking forward to it, didn't think I'd be able to do it. But my line manager said 'well this is your best one you've done up to present' because it was the one he'd had to make the least amount of comments on. So as far as he is concerned, and I am concerned, I think I have progressed.

But one thing that does make life easier is the level of support in the workplace. The support I'm getting is absolutely fantastic. My mentor always gets a copy of my assignments before I send a copy to you for comments. The first couple came back with 'Perhaps you should do this? Perhaps you should do that?' With the last one, which was actually the Project Management, believe it or not, he said that he felt that was my best one I'd done up to press because he made so few comments. I felt that I really struggled with it.

The level of support is fantastic, I cannot fault it. If I go and say to my boss (if she's busy she'll say come and see me later on), but if I've got any problems whatsoever I just go and see them. We have a regular get together every Wednesday morning, we meet all the time. The guy who has just come in, he is above me but he's my best mate

out of work so we have got a good relationship. I get on fantastic with [the line manager] and the secretaries are brilliant out there.

I also get a lot of support from home. The missus, she is well supportive, she wants me to achieve, she wants me to get on and go all the way, she keeps nagging, she's been nagging me this week 'come on David you need to get stuck into your course work'.

During the course I used tutor support two or three times and I found it exceptionally helpful I really did...I had some problems with Emerald I must admit, but I sent an e-mail and it was promptly dealt with and sorted out, and I found Emerald was exceptionally helpful in writing my second assignment. I took the opportunity to submit a draft assignment and I did find it exceptionally helpful to get comments on the draft.

We are different compared with younger students. I think it's probably work related because we are all in full time employment, most of us responsible for staff, so you learn how to treat people appropriately, whereas younger students haven't and they may feel threatened by an elder tutor so to speak. So it should be easier for us to ask for support.

But I think it is necessary for tutors and students to keep a distance between them. But the gap between tutors and students has closed since the first project. What I have noticed from attending the workshops is that people are speaking more, feeling more confident and are saying things that maybe they wouldn't have done at the first workshop.

I think one of the most positive things I feel to instil confidence in me is the feedback that I get. Even if it only says 'this is well structured blah blah blah', it makes you feel good in yourself and you feel that you're making progress.

I think I got 75% for one assignment. But I put that paper in and I would have been happy with 41/42% just to achieve the pass mark, and I said to these here, I am only just going to get a pass mark with this but that will do me, that's all I need. When it came back with 75% I was just gob smacked, I came through the door and the missus said 'what's the matter your mouth's open', I said 'just look at that', she said 'you're joking', and I said 'no I'm not' and I was absolutely gob smacked. I felt so proud and so did she that I had actually got as good a mark as I was getting in my other projects.

Most of the time I find the workshops really useful, there are a couple of bits where I've felt bored, but that's when somebody is delivering...where towards the end of the session I felt it has been going on too long if it could have been made a bit shorter and sharper just to get the point over, but sometimes you do need a bit of the background knowledge to support what they are telling you...I enjoy the two days that we have and I think the way that we interact and the group interacts and the way that you keep splitting people up...the only thing I'm not very keen on, and I might be making a mistake telling you this, is standing up and presenting in front of the group and I don't think I've done one yet and nobody's noticed, but I'm sure that will change now I've told you that.

Coming to the University adds more pressure than training as the expectation is more academic and I must admit that I lacked confidence in the beginning whether I had the ability to come to Sheffield and actually do the academic writing, and write in an academic style and actually pass with a reasonable mark. I now feel after 3 or 4 projects more confident in myself. I feel very confident that I am going to survive this next year. Now I am two thirds of the way through the course I can honestly say I am confident of achieving 70%.

Up to press I've really enjoyed the course and I haven't really found or had any problems in doing the course work apart from the normal family type of stuff which you get anyway. It hasn't all been easy. I struggled the most with the Project Management. It took me six weeks before I even put pen to paper because I was absolutely dreading it, it was terrible. I eventually managed it. I think the reason [it was difficult] was that I have never ever been involved in an official project.

When I started in FM I was thrown in at the deep end. I have had to learn on the job but I have been well supported. The support that I get from them two guys [line managers] is brilliant they are fantastic. As far as learning is concerned, 12 months ago I was the new boy in FM, the only thing I had been involved in was security and car parks, now I am involved in housekeeping, cleaning, estates, security, car parks, the whole spectrum, even building maintenance, I have gone from knowing nothing to feeling confident in taking most issues on board.

I have been able to apply a good deal of the formal learning in the work place. I think now my standard of report writing has improved. I write a lot of reports at work to go to the Trust Board and I feel that my projects are better constructed.

I think my ability to listen and take things on board has certainly grown as I've gone along...I tend to look at things from the bigger picture view as well now, well if I took a left here it might bring me here quicker, so I do think of things outside of the box a lot more now...I have become more confident these last 12 months. Now that is probably something to do with University **and** having experience within FM. Bringing the two together has given me some confidence that, yes I can do it, I am capable of doing it.

I'm happy to be doing the course, I enjoy it, I love doing it, at the beginning I didn't think I was capable of doing it at my age and being so new into FM but now I feel confident and I feel I can take on the world...and I'm proud to say I am going to University. Attending University was a big achievement for me at age 42, however successfully passing the course will be the biggest achievement within my working career, and at this moment I feel very proud.

## **Maria**

I am a Facilities Manager working for a service provider, responsible for providing the full range of services for a client's HQ building of sixty thousand square feet. I left school with GCE's, spent some time as an administrative assistant in a social security office before moving to an engineering firm as a general administrator.

Although I consider myself well qualified in terms of experience, I do recognise there are aspects of the job, such as people management, I could learn more about. I wasn't aware of any qualifications in this area until I saw the course advertised in one of the professional journals. I had just had my annual staff appraisal and I had decided that I wanted to do something by way of staff development that was FM related. I really do need a qualification because experience is not enough. I do like the job but I want to be able to move on and I need a qualification to back up my experience. Most jobs I see advertised require BIFM<sup>15</sup> membership. That's a big thing. It would be nice to achieve it for credibility. I want the certificate to prove to myself that I can do it, but I want to prove it to other people that I can, yes I'm good at my job and this kind of proves it.

I don't know what to expect. I don't feel too worried though. I have a rough idea of what will be covered. I have done a BTEC course in the Built Environment on a day release

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<sup>15</sup> This is the British Institute for Facilities Management, the main professional body

and I expect something similar. I know vaguely what I am letting myself in for. I do feel anxious, I don't know if I am good enough and I am worried about being interviewed but if I'm doing the job anyway there should be no problem. Interviews and exams really do make me sweat though.

When I was accepted on to the course I had another panic: will I have the time and willpower? Will I be able to give it my all? Will I be able to give enough of my own time for homework? But then I'm not worried about going back to school because I have always done things like this. I am getting good support from my parents and my line manager and client have been very supportive. Though getting the fees paid was a shock, the training budget is only £500.

Being accepted on to the course was great; obviously I am the right sort of person but Oh Christ! Now the homework starts. What will the other students be like? Will I be the dunce? How will I cope with homework on top of the daily routine?

I did struggle with the first homework. Lucia [a fellow student] was my support, if it wasn't for her I would have jacked it in. I was stuck but I didn't have the courage to ring you [the tutor] at that point, but I took it on holiday and I sat down and I did make myself write 100/200 words a day, and my friend was there saying 'you haven't done your homework, you haven't done your homework, get out there and do it', so I went and did some, and then I thought I've got plenty of time, I've got to get back to work, and I kept thinking about it, thinking about the informed client [the essay topic for the first assignment], talking to various people, my manager, thinking, 'well she can't be the informed client, she hasn't got a clue'.

And then there was a series of events, my sister was getting married, it was Christmas, then New Year, then we had this office move and it was just too easy to keep putting it off. And then it came to the date and I thought I've got a week left to do it, what can I do?

When I eventually got back to work there was an e-mail from Karen saying did you have a good holiday. Then we got talking and really she inspired me to ask for an extension. My manager agreed that I had been busy at work and agreed to support me in asking for this. This was great, I needed to hear that.

Before Lucia was really pushing me. I thought 'I can't do it, I can't do this now there is too much going on' but then it started to flow and I would write a whole ream. I did headings, and every now again I would post a copy to Karen and she would have a play around and say 'what about this, what about that?' and in the end, yes, I wrote it all up.

Lucia and some of the other students have been really helpful but I can't keep relying on them, there'll come a point when they'll think 'for Christ sakes can't she stand on her own two feet, have I got to do her homework as well as mine?' But I won't let it get that far again. I'm not frightened of asking for help, it was just the deadline had gone. What happened, it's my fault, I'm the one without discipline.

It's great to see everybody at the workshops but you know that at the end of the two days, you are going back with a heavier bag and the worry that you've got to get this next assignment in.

I can't do it at home because I haven't got a PC and I'll be buggered if I'm going to write everything out and then type it up when I go to work. I have spent a lot of weekends at work as well as staying on until they kick me out in the evenings, which I don't mind because I'm not disciplined to do it at home and I need to do it at work for the other bits of paper and relevant information. I say to myself I'm going to do college work today, I get all my stuff out and do the assignment on the PC and I won't do anything else unless it's an urgent email or phone call or visit or something. I can spend a day doing the work, that's not a problem. My boss is off site so he doesn't know what I do and it's easier to get on with the day job when everyone has gone home and the phone stops. I don't mind doing that for short periods of time, but I get it out and I don't do anything because of work commitments and then the time is suddenly a week before the deadline. Do I jack it all in or do I phone for an extension yet again? I so want to jack it all in.

At the start of each homework, I need so much help simply to understand what I need to do. Am I reading it right? What does it mean? It's double Dutch. I need it in plain English, I worry that I've done reams and reams and I've not got to the point. I've not answered the question; I've not given you what you want. I think perhaps the way you speak perhaps, well I wouldn't say it intimidates me particularly but it is intimidating because I feel I don't use big words, I say what I feel but I'm a grown up and I should

know what you mean. Perhaps I'm confusing that with academic speak as opposed to grown up speak.

But when I get the feedback I'm always astounded that; a) I've passed the essay and b) that it is well written, and you can see a marked improvement. I'm absolutely gob smacked, because I do rush it and I don't feel that I put the effort in that some people do. Christ, once I've got to the number of words that's it mate it's off, I ain't going back to it.

I think once the deadline is upon me I realise, oh God! I've got to ask for another extension the week before. I tend to feel then I would appreciate a call from one of the team to say, 'how are you getting on?' Then I would know that they care about me and they are thinking about me and they know that I'm struggling.

Looking back now the course is everything I thought it was going to be, all my concerns and worries. I started wanting a distinction, then a merit's good enough, then, eventually I'm thinking, just let me pass. I do feel that it's down to my laziness, I'm not disciplined enough to spend a day here and then go home and spend a couple of hours homework on the course. I'm not committed enough...I'm giving as little as I possibly can get away with...I feel embarrassed when I sling something together at the last minute, the eleventh hour, having had an extension of time...Yeah, so I'm not putting any more effort in now than I ever did when I was at school, so why aren't **you** saying 'this could be better'?

With work, because they have given me these other two offices to look after, I don't feel that I am doing a good job. They say to me 'don't be so hard on yourself, you are doing the best you can with the hours in the day', so perhaps just because I'm not doing as good a job as I think I can do, or I know I can do, doesn't mean to say I am doing a crap job.

Work is a pressure but, on the other hand, we knew that when we signed up to it [the course], something's got to give and if it is a social life then it needs to be a social life. I don't want to waste your time by whinging and moaning and having extensions and you having to mark my work when you have done everybody else's every time, just because I can't pull my finger out and get it done sometimes. What I can't understand is that I can't get it done for the deadline, yet I can get it done for the extended deadline. It's not because I just can't do it, it's because I leave the start date too late, I

start two weeks before the hand in date and get so far. If nothing cropped up I would be able to get it in on time, but you can bet your life there will be an office move, or something crops up which stops me meeting that deadline so I then have to go for the extension.

I feel that I am lazy and I don't want to keep coming to you because I feel that you are doing my work for me. So I'm not using you [for support] the way I perhaps should do. If I wasn't coming to you with 'Oh can I have another extension please?' and I came to you with a genuine 'Oh I'm not sure about this', and I came to you midway through the homework period to say 'can you give me a brief overview of what this means', I would be happy. But when I have left it to the last minute I feel that perhaps you would think, 'bloody hell if she hadn't left it to the last minute she could have researched that and found the answer herself' instead of you giving me the answer.

Doing the homework is not painful and it's not even difficult. I've done all of this without any research at all, I haven't searched the web or searched libraries and things; I have just written from the bits and pieces that we have been given as handouts and experience. It is a piece of cake, it really is, and it's just fitting it in. It's time consuming but it's not difficult. I am enjoying it but because it's not tailor made to me, it's not all relevant and I get frustrated with that.

It's always getting started. There is always a problem with getting started, once I've started and you have interpreted the assignment question for me, I've then got an idea in my head. While you are talking in class, I'm thinking about examples I can use and once I've got it I'm sorted. I might need help interpreting the outcomes that you are looking for but generally they are in there somewhere. They might not be as good as you want them to be but basically I've covered them.

Other people at work haven't got a clue; they don't know what I'm doing. When I came back from Sheffield this time, I said to my line manager, 'Oh I've got to talk about organisational culture; can you give me any information about [the company]?' He said that he had done assignments on this sort of thing, and I said, 'Oh great bring them in then and let's have a look', but he hasn't. Basically he hasn't asked me how I've got on or what we were doing. He's not interested and nobody else knows. I happened to mention to the Health and Safety person downstairs that you were coming in today and he said 'what's that about then?' I said it's a facilities course, but he was interested in where the money was coming from, not what I was doing.

For me to say I am doing a course is nothing because everybody else in here is doing some sort of course. At one stage the company had a ban on pay rises so everybody was given training courses. I wasn't given a promotion; instead I was given a training course to do whatever I liked. So there was that sort of culture. People didn't get pay rises or promotions they just got loads more training courses. So for me to say I'm doing this course...it's nothing special.

What I have found much to my surprise, is a huge value in meeting people. The diversity of people's roles is quite astounding. Listening to others talk about their roles and responsibilities, talking about the link between client and service provider and where they fitted really helped me think outside the box. I have a much better idea about Facilities Management now. Quite honestly I could have been classed as an FM virgin!!...My family and friends are all impressed that I have attended a university and gained a recognised qualification. My family and friends are all impressed.

## **Ray**

I am in my early thirties. I started out as an electrician but I now work for an FM service provider providing FM services in the retail sector. The last thing I did education wise was my City and Guilds and this was some time ago. I became aware of the postgraduate programme in FM at SHU but decided, having looked at the entry criteria, that this was pitched at too high a level for me at this stage. However, at the same time I saw details on the University Certificate and thought that this may be more suitable. I was attracted by continued assessment because I hate exams, I actually hate sitting there. But then again when I've done exams I have passed them but I hate that actual sitting down exam and that is what attracted me to this. Continued assessment is much better for me personally. I did think about studying for BIFM examinations, but found too many barriers standing in the way.

I got an information pack and then talked to our HR contact who thought attendance on the course would be beneficial. I had already set return to education as an objective in my personal development plan. I thought that the formal insight provided by the University would help reinforce what I do in the workplace. At the time colleagues at work seemed supportive and I also discussed this with family and friends who have also offered support and have shared in my excitement.

I felt very positive and thought 'let's get on with it!' although I also recognised that trying to balance work, family and study wouldn't be easy. But I felt competent and confident enough to ensure that I would balance everything.

I see the main benefits of the course in terms of gaining a formal qualification, personal achievement, networking and liaising with other members of the course and providing a 'foundation' and bridge towards the Postgraduate Programme. This is a challenge and a break from the norm which will do me good.

The first workshop was about problem solving. It wasn't easy and there was some conflict within the group and I did feel that a lot of my ideas were being over ridden by the majority. But I did begin to feel more at home as time went on. I'm the sort of individual who normally offers up my opinion freely but in this workshop I was conscious not to take the lead but to try more to influence the other members of the team.

When I did the first piece of coursework I was relieved that I'd handed it in, great, it was a real weight off my mind. It had been a pressure. I felt I'd got to get it done because for a start I'll only let myself down, I don't want to let my company down, I'd only let my family down. I didn't want to let anyone down, because you know I think to myself well that's too bad to do that. The people that have put the faith in me, the company that have paid for the course, support there from my family to do it, and at one point I was thinking God, if I don't do this it's got bigger implications than if I just fail the course. That was something that played on my mind.

Then when I got the pre course reading for the second unit I thought this was quite intimidating. To be honest if I had received this before the first unit I don't think I would have got any further with the course. Some of the harder stuff, you read it and you wonder what they are actually saying, 'can you just please say it in simple terms'...then there is one paragraph right at the bottom that says 'in simple terms facilities management must support the core business' and you think well why couldn't you say that instead of writing 3 pages on it.

As soon as we had handed in the second assignment, almost immediately, within a few days a load of pre-course reading dropped on the mat before the next session and my thoughts on that was blooming hell, I just cannot even look at that yet because my mind was blown away in what I had had to do and I almost got to the point where I was

getting a bit stressed out thinking I've got to get it in, it just felt as if I didn't have time to recover and it was a continual thing...I remember consciously thinking goodness me I've got to get stuck into another one now, where I was almost looking forward to a break not even having to worry about it or thinking about it because of all the things that are going on.

Doing the course has been a mixture of feelings, it's hard to pin point, but you go through an awful lot of different feelings. The sheer relief that I get when I've handed it [coursework] in, when I've actually written the piece, to me that is a relief, but yes anxiety before it, fitting it in around what I am doing at work and what I am doing at home, it's quite difficult.

But as it goes on I'm certainly feeling more comfortable about what I'm writing, because each time I'm doing one I'm learning more, getting used to doing it, I'm certainly feeling a lot better about when I get the feedback, thinking oh yes, taking on board what was said last time and trying to get to the point. As time goes on I feel better about that.

Of course one of the problems for me is that I have not studied for years and getting back to this was very difficult. In the beginning there is always that fear there. Am I up to it? Can I do it? I think everyone probably went through that. Now I find myself reading more, I would never have read before, I would just get on and do things, but now I'm actually just picking up books and getting interested in them.

The course is certainly different to what I thought it would be. Thinking back on the first three units I feel that I could have done better. I am disappointed by my performance on some of these but not others. I would have liked to spend more time on them but pressure of work makes that difficult. I have experienced a major change in my job role.

I just think I'm mister average, what I'm probably trying to say is I do enough to get by and because I think maybe because I haven't got the right inclination to make it absolutely perfect, may not have the time to make it absolutely perfect, but then what I might be saying to myself is yes you've done enough there, that's OK and it will pass. I probably look at it like that.

I really enjoy the workshops and I thought Managing People was great, I really did, I thought the workshop was great and I thought that I am really into the whole people bit and the development of people and looking at people having opportunities, looking at

the people, I think on the course when I was at the workshop I referred to this book that I had read about not people being the most important assets but the **right** people being the most important asset.

I don't know if I can encapsulate what the last year has been. I went through all sorts, I've enjoyed it, I've despised it, I've found some parts of it relatively easy other parts I've found pretty damn difficult and I just went through every sort of feeling, the underlying feeling is that I'm going to stick with it and succeed in it.

My workplace is very supportive although there is a time commitment involved and there is a knock on effect that the work is still there to be done when you get back. Also mixing work, the course and home life is difficult.

I haven't actually needed much support from the university; to be quite honest in the first assignments I didn't really feel that I needed that much at all. The learning centre was great, I went there to the library and got the books that I wanted, it was easy to get them, and I went on the bulletin board a little bit, but it seemed to die off you know, it was an initial load of people on there and they just died off, I don't think anybody used it.

I don't know if there is anything that you can do to improve the level of support you provide, because I feel that you are doing as much as you can really. A lot of it is up to us as a group to interact more and that's our responsibility, you can only encourage it. When I look at my working life I have absolutely no problem with saying to the people around me within the team about sharing a problem, I have no problem with that whatsoever, and I don't ever think, because I firmly believe that I haven't got all the answers, I might be in a responsible position and the thing is you are only as good as the people around you, and so if you are trying to make a decision or come to a conclusion on something the more people you get involved the better, you get a better outcome from it, so I don't really know why I have been reluctant to use the support on offer because it's not me.

But we went through 3 assignments now and we have had feedback on 3 assignments. We have gone through quite a lot with those, so yes I think it's a bit of trust a bit more, as well as confidence in your own ability and stuff. I think everyone goes through that in the beginning, but as I've gone through now I'm thinking to myself well yes like I've said I'll never set the world on fire but I'm pretty confident in being able to deliver

something because I've done 3 of them but different in quality. It is progressive and yes you could call it trust, and that has developed as time goes on.

Phew, how have I changed over the last 12 months? ...I went through a lot of change and probably what the course has done for me so far has just given me that much more belief and confidence in myself, I'm pretty confident anyway and I've got no problem in groups or standing up and talking and putting my opinion across. What the course has done for me is being able to have much more belief and confidence in what I do, because I went through such a rapid change you obviously naturally start questioning yourself and saying, well, am I really qualified to be here, am I really the right person for this?

Overall I believe that I have performed quite well and achieved my objective of completing the course. I could have probably done better if circumstances were different, but I suppose we could all say that. You have to deal with them at the time, the best way that you can.

## **Liz**

Having worked through the ranks on the domestic staff in my NHS Trust I am now employed as Deputy Support Services Manager. Since leaving school I got an A level at night school. I also have a City and Guilds.

When I first heard about the Certificate in FM at the Association of Domestic Managers [ADM] Study Day in Leeds I felt inspired. I wanted to feel part of it. It was the way forward. I was delighted that somebody was doing something for people like me. Although my background is in domestic and catering, I am now being asked to get involved in a wider range of services and I need some formal training in these areas. The course is facilities based and this fits in with my needs. I also like the way it's structured, not being left alone after the workshops, contact via e mail etc provides a lifeline. I am used to being taught.

I was pleased and really surprised when my application for funding was approved. When I applied to the University I was invited for an interview. I was surprised this was so informal and afterwards I thought, 'is that it?' In the past people always wanted to know about qualifications but they were saying that I could get into the course purely on the strength of my experience.

I got a formal offer of a place on the course and now there is no turning back. I know now I need to do it. I can't imagine why I am doing it at my age. There will be a lot of hard work, why should I do it if no one is making me? I thought 'what makes you volunteer? Why put yourself through it?', but if someone is prepared to pay for me then I **should** do it.

I am worried about putting things down on paper, my spelling is poor and I waffle. The IT side of things is also a worry, how to use information sources and of course finding the time. I know that I tend to underestimate my own abilities. Perhaps the course will help me raise my self esteem. But I am committed and if I do experience difficulties I will ask for help. I just don't want to have to admit defeat, to be thought THICK.

I am worried but I can see some benefits; help with writing skills and the linking of theory and practice; proof of what I can do; it will improve my self image.

During the first workshop I sat back and listened to the general discussions without contributing. But I found this very confusing. Ideas were coming from the group...this became more confusing as time went on. People had very definite views...this was obviously taken from what they were associated with in their area of work. People with an estates background were adamant there must be an Estates Department, whilst others had never heard of estates. Another stumbling block was whether to include IT and accommodation within facilities. The people involved with universities in their present post felt that accommodation had to be included, whilst one course member was adamant it should not be included, he just went on and on about it.

It was worse because the conversation was being dominated by one person. I am convinced that this was our fault for letting him take control and not contributing for themselves. Although we did reach agreement I was very confused by the end of the day. I could see all the different viewpoints, and was beginning to realise that Facilities Management was not as straightforward as first seemed. It is also difficult when people have very fixed ideas and are not willing to be flexible in their approach. I don't feel that I contributed very much.

My approach to day two was that I was just going to sit there and let them get on with it. I would still gain a great deal from the day, by watching and listening. As time went on though I found that I had to keep reminding them about the time factor. We seemed to have plenty of time, but we still had a great deal of work to complete, we had to keep

on track. As my efforts to organise were acknowledged this gave me the confidence to contribute further to the discussions. I started to talk to the other groups and I even ended up writing the mission statement. The workshop ended with a presentation to the Facilities Director and this seemed to go well but I was left with a sense of wondering if we had passed or failed, a bit of an anti climax. All the effort over the last two days was now over.

But I enjoyed the workshop; it was a very positive experience. My own learning style is 'logical' and I can see now how this works. My thoughts on going into the last day of the workshop was to observe and think it through myself, but this did not go to plan. I like to be organised and know what is happening, this was not evident with our group, so I made a point of trying to make the other group members aware of what we had to achieve in the time allocated. When they welcomed my suggestions it gave me the confidence to move forward. I do not usually like to put forward points of view in case they are thought to be wrong, I do not like to have the attention on me.

Writing the mission statement was a small issue, but to me it was a big step as it was something I had never done before on all the courses I have attended. Writing anything for public viewing was to be avoided because of what others would think of my spelling and writing, but in the small group where there only seemed to be one other person recording our work I thought go for it, make yourself do it.

I got a mark of 75% for both pieces of coursework at the end of that first unit. I remember telling my husband and he said 'is that a good mark?' I said 'I don't really know.' I actually felt quite disappointed.

I'm now about half way through and the course is a lot of hard work, a lot of stress and probably if I'd have known what it was going to involve I would never have started it. I get stressed when it comes to handing in the assignments. It stresses me out no end, it is terrible, I have never known anything wake me up in the night, I can sleep through anything, but it gets so that my every waking moment is thinking about doing that and it starts with the stage that I'd do anything other than do it, the house has never been so clean and tidy, it's marvellous what you do just not to do it, but then it gets to the stage where it has got to be done and it wears me out, it really does.

The first piece of work, the reflection, was not too bad I got through that relatively unscathed. But with the others I just sit there with all these books in front of me and

think I really don't know what I am doing here and it is like the blind leading the blind, but I suppose I get there in the end. I'm getting too old for learning. When I hand it in I think as long as I get 40% it is done. I have actually done better than that but I think it is the fact that when we used to go to school a good mark was in your 80 and 90's and it takes a lot of getting over, the fact that 65% is a good mark.

I suppose getting the mark does make up for the pain and stress because the last time one came back, my daughter rang me at work and said 'you have got a big brown envelope from the university' and says 'I'll open it for you', but I said don't because I can sit there on my own with a bottle of wine and then nobody will know, but then she said 'I'm going to open it for you', she did do and I must admit I was pleased with myself, I thought oh yes, I've done it, and the comments were valid and I agreed with them.

I don't like group work. I don't enjoy the workshops. I much prefer a more formal way of teaching. The best bits are the guest speakers. The course is a lot of grief...an awful lot of hard work and time I haven't got...I look at it as a burden. Even so I suppose I have changed. I look at things in more depth and I can see different points of view.

I am a bit of a loner, perhaps too proud to ask for help. This might be the way I used to be taught. I don't like to make contact with the tutors I'd feel better if somebody rang me, because then I wouldn't feel such a failure. I feel as if we float from one workshop to another with no contact with anybody and they just say 'there you are, off you go' and then three months later it's, 'well we are here again' and it is as if we are just left in between times.

I don't like to seek help because in the end people have got this impression of you that you are this confident person that can just fly through anything and nothing is daunting to you and nothing is an obstacle, so do you want to burst that bubble?

I expected a much more formal style of teaching like school or evening classes where it was a case of you went to lectures and you did what you've got to do, they set you work, you handed it in and you either passed it or you failed it with no help from anybody else...I am used to a more rigid form of education and I think that is what I find very difficult. Now it's as if you give me a piece of paper, you sit us down for two days, you look after us for two days and then at the end of the day you say 'bye, see ya' and I think, well I won't tell you what I think. I just feel abandoned, then all of a sudden

everybody wants to be chummy chummy with us again in 12 weeks time and give us some more work and I think 'No'.

The course has been all these things and more but I am very pleased I decided to embark on the course, it has given me a greater understanding of Facilities Management and the role it plays in today's organisations, but more importantly the course has given me a greater understanding of myself, given me more confidence and an enormous sense of achievement.

# Chapter Five: The Student Experience

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## Introduction

In Chapter 3 I set out the range of instruments used in data collection. Chapter 4 displayed some of these data in terms of narratives, tracing the experiences of four of the 22 students from Cohort Two of the Certificate in Facilities Management, covering the period from October 2001 to January 2004. The purpose of the four narratives was to capture the richness and detail of the actual encounters of these students with higher education over the two and a quarter years of their course. It is these narratives that set the scene for this full thematic presentation of the whole student data set displayed in this chapter. The full data set is mapped by student and by instrument earlier in Chapter 3. This clearly indicates that, not only are all 22 student voices represented within the data analysis, but also that all nine instruments used in the collection of data relating to the student experience are utilised.

My approach to analysis was set out in Chapter 3. This described the way in which the data were coded and presented, how codes were grouped into categories which were further reduced to yield the four main themes:

- |         |                          |
|---------|--------------------------|
| Theme 1 | The obstructive context; |
| Theme 2 | The supportive context;  |
| Theme 3 | The fragile identity;    |
| Theme 4 | The capable identity.    |

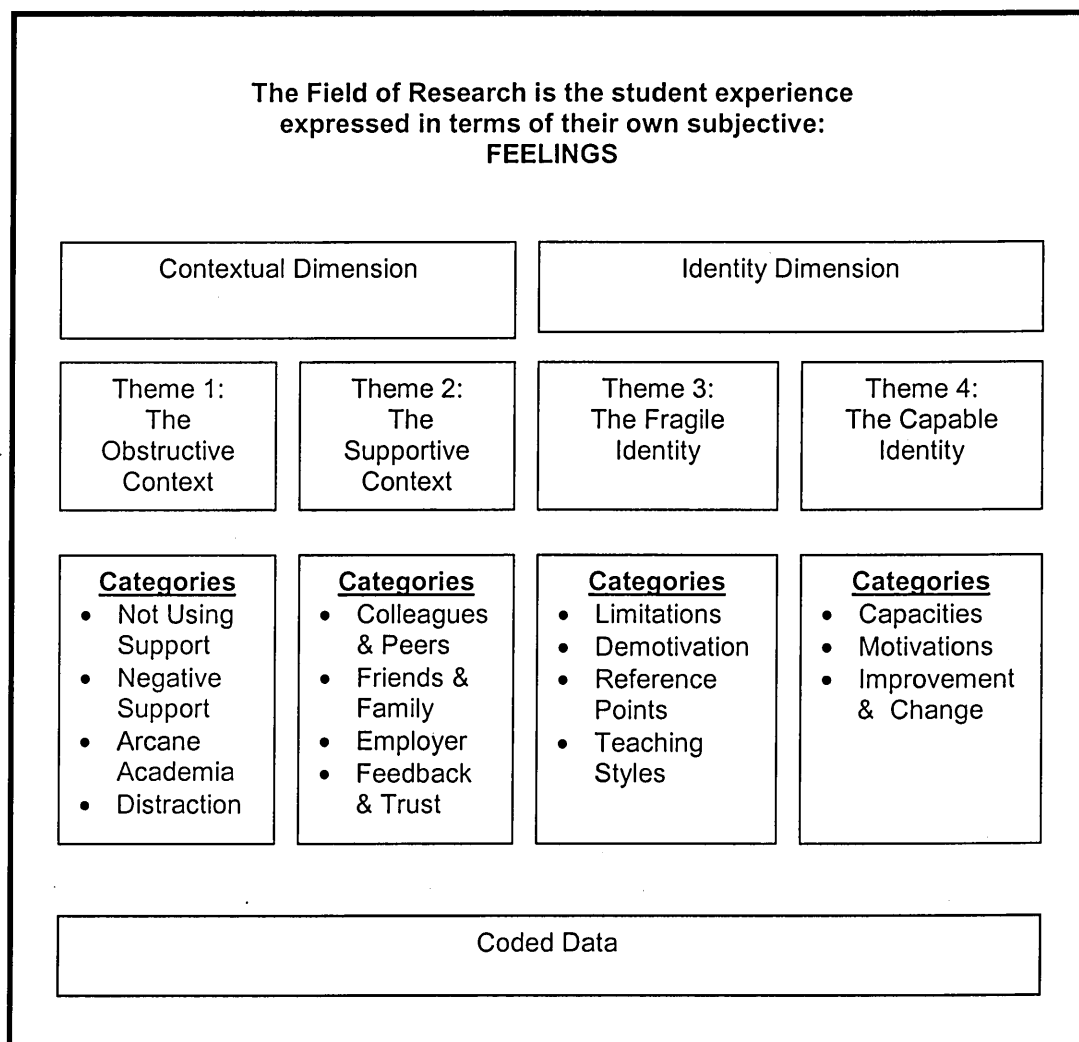
The four themes emerged from the display of data, firstly in terms of the negative/positive binary distinction and secondly by dividing the data between context and identity. This two by two matrix of themes is summarised in Figure 5.1: Theme Matrix.

In this chapter I will examine the data set in terms of each of these four main themes, in order, starting with the dimension of context, followed by the dimension of identity. For each of the two dimensions the analysis will start with the negative followed by the positive.

	Negative	Positive
Context	Theme 1: The Obstructive Context	Theme 2: The Supportive Context
Identity	Theme 3: The Fragile Identity	Theme 4: The Capable Identity

**Figure 5.1: Theme Matrix**

For each of the four themes the main categories emerging from the data are identified as summarised in Figure 5.2. The contextual dimension is intended to embrace the physical, social and cultural environments in which learning takes place. The main components of this contextual dimension include the different parts of the support infrastructure such as colleagues, friends and family members and this also embraces the tutor role through the provision of feedback on progress. The obstructive side of the contextual dimension examines the support paradox and the ways in which different elements of student support can, in practice, serve to obstruct rather than support the individual student. A second major source of obstruction is concerned with the way in which the wider institution of higher education manifests itself as a 'hostile environment'. All of these categories clearly impinge upon each learner in very significant ways but are external to the individual. By contrast, the identity dimension is concerned with the ways in which these individual learners view themselves. The fragile identity is reflected in individual limitations as well as *demotivation* whereas the capable identity is expressed in terms of the capacities of the individual and their positive motivations. Fragilities are seen very much in terms of the points of reference students make with past educational experience as well as with problems encountered with less familiar student centred approaches to learning and teaching. Finally, within the capable side of this dimension, students are able to measure their progress in terms of the ways in which they improve and change as a result of engagement with the course of study.



**Figure 5.2: Framework for Student Data Presentation**

One final point on conventions. Where I refer to extracts from the data these are identified by reference to the source instrument by name, and where appropriate by number and by the initials of the student(s) involved and these initials can be cross referenced to the full names in Figure 3.2: Student Involvement in Instruments above.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> The names in Figure 3.2: Student Involvement in Instruments are all pseudonyms. Any other material in the extracts such as employer names have been removed or changed to protect anonymity.

## Theme 1: The Obstructive Context

This academic context, setting or environment, emerges from the data as a source of intimidation. As one student put it:

you've got your work environment and home environment and you are going to something really that, for most of us...I've never been to University...so it is something completely different. It was a bit daunting. (Group Interview #3:TW)

So much of the learning environment inhabited by the adult learner seems to have a negative or obstructive impact upon the learning process. This idea of a learning context that serves to obstruct learning has been a major theme throughout the longer action research cycle linked to the development of the Certificate course. My earlier focus, for example, was on barriers to learning and how these can be addressed. This first theme contains the following categories, each of which is considered in turn:

- 1.1 Not Using Support;
- 1.2 Negative support;
- 1.3 Arcane Academia; and
- 1.4 Distractions.

### 1.1 Not Using Support

One of the key drivers behind this research was the desire to find some explanation for the tendency of students to ignore the support available to them. The provision of high levels of appropriate support has been a priority and a challenge in the development and delivery of this course and its predecessors. Not all students seem able or willing to take full advantage of this and earlier evidence from the predecessor course demonstrated that even in the face of desperate struggles (especially over, but not confined to, the assessment process) students remained reluctant to seek help.<sup>17</sup>

Students are made aware of the support available to them and seem to content themselves in the knowledge that this support may be called upon should they really need it. But there is evidence to suggest that they view seeking advice from the tutors as a last resort. Thus support is seen as '*a comfort blanket*' (Group Interview #3:SJ) and to ask a relative stranger for help is '*embarrassing*' (Individual Interview #2:RW). Evidence in the data does suggest that these students need to build a relationship with

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<sup>17</sup> See Appendices B and C for an illustration of these difficulties.

their tutors before this embarrassment can be overcome. And yet these part time students experience particular problems in trying to build these relationships due to the lack of continuity caused by the relatively long periods of time between workshops (approximately three months). One student (Liz) goes as far as suggesting that she felt a sense of abandonment in between times (see Chapter 4). But although students occasionally expressed the desire for a more proactive approach to support from tutors, such interventions were seen by others as unwarranted intrusions into the separate world of work.

Part of the explanation for this reluctance to seek support appears to be a generally held belief that learning is something you do on your own. This latter point could be yet another of the legacies of school but these students also seem to carry with them further 'baggage' from the workplace in the form of a tradition that you do not ask for help before first making every effort to solve a problem yourself:

Yes but we all do it at work don't we, don't come to me with a problem unless you have tried to sort it out yourself. (Group Interview #3:MH)

Asking for help is also seen as an admission of failure:

I don't ring here unless I am desperate...I think it goes back down to the way we used to be taught, and rightly or wrongly I [would] feel better if somebody rang me, because I wouldn't feel such a failure. (Individual Interview #2:LS)

This sense of failure may simply be about not showing your ignorance as illustrated by this interview extract:

Laura: Did you think about contacting us at that point?

Paul: You don't like to because you think you might think you're a bit stupid, summat came up on the last course, unit 1, Phil was going on about OB and it just didn't click but I thought I'm not asking what it is and now I realise it's organisational behaviour...I'm sure other people in there thought 'what's he talking about', but don't want to ask because you look stupid...I don't want to be stupid so I didn't get a full grip of it.

(Individual Interview #2:PM)

But this problem is not just confined to academic issues:

You said I might find it easier to ask people at work for help, I don't. I don't find it easy to ask anybody for help...It's not that I don't feel I can ask for help it's as though I feel I am letting myself down if I ask for help. (Individual Interview #2:AD)

There may well be a gender difference here *'it's a male thing not pouring out your troubles'* (Individual Interview #2:TW) although there is no significant body of evidence in the data to support this. There is however a view that there are other ways of finding out and asking a tutor may be seen as a last resort not least because, as facilitators, tutors are not necessarily the best people to go to for advice on 'practical' issues relating to the work place:

There are two types of problems, the academic type problems which you would ring Jane or Phil about. And don't get me wrong, there's no disrespect whatsoever, but in current FM practice [tutors] here wouldn't be able to help. Would you be able to answer something about the latest legislation? (Group Interview #3:TW)

These are mature students with managerial status within their own workplaces. Such status may well provide them with a source of power in the classroom not normally available to the average 18 year old, undergraduate student. The existence of a power differential between the students and their tutors was raised during the second group interview as a possible explanation for not using support:

Maria: It never crossed my mind.

Adrian: I never thought about it.

Daniel: I think it could be an issue without the likes of yourselves who are very friendly, more difficult for someone [i.e. a tutor] who is a bit more old school.

(Group Interview #2:AD/DC/MB)

When pressed, these students did not accept they had less power than the tutors. So any reluctance to take advantage of support offered by tutors does not appear to be explained by any perception of a power differential.

If students do seem reluctant to seek help from tutors some of them also seem to recognise that they do not make best use of support from each other either. The cohort experience is an important principle underpinning curriculum delivery on the course, yet a number of the students expressed disappointment that there was only limited contact between students once away from the university:

We did not communicate well as a group away from the university and the group discussion board through Blackboard<sup>18</sup> was not used to its full potential. (Reflection #2:LS)

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<sup>18</sup> Blackboard is the name of the virtual learning environment used by the University

The one issue that I was disappointed in is the poor 'out of classroom' interaction between the students, I have tried on a few occasions to interact with others but found it long winded to go through the Blackboard site. (Reflection #2:JB)

Students do however seem to accept a degree of responsibility for not making use of the range of support on offer:

I suppose, looking back, I should have made better use of the lecturers at Sheffield, instead I struggled with my first unit, as I was unsure if I was approaching the work and subject matter in the correct manner. (Reflection #2:LL)

There is though a suggestion that perhaps, as time goes on, it may get easier to ask for help:

I had thousands and thousands of extra words and didn't know which bits to chop out, but now with the benefit of being three units in I would pick up the phone to you more readily now knowing that you are a time management resource. (Individual Interview #2:JW)

One means of support, designed to reduce the level of anxiety related to the assessment process, is the encouragement for students to submit drafts of their work for interim feedback. Not all students took advantage of this facility:

I believe my colleagues have sent theirs in for checking and have come back as 'very good'. Well done to them but I am not a great believer in having my work pre-checked. I understand it is a very helpful opportunity but it is something that I have never really taken advantage of, probably to my detriment - I should have really!! (Log:AJ)

## 1.2 Negative support

This second category within *the obstructive context* theme deals with what might be termed 'the dark side' of support. It is a central paradox that many of the elements within the support infrastructure can in practice serve to inhibit learning. Thus, although the existence of family support was identified by many of the students as crucial in the decision to take up places on the course (Individual Interview #1), it also emerges from the data as a source of tension. This obstructive/supportive tension involves mainly partners and children who must now compete with study as well as work for attention. This may well be dismissed as *'the usual family stuff'* (Individual Interview #2:DL) which can be managed, but it can also result in displeasure and confusion. There are a number of references to family members showing annoyance at the amount of time

students spend at home working on the course, taking time off from work to study. One spouse refers to her partner's involvement in the course as '*his obsession*' (Log:SJ) and then there are the children who simply don't understand that '*mum has to finish her assignment*'.

Family members can present problems even when they have the best of intentions:

My husband is very good in terms of saying, 'yes you're fantastic just get on and do it, you can do it', then its sort of like oh god you've got confidence in me but can you listen to my worries instead of telling me I'm fantastic. (Interview #2:JW)

There are similar tensions with colleagues in the work place. Whilst for family members this is the simple matter of competing with the course for attention, for colleagues, the engagement of fellow workers in higher education can be a source of envy and even a threat:

from my 'peers' I get no support at all, in fact I get ridiculed if I ask a question, so I've stopped asking them...I get comments like 'oh well in a couple of year's time you'll be as good as I am', it's not pleasant, there's a barrier there so we just don't go there. (Group Interview #2:LW)

They take the Mickey, if I say 'what about this?' they'll say 'well you go to college', but they are only taking the Mickey. (Group Interview #2:AD)

Colleagues in the work place are not always totally supportive:

Told the others in the office and was surprised at the reaction. Not everyone was pleased!! Looking back the people that mattered were. (Log:LW)

For this reason perhaps some students made it clear that they keep their studying to themselves for fear of exposure in front of colleagues in the workplace.

There are also tensions between peer students within the cohort. Students can intimidate each other as they were by the size of Josie's portfolio (Group Interview #2:LW) and the emphasis on group working within the workshops also creates tensions:

Within our group were two strong characters - Ray and Josie who at times disagreed with one another and did not help the group in devising their action plan, objectives etc. I often acted as a mediator and tried diplomatically to resolve tricky situations by coming up with a neutral angle to issues raised which helped in some matters. I also tried to motivate some of the quieter members of the group who were not contributing much, maybe because of the stronger personalities, or maybe because they did

not know much about IT as this was not their FM specialty. (Reflection #1:IR)

Sometimes this is manifested in a tendency not to listen or to remain closed off to other influences and ideas:

There were times in the workshop when input was needed from the whole group, but at times the input came from a select few. We would only listen to what we did in our work place and not listen to what others did in their work place. (Reflection #2:MH)

Sometimes the behaviour of other students leads to conflict and confrontation:

It was also apparent that some members of the group were upset by the confrontation. I did not realise this until after the session and I need to start to look at how behaviour, others, and mine, affects all members of the team and whilst it's not always possible to avoid conflict, I need to take action to minimise it. (Reflection #2:LW)

Later in the course though the people who liked their own voices were 'shut-up' by other course members rather than members of the teaching staff. I still don't know if this was deliberate or if the staff had a certain amount of material to deliver in a certain time, so tackling the noisy/quiet ones wasn't an option (Reflection #2:TW).

And even when in group situations students behaved in a caring and sensitive fashion this did not always have the desired effect:

Lucia often asked me if I was 'all right' and 'what I thought'. This I believe was in an effort to bring me out of my current train of thought, however what she did succeed in doing was making me feel much more insecure (Reflection #2:JB)

There were occasions when the tensions between student colleagues spilled into the workplace:

I noticed at work today that one of my colleagues who attended the course with me had already begun their assignment...Arrived back into work after attending site and lo and behold he is still printing reams & reams of information off the internet!!...A little annoyed that I do not have a minute to myself yet others have spent the whole day gathering information...Decided to come into the office at the weekend to start gathering information to assist in writing my assignment...I cannot believe it, but I have just witnessed the passing of copied information to another colleague on the course...I guess I must have upset a certain person??!!...Not quite sure what is going on at the moment but I certainly feel more than a little left out!! (Log:AJ)

But students do learn lessons about effective group working:

For the future I need to be aware of how personalities can impact on discussions and decision making and need to ensure that this is taken into consideration when agreeing and organising working and project teams.  
(Reflection #2:LW)

There is a further negative dimension attached to the pressure of support. To fail the course would be to let down all those significant people who provide support including those at work as well as family members.

Part of the so-called student support 'infrastructure' for these semi-distance learners is IT based but this also has a negative dimension. Problems include lack of access, such as not having a computer at home or having to compete for hardware with the children, *'Especially if you've got to fight your 17 year old for possession of the computer'* (Group Interview #2:DC). Within some organisations firewalls create obstacles to efficient communication with the outside world. All of these might appear to be resource problems but there is some evidence that students use apparent technical and resource difficulties to hide their own limitations in computer literacy. There were some expressions of frustration with the use of e-mail within the Blackboard virtual learning environment. There is also the impression that many just gave up in the face of these difficulties:

I tried to use the e-mail facility and basically ended up in a right mess with it. Was told basically that my e-mail address wasn't recognised, so I did try to contact support and they told me to contact the tutors, so I thought, well give it up. (Group Interview #1:AD)

Not being very IT minded I struggled with Blackboard and on many occasions lost patience with it and just closed it down through frustration.  
(Reflection #2:LS)

In one revealing incident several students seemed to be experiencing problems accessing a password protected information database during a literature searching exercise. It was quickly assumed that this was a technical problem such as a changed password. However it turned out that students were all typing the correct password incorrectly (Tutor Critical Incident Log). IT, in all its various dimensions, is clearly an important part of the support infrastructure. At the same time it can be a source of frustration for those with low levels of confidence, ability and experience.

Students also experienced difficulties with more traditional information sources such as pre-workshop reading. This is yet another well intended potential source of support that could become frustrating and even intimidating:

Phil      What about pre-course reading...was that helpful?  
 Daniel    If you can understand it yes.  
 Ray        Yes I mean the pre-course reading for this course, if we'd had that for the first one, I think.....  
 Lucia     Half of us wouldn't have turned up. (Group Interview #1:DC/RG/LW)

I've read it several times and the first time it went straight over the top of my head, and the second time I didn't even see it and the third time I started taking notes and try to figure out exactly what we are meant to be doing on the next unit. I kept reading and reading. (Group Interview #1:SJ)

One incident concerning the provision of information related to the second unit and the assignment on the subject of the 'Informed Client'. Students were struggling to find any information on the topic. Eventually the course team posted some references on *Blackboard* and these seemed to 'unlock' the students who were then able to continue. There was some mild criticism of the tutors for not providing this information at the outset, as this would have saved the students time and frustration, but at the same time there was also recognition on the part of the students that searching for and finding information was an important skill to be developed. This is recorded in my own Critical Incident Log but was also a significant incident for the students as well:

Daniel:    Phil I thought you'd just made it up...Can I just say that I contacted [my employer] help line basically, and I got a letter three days later saying 'I'm sorry I don't understand this'...so I thought haven't got much hope here. (Group Interview #1:DC)

7th January 2002: Spent a total of 6 1/2 hours working on assignment (Part B), (5 hours writing and 1 1/2 hours reading). Unhappy with the way it is going I've looked through 5 FM books (6 quality assurance books) and not seen any reference to 'Informed clients'. They must have made it up. (Log:SG)

Getting information for assignments was seen by many as one of the most difficult problems:

Daniel:    For me the gathering of information was the most time consuming and hardest thing. Finding stuff that's relevant is the most difficult thing. (Group Interview #2:DC)

Or finding too much:

Maria:     Before we left here I had a chat with Phil and my worst nightmare was gathering the information and he gave me a few pointers and eventually when I got started I wrote the commentary and thought that fits nicely into that let me find that piece of paper. And now, although I haven't referenced it I've got a pile of information and I've got my

### 1.3 Arcane academia

A significant part of *the obstructive context* is higher education itself. This category includes a number of different but related manifestations of the 'confusing culture' of higher education including rules and regulations, word limits, language, assessment assumptions and other 'academic' issues that are at best unfamiliar and at worst intimidating. Furthermore this is also manifested at the macro level through homogenising assumptions made within the sector as a whole. These include assumptions that all courses will conform in terms of the semester timetable, quality assurance regulations and course management requirements.

There are a number of examples in the data of the different manifestations of *arcane academia* including language:

I thought, also, that I should look up the definition of 'cohort' as the word keeps cropping up. The 'Collins Concise Dictionary of the English Language' (Guild Publishing London) defines it as '2. any band of warriors or associates: the cohorts of Satan'. Well, having been a warrior for most of my life, probably sided with Satan more often than not, I will now think of my fellow students as 'associates'.  
(Reflection #1:SJ)

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'Even the word essay left me thinking for about three minutes. Essay..? At college it was an assignment or homework. (Group Interview #1:SG)

The very fact of being at a university could be intimidating:

Now, sitting in the class (or are they called something posh like lecture theatres), hearing phrases like, 2500 word essay, brings it all home. I'm in a university being asked to do university type things! Is it too late to enrol for the Calligraphy or Water-colour evening classes? I wonder. (Reflection 1:SG)

Students can also be intimidated by the apparent size of assignment tasks:

And we have to write about our feelings. I'm English. We English are not very good at expressing our feelings, so how am I going to find 2500 words to describe my feelings during the workshop. 2500. 2500 words! That's called a book isn't it? (Reflection 1:SG)

The formalities of using the Harvard referencing system created problems for others:

We were pointed towards the Harvard writing style...I don't really get this... rightly or wrongly I sort of wrote my own style...because I couldn't really

get a grip of what I was meant to do as regards the Harvard writing style...  
(Group Interview #1:RG)

The amount of time required for study was also an issue:

Probably a low was when I got the first assignment and looked at the number of hours required, having to split my time between, work, family and course work, although it didn't turn out as bad as it looked on paper, but it was certainly a shock to the system; 156 hours. (Group Interview #2:TW)

Manifestations of this category are also evident in a number of critical incidents recorded in my own Critical Incident Log. As academics we rather take for granted much of what surrounds the formality of the assessment process. When one student appeared to be unhappy having received a mark of 75% for her first assignment it transpired (only some time later) that she did not have a clue about what standard this represented. Her response was 'I am glad I have passed but is this good mark?' She was actually disappointed by what, by our standards, was a very good mark. Then there is the distress experienced by students over minor errors that are perceived as fatal flaws such as the one who put her bibliography in the wrong place when binding a Project Report for submission.

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Some of the 'rules' within this academic environment attracted attention such as the apparent inequity of getting extensions of time with no penalty:

I felt that the amount of people who were granted extensions was appalling and very frustrating for me personally, perhaps a deduction in marks is a must for future students!!' (Reflection #2:AJ)

Students are aware that they are entering a new and alien culture by signing up to an undergraduate level course at university:

Adapting to a new culture, is in itself difficult at the best of times, but when that culture is as alien as academic study it becomes terrifying. That has been the biggest hurdle I have had to overcome, learning to learn.(Reflection #2:PM)

And inside this new culture there are certain things that are never fully explained:

No, I didn't know and still don't understand what the level is (Individual Interview #1:TW)

## 1.4 Distractions

*Distractions* are those things that prevent students from fully engaging with their studies. From the outset most seem to be aware of the need to divide themselves between work, home and study. Yet getting this balance right appears to be almost impossible in practice and inevitably leads to a whole new set of tensions.

For most of these students work simply has to come first. It takes priority as work pays the bills. FM tends to be a reactive profession and many Facilities Managers spend most of their working lives 'fighting fires' and dealing with urgent crises. They take time away from work to attend study workshops but seem then to return to work to face even greater pressure. Within the data there are many general references to difficult and busy weeks at work as well as specific references to urgent tasks often dropped on them at the last minute. Unexpected emergencies include break-ins but other *distractions* include work force cuts and redundancies. There are the unexpected peaks and troughs, job changes, including increased responsibility, as well as just change in general:

After attending the workshop, I felt drained!!!!...back at work, I did not have time to think, work had piled up since I was off... and the e-mails!!! (Log:AJ)

The second day of the induction, I was summoned back to work to be informed that the company, following the events of the 11th September, had reluctantly announced a 10% cut in the workforce world-wide. I was told all departments, including my own, would be affected. Each manager was requested to assess what the implications of a 10% reduction in personnel would have on their department, and devise measures we could employ to minimise the affect (sic). (Reflective Report: SG)

Support from work, they allow me the times to do things at work, but I'm working extra hours everyday anyway, so finding these extra hours to do any work for college...in reality it doesn't work out. We're short of numbers, made redundancies. It's very difficult. (Group Interview #1:SG)

Although just occasionally students do concede that it is easy to use pressure of work as an avoidance tactic:

You put it at the back of your mind to try and put it off sometimes, its an excuse, it's easy, 'I'm busy at work' I'll have to go and do this after work, if you really thought about it you would do it there and then, you can plan it. I can't go out tonight I'm doing my course work, or I'll work after work for an hour. I'll cancel that meeting or blank out my diary. It's just an easy excuse saying I'm busy at work. (Group Interview #3:MH)

Home also competes with study. Many of the students are of an age where they have young families and they can find themselves under pressure because, quite naturally, they want to spend time with them. One parent describes how the kids get upset about being left while mum attends University:

Katie and Paul are back tomorrow afternoon and I'm going to Sheffield tomorrow night. That's going to go down well. I've taken tomorrow afternoon off to pick them up. As well as doing the reading. I've had to get school uniform, PE kit etc ready. At one stage I even wrote a list of what I needed to do before tomorrow evening. The list included clean shoes, empty dishwasher. My head was beginning to spin with all that I felt needed to be done. Would it have mattered if she goes to school with dirty shoes? Probably not to Katie but it would to me. (Log:LW)

Although leaving the family is a wrench for Lucia, Daniel enjoys the chance to get away and 'escape':

That's the big difference between men and women because I love going into the office when there is no one there, away from the family. (Group Interview #2:DC)

Home *distractions* and diversions include Christmas with '*Everything that's going on*' (Group Interview #1:HH) as well as shopping, walking the dog, the housework and DIY, making meals, spending time with partners, getting the kids ready for school, going to football, family visits, holidays, TV, competing with the kids to use the computer, wanting to give them more attention, but also finding their noise a distraction, especially when it involves them having friends around.

Ill health is another part of normal life that cannot be avoided, occasionally running out of control and impacting upon the ability to attend to the demands of study. This includes serious instances such as depression, major operations as well as the anxiety associated with medical tests and hospital appointments and the routine inconvenience of coughs, colds and flu:

Operation is on Friday and I am not looking forward to it at all.

After the housework etc, walking the dog, sorting out my hospital bag...It sounds harsh but I have more important things on my mind - results from the hospital which were not particularly good.

I know I have more tests to go through over the next 6 months or so and it is not an exciting prospect. (Log:AJ)

Both the manifold competing pressures of home life and the inconvenience of minor illness are well summed up in the logs which capture the detail of the day to day struggle to complete coursework. Christine's diary entry is very typical:

4th January 2002

I haven't had time to write this reflective diary because all my spare time has gone on unit 1 assignment. I feel like the assignment has taken over my life. I have worked through every lunch time at work. I never did much work on this assignment over Christmas I did a total of 4 hours but have made up for that over this last week. Spending every night on this. It is 11.30pm and I thought I had to write something before I forget. Hopefully I will spend more time tomorrow on my assignment. May have a break from it on Sunday hopefully. At lunch time today I felt like ripping everything up and forgetting about the course. I feel like I have not managed my time. After I receive the next assignment I must start it straight away and manage my time more effectively. (Log:CS)

Many students admitted that they had underestimated the amount of time it takes to put together coursework submissions. The need to allocate blocks of time to get down to working effectively virtually ensures that it is necessary to work at weekends and this makes study even more intrusive on family and social life. The combined effect of all these pressures is the impact on time. Students recognise the need to develop good time management skills and yet there are many references of regret that time has not been better spent. The worst thing is that there is never enough time and the pressure of constant work means there is no time to de-stress:

When you have had a hard day at work as well, coming home thinking I've got to have my tea, watching TV doing some work, not resting for the next day at work, so you never de-stress or relax. If you do 3 nights work in a row, you're always tense. (Group Interview #2:GF)

Some students expressed surprise at the impact of study on the other parts of their lives:

I did not think about the impact university education would have on my work and social life, I think I was a bit ignorant in my understanding of the course and that I would just fit the extra workload in without any hesitation. (Reflection #2:MH)

The realisation that the time spent on the course work has been much more time consuming and intense than I ever thought it would be, and at times I must say more difficult. (Reflection #2:RG)

The last two years during my return to 'further education' has certainly been different, I am not sure what I expected but I have experienced many emotions from joy to complete terror! The balancing act one needs to fulfil between work, study and home life is very stressful and to a certain degree bordering on the impossible. (Reflection #2:PM)

Others report how they engaged in displacement activity to avoid getting down to study:

Is it natural to feel compelled to do anything and everything, especially the ironing and housework, when you know you really should be working on your assignment? When talking to fellow students on the same course they too felt compelled to do exactly the same; on the whole we all must have had the cleanest houses, cars, etc. during the duration of this course. My husband (of 3 months), hasn't got off light either, I'm not saying the pressure was on but when completing an assignment but I've lost count the number of times I've said sorry! I would never have believed that when you're about to hand in an assignment it can take over your life, every waking moment, it's all you think about. (Report #2:HH)

If the above extracts appear to be comparatively trivial, there are, at the other extreme, significantly unsettling life events that impact on the ability or motivation to study:

It was unfortunate for me that the final workshop at Sheffield Hallam coincided with my being made redundant (Reflection #2:SJ)

I was very disheartened due to family events and my position at work. I had no motivation to carry on with the course due to my contract nearing completion. I felt all my hard work, which I had accomplished in the past year, would be wasted. I would not be able to fund the second year's course. (Reflection #2:RW)

2003 was an especially bad year for me personally, with the death of two close relatives and this disrupted my work...and consequently my studies at Sheffield, somewhat spoiling the enjoyment of the course, as I fell behind with my assignments and struggled to regain the ground I had lost. Unfortunately, despite the many positive things about the course, this will be my abiding recollection of my time at Sheffield. (Reflection #2:DC)

There are general personal issues such as *'losing jobs, getting jobs, business re-organisation, personal crisis's even having babies'* (Reflection #2:MB). For other students changes in circumstance during the period of the course gave rise to unanticipated difficulties, *'I have changed employer twice, moved house twice and have recently become a father again for the second time!'* (Reflection #2:DC). But at least, many of the students, when asked what difficulties they anticipated appeared to enter the commitment with their eyes open, at least in terms of the need to balance study with other pressures such as family, time away from the workplace (Individual Interview #1:DC), long hours at work (Individual Interview #1:SG), Trying to balance work, study and personal life (Individual Interview #1:AD) and returning to study (Individual Interview #1:RW).

Students are forced to take drastic measures sometimes to escape the distractions. Lucia records how she had to drag herself away from the pressures of teenage children and their friends at weekends, even though she hated being away from them. (Group Interview #2:LW) One of the consequences of pressure is that weekend working becomes commonplace:

I find it hard to motivate myself at home and I've got to go into work, and when you are working long hours anyway the last thing you want to do is spend even more time at work, I find that really hard having to go in at weekends; working until 9/10.00 on the computer, it's hard but I know I've got to do it. (Group Interview #2:LL)

The bottom line is that in balancing the competing pressures of work, home and study, for many it is home life that gets sacrificed (Group Interview #3:TW).

The data from these students provide a clear and comprehensive picture of the competing pressures faced by the part time adult returner.

## Theme 2: The Supportive Context

This second theme, sitting on the positive side of the contextual dimension, contains categories revolving around social support networks. At one level this is about the people dimension of the support infrastructure and is concerned with the range and variety of modes of support drawn upon by students. The categories within this theme are:

- 2.1 Colleagues and Peers;
- 2.2 Friends and Family;
- 2.3 Employers and,
- 2.4 Trust and Feedback.

### 2.1 Colleagues and Peers

This category refers to people at work or on the course who are of approximately equivalent status. There is evidence within the data of their importance as a source of support. It was noted earlier in Chapter 4 for example, how important this was to David. One of the strongest messages to emerge from group interviews was the importance of peer support and the apparently natural emergence of informal but extensively used networks within the cohort. Clearly, for some, these networks proved critical in overcoming crises and providing encouragement. For less confident students there seemed a greater readiness to use fellow students for support rather than tutors. Mature students, perhaps more used to networking, seem to see the development of peer support as a student responsibility.

Despite earlier expressions of disappointment about the lack of contact between workshops, there is evidence of the existence of an effective peer support network among some of the students:

- Lucia      We actually talk to each other, I don't know about the others, but there are 4 or 5 of us that talk regularly.
- Jane      Peer support?
- Lucia      (We) chivvy each other along.
- There was certainly a lot more conversations between, I suppose everybody's got their little groups, certainly all the way through this one there are constant phone calls between us all and everyone seems to be feeling the same uncertainty: 'Is this right? Are we going down the right track? is this what you wanted?' Certainly from my point of view, when I have a group that I talk to regularly and at one stage it was everyday, what did you do last night and how did you get on with it?

(Group Interview #2: LW)

Students are also aware of the benefits of the cohort experience:

We take a lot more out of it as a group, because you meet different people and different environments and you sometimes take that back into your own work environment and think I remember last week someone mention that they do it this way, even though it's a different organisation but you look at it and try to adapt it into yours. (Group Interview #3:MH)

They use each other to provide mutual support on coursework:

David's all right. When I got stuck on the portfolio he sent his through and it kick started me a bit. I read it and I thought that's what it's looking for. On the first one, the reflection, Lucia Warne sent me hers and that gave me some idea but I weren't keen on the way she wrote hers out. I thought I don't want to do it that way so I put it to one side...Daniel sent me a piece through on the informed client one on how [his employer] interprets it but it wasn't relevant to me. (Individual Interview #2:PM)

There are similar comments about peer learning sets (Individual interview 2: JW), working together as a team (Reflection #1:AJ), problem solving and working with others (Reflection #1:MH), complementing one another on achievements and coaxing and cajoling (Log:LW).

## 2.2 Friends and Family

In the first individual interviews, students made it clear that they sought the approval of family and friends before committing to the course. Prospective students seemed to grasp the impact of study on family life from the outset. Partners, parents and children were all seen as important. The full range of family members appear in this supporting cast but many students also mention the importance of friends. In some cases work colleagues are indistinguishable from friends, seemingly performing the same mentor type function. In other cases peer students become friends.

The importance of friends can be illustrated by this student who reports in an interview on how he was at the point of giving up:

then I went out with some friends who have done degree courses and I was telling them about it and they were saying 'don't throw it in'...Dave, who is one of my friends has been very inspirational, he said look at the papers you are producing now..... (Individual Interview #2:RW)

Partners are probably the most important family influence; as a source of support '*I spoke to my wife and she offered full support*' (Individual Interview 1: PM); as a sounding board:

Jane      So instead of expressing those thoughts in a diary or log how do you actually get rid of those feelings, do you talk to friends or do you talk to tutors within the course?

Adrian    The missus.

(Group Interview #2:AD)

They can be a source of information:

That was the main problem I had, what is a portfolio? And no matter how many times I read the guidelines, I still didn't know. Until I went to my wife who's recently done a nurse training course. She said here that's what I did and passed, so you've got that. (Group Interview #2:AD)

Or simply provide enthusiasm:

I told my family who were over the moon as they knew more than anyone else how hard a step it had been for me to start the course. (Log:LW)

## 2.3 Employers

The majority of students received financial support from their employers. Many expressed surprise at being approved for funding because of the amount of money involved. Employer organisations were seen as supportive in other ways as well. For some, this included time to attend the workshops and undertake the assignments, though in most cases this was seen as an illusion. Shortage of staff and pressure on time meant that the work still had to be done. Of more practical value was the presence, for many, of someone in the organisation to take an interest and provide support for the assignments. At the same time, there was a widespread feeling that the employer had done more than enough by providing the opportunity to do the course in the first place.

In the data the employer appears variously as an individual (the boss), as an institution (the client, the Trust) and more vaguely just as 'work'. The employer as institution is seen as a source of mainly financial support, whereas bosses sometimes have more proactive roles, acting as mentor/supporter and checker of coursework. This latter role of course, can be perceived as surveillance and as potentially threatening:

Felt really scared when I went to see [the manager]. Was really unsure of what I'd done. Would she think it was OK, felt really vulnerable, but she was really impressed and other than pointing out some silly spelling/grammar mistakes there was nothing to change. (Log:LW)

Whilst some employers appear to take very little active interest, there are those, at the other extreme, who appear to take the role of friend. Sometimes the pattern is inconsistent. David found *'The level of support given by my managers has gone from one extreme to the other over the two years of the course'* (Reflection #2:DL).

Work is sometimes presented as a disembodied abstraction, it is presumably much easier to be critical of an abstraction when it might be seen as risky to criticise 'the boss'. Work, despite its role as a major distraction, as noted above under *the obstructive context* theme, is generally presented by students in a supportive light.

## **2.4 Trust and Feedback**

During the second group interview students discussed the highs and lows of the course so far. For most the high point was being told they had passed the first unit *'when Phil rang it was a high'* (Group Interview #2:SG) and this is balanced by the low point for most which was the delay in feedback on the second unit. Feedback is clearly important.

Through the research trust has emerged as having a major role in support. This is the trust between tutor and student and it links very powerfully with feedback. A degree of trust has to be established before students feel confident enough to ask for help. Building this trusting relationship takes time and appears also to be a function of the number of completed assessment cycles. Thus it takes two or three completed units before students start to believe in themselves. The paradox then, is that almost by definition, you achieve the holy grail of trust precisely at the point that you no longer need it. Over time, positive and sensitive feedback encourages the development of trust, which in turn leads to an inclination on the part of students to make better use of the support available to them. Lack of trust appears to be the most convincing explanation to date for student reluctance to make use of support.

I quote at length here from a second individual interview where the comments of this one student seem to sum up the problem:

I think from my point of view it was thinking that you would think I was totally thick, but bear in mind at this point we didn't have an established relationship where I knew I could trust you because it takes time to build up that trust doesn't it no matter where you are, and although it had been stressed in the pre-workshops, you are there to ask these questions, I do think that there is a barrier still there and the only thing from my point of view.....that would have changed that...was to have had feedback

from a previous cohort, to say 'look guys we got through this and the first two or three units we struggled but when we realised that you don't need to do that you can just pick up the phone, you don't need to feel thick'.....  
(Individual Interview #2:JW)

Josie was one of three students to make this point at roughly the half way stage of the course. It may be significant that different students were reaching the same conclusion after three full assessment cycles.

Feedback is important and these mature students do appear to make extensive use of it. They act on advice given and feedback is seen as one of the most important ways of securing improvement and progress. There is a good deal in the data supporting the value and importance of feedback:

The results I have achieved, I have felt more than happy with. The initial stage of the course was hard, as I did not know what was expected of me. I worked very hard on Unit one and it paid off. After receiving Unit One's marks it made it a little easier, as I felt more relaxed and more confident. This confidence grew, as my marks remained good. (Reflection #2:CS)

Contrast this with the following comments, from a student reflection, about the impact of not knowing how they had performed on a subsequent unit:

I was very relieved when I received my grades. At that point, I was not even sure if I would receive a pass! Not knowing was probably one of the hardest times to get through after spending so much time writing and researching the topics. (Reflection #2:LL)

This issue was also discussed in the second group interview:

David     My high was getting the phone call saying I'd passed the first two parts because they were important really, and my low, I think I'm at my lowest now awaiting for my next result. I've been guessing, I feel nervous today because I don't know the result before we have had to come back to the University.

Lucia     Yes, that's a strange feeling.

David     Yes, I know its circumstances, but it is a very strange feeling coming here this morning not knowing how we've actually done.

(Group Interview #2:LW/DL)

Getting the phone call, indicating success on that first assignment was the high point for most students. There is also evidence of a cumulative impact of feedback:

One thing I've found certainly, I don't know if you have, that as it goes on I'm certainly feeling more comfortable about what I'm writing, because each

time I'm doing one I'm learning more, getting used to doing it, I'm certainly feeling a lot better about when I get the feedback, thinking oh yes, taking on board what was said last time and trying to get to the point. As time goes on I feel better about that. (Group Interview #3:RG)

And how it is used to good effect; *Feedback from staff is positive, because you think I've done well but I can improve* (Group Interview #3:GF). And feedback is much more than just the mark:

Managing projects, the last one, it was brilliant, probably the best feedback I've had...the word 'excellent'...that was the best feedback I've had so far...(Individual Interview #2:PM)

One final point illustrated very clearly by the data is the importance and drama of the assessment process. First there are the mixed feelings on the point of submission of work:

Now that I have submitted my assignments I feel wonderful. My only worry is will I pass?!

I tend to put these thoughts out of my mind and wait until I hear.

So 'FINGERS CROSSED' 40% pass. (Log:AJ)

Well it's gone by courier today. Too late to do anything now. Feel sick!!!  
How long do we have to wait? (Log:LW)

And then the genuine surprise at the actual mark:

Wow, got results back - 85% in both and the comments are very encouraging. I cannot believe I did so well - I was never sure if I had written them correctly!!

I have to say I am particularly proud of myself...but hey I did it!!!

I am astounded that I have got such a high mark. I keep reading my comment sheets over and over. This has certainly given me the 'umph' to carry on....(Log:AJ)

## Theme 3: The Fragile Identity

This is the first of the second pair of themes that provide the focus on the individual rather than the wider social and physical context within which that individual learns. On this negative side of identity there are four categories:

- 3.1 Limitations;
- 3.2 Demotivation;
- 3.3 Reference Points; and
- 3.4 Teaching Styles.

### 3.1 Limitations

Personal anxieties include concerns about ability '*am I good enough?*' (Individual Interview #1:MB) but for others it is not so much ability that is in doubt, just '*the logistics of fitting it in.*' (Individual Interview #1:AJ) Many of the anxieties were expressed by the students in the cohort prior to starting the course; the worry and uncertainty about returning to study, the lack of capability, not having the skills, knowledge and other resources to succeed or simply getting things wrong. Lists of concerns about lack of ability, experience and confidence emerge from the data. These are both concrete and specific such as the lack of academic skills, as well as abstractions such as feelings of vulnerability. These limitations induce particular feelings and impact upon the students' emotional experience and state of mind throughout the learning process. This can be seen to form a cycle of failure - I had a poor experience at school, so whatever else I might have achieved in life, my self esteem as a learner is low; so when I return to education I do not expect to perform well.

This category includes a range of codes relating to anxieties. These anxieties appear to reflect negative expectations of what is going to happen:

Dreading tomorrow, the word 'presentation' was mentioned - I will not do one, I absolutely hate being the centre of attention and although I have done a few presentations I just HATE THEM!!!! (Personal Log:AJ)

A related group of codes are concerned with lows. Lows are occurrences of negative feelings reflected upon as and when they happen such as:

I didn't want to go to Sheffield, I felt sick and up set. I felt like phoning work and saying 'I am not going to Sheffield' . (Log:CS)

Morning, tired and fed-up. Hate the course. Why are you doing this to yourself? PUB! PUB! PUB! (Log:RW)

Such low points might be fleeting reactions but they can also develop into more significant frustrations which can, in turn, soon result in anger:

I am really sick of all the work, I just wish it was all finished. I feel I have put so much time and effort into it. (Log:CS)

My first effort of typing something formal was one Saturday spent at our caravan in the Dales - three hours, three hundred words only, a lap top nearly airborne - a damn good job there was a rugby international on and beer in the fridge. (Log:SJ)

Anxieties and low points seem often to be the result of perceived limitations. Students express all manner of personal limitations such as not being able to meet deadlines (Reflection #2:MH), weakness in writing skills; *'I now had to write in 'proper' English, using commas, full stops and capital letters where they were meant to go.'* (Reflection #2:LW), *'my English and spelling'* (Reflection #2:CS), being assessed *'what we are expected to produce made me sick. I was amazed at how hard it was going to be to study'* (Reflection #2:RW). As well as a range of other anxieties about presentations, age, having enough experience, meeting the criteria, fear of failure, and so on, frequently expressed within the data. These limitations border on paranoia such as the following interview extract where the student feels personally to blame for not learning:

I've not learnt anything yet because all I'm doing is writing what I've done, but I do feel that it's my fault that I'm not learning anything, and if I did research that I would develop more (Group Interview #2:MB),

Another common anxiety appears to be knowing when to draw a line under an assessment submission:

Once you've done it and bound and in the post, you almost want to take it back out of the envelope and start doing it again. It's difficult, once you've got into it to say 'that is the end now'. (Group Interview #3:TW)

There is the understandable and common fear of the unknown; *apprehensive about University and needed reassurance that I would be OK.* (Individual Interview #1:SG); lack of confidence:

I needed to remember the learning from yesterday and actively encourage all members to participate. It was apparent from early on in the session that everyone was looking to me to guide them. At first I was uncomfortable with this as I didn't want to be perceived as 'taking over' but during the discussions it was quite clear that this was not the case and that they

regarded me as the natural leader as I had the most knowledge, experience and confidence, how little they know! (Reflection #1:LW),

An important emphasis is placed on group work within the module workshops. This is considered important in generating the cohort experience as well as being an opportunity for students to learn from one another. But it also carries a degree of risk, especially at the early stages of the course. Students can, for example, be intimidated by each other in terms of their own perceived lack of experience:

In our group we had two very strong leaders David and Paul; Michael was also a strong individual. They all had a lot of knowledge and experience in facilities management and each has been in their work positions for quite some time. There were times when I felt totally out of it as I only have basic knowledge of the subject. The other group members must have noticed this as I sat back most of the time and listened to their conversations etc. (Reflection #1:CS)

In group discussion leaders do emerge but sometimes this can result in feelings of inferiority in less forthright members of the group:

This 'domination' of the forum made me feel quite insecure and doubtful of my own opinions, which meant I was more inclined to discuss matters within the confines of the small group or keep them to myself as I felt I was not in a confident position to have a open confrontation at this time. (Reflection #1:JB)

This may result in a reluctance to contribute and, at these early stages, students are understandably afraid of appearing foolish:

The first point that I found most startling is that when in the class room environment where I tended to withdraw into myself and was much more comfortable in letting other people do most of the talking, even if I did not agree with what they were saying. I felt during the workshop sessions intimidated, however I am not sure if I was intimidated by the people or their professional aptitude or merely scared of making a 'fool' of myself. Strangely enough though I did not have this problem within a social environment, although I was a little more reserved as I expect we all were initially. (Reflection #1:JB)

For these adult returners, it is no great surprise that one of the most common anxieties surrounds having been out of formal education:

Fear is what I felt that first day, having been out of education for over 25 years. I had put off completing the application form for the course until the last possible moment, hoping that by the time I sent it in the course would be full. (Reflection #2:LW)

I was nervous about how I would find returning to study, and especially how I would also juggle a full-time job! I was also apprehensive about how I would adapt in getting back into 'study mode'. (Reflection #2:CS)

it has been a long time since I have used my brain in an academic environment. (Reflection #1:HH)

These expressions of fear are far too common to be dismissed as artificial protestations of modesty and this sense of fear can be almost tangible:

Tuesday 30th

Scared!!!

Room full with fellow students. I decide to sit on my own near to the white board. I listened to a lot of the talk. Many of the people were describing themselves and what they did...What FM duties they do. How this course would affect them. I was rather quiet plus very unsure of myself. (log: RW)

### 3.2 Demotivation

This is the second category within *the fragile identity* theme. I have already noted how demotivated emotional states (low points) can be triggered by specific events or frustrations. There is also, within the data on demotivation/motivation, an instrumental dimension. This is behaviour, especially in relation to assessment, which is about responding by doing only what is necessary to achieve a pass. It can be summed up by this student, referring to that moment when the assignment is finally completed; '*Christ! Once I've got to the number of words, that's it mate it's off, I ain't going back to it.*' (Group Interview #3:MB)

Instrumentalism was a common theme in later individual interviews as students struggled with competing pressures. It is interesting that students seem to be conditioned to assume that instrumental behaviour is unacceptable. Note for example the way that Ray describes himself as 'Mr Average' (Individual Interview #2:RG) or Maria can't believe the mark she got when she knows she put in so little effort (see Chapter 4). On this, and a number of occasions, putting in less than one hundred per cent, results in feelings of guilt where students have been conditioned not to behave instrumentally. Such conditioning may come from one of the *reference points* which is the next category to be considered.

Although students set out with high expectations of themselves, a more instrumental approach sometimes arose as a result of pressure of work '*my heart was not in it any*

*more as results plummeted and pass marks were only just obtained'* (Reflection #2:MH). For others the lack of penalties for late submission was an issue (Reflection #2:CS), illness led to demotivation *'to be quite honest I couldn't get myself off of the settee, never mind getting myself in front of the computer'* (Interview #2:AD).

Paradoxically, the very flexibility of the course can also be a source of demotivation. This comment from a first individual interview is in response to the open access policy on admission to the course which has no formal academic qualification pre-requisites *'I did feel that if you are saying that anyone can do the Certificate this does rather devalue it'*. (Interview #1:MP)

Finally, this student suffered a period of low levels of motivation linked to ill health:

I was off work for a month after the last workshop, nothing to do with the workshop, I was off with depression, so I couldn't get myself up at all then and I find it really difficult to motivate myself and I feel its because I'm not exactly learning anything. (Individual Interview #2:AD)

### 3.3 Reference Points

Students entering higher education will have very different points of reference against which to measure their expectations. For some this will be National Vocational Qualifications. In one incident reported in a reflective report, a student clearly thought he had touched a nerve with my own, in his view, somewhat arrogant rebuttal of the NVQ style approach to portfolios. This does serve to illustrate how we (albeit unwittingly) jealously guard academic status. The incident also demonstrates the importance of such *reference points* to the students.

For many of the students though, secondary school is the main point of reference in terms of educational/learning experiences. Of course for many this is actually negative. Past experience distorts expectations and magnifies anxiety. Some students recognise that their very presence on the course is a direct consequence of poor performance at school. They are somehow in deficit and in need of remedial treatment. In this way school is, for many, one of the sources of self doubt and low self-esteem emerging from the data. This is invariably invoked through negative language. Language such as 'could do better', 'dunce', 'teacher' and most commonly 'homework' are clearly grounded in the school experience:

Sending out mails to all my course **mates**, to see how they are doing. I've got what I want to put down for unit 1A. But I'm scared. I may put down how, why it felt at the course. Would the **teacher** understand? (Log:RW)

We have to write an **essay** about our feelings during the workshop. 'Is that right?' I asked myself. 'An essay! I haven't written an essay since **Miss Brocklebank** asked me and the others in **class 4A** at **St. Hugh's High School** to write about what we did during our **summer holidays**. And that was in 1969!' (Reflection #1:SG) (The emphasis is mine)

This student identified poor performance at school as a legacy that still hung over him:

Education at school - thought that might be questioned and highlighted that doing a job that is demanding but felt concerned about school grades.  
(Individual Interview #1:MH)

Many students benchmark against other previous negative experiences of education:

This was my second time in a University environment, the first being a day release course at Bradford University to take a HNC certificate in Electrical Engineering which I dropped out of after three months. The reason being made to feel like an outsider after coming into the course from Technical college and a different way of learning, sitting in a class and taking notes while a lecturer talks. (Reflection #2:GF)

### 3.4 Teaching Styles

Although the course seeks to cater for a range of requirements, teaching styles do tend to favour a student centred pedagogy. Not all students feel well served by this. Although in a minority, there are students who clearly have a preference for lectures and a more tutor centred approach. That some students experienced difficulties in making adjustments, may reflect their own educational backgrounds.

At its extreme, the emphasis on more learner centred approaches might be seen as the imposition of a particular pedagogy and this could be yet another manifestation of *arcane academia*. A dislike of such approaches among a significant minority of students can contribute to a negative workshop experience. Liz is a good example of this as her narrative in Chapter 4 demonstrates. There is a tension here in the data because, as a category, *teaching style* could just have easily featured as part of the *supportive context* for students who actually prefer the student centred approach.

The students who are less than comfortable, report on their own tendencies to keep a low profile during workshops, especially in the context of group work. This arises partly out of a sense of discomfort about their own lack of knowledge, experience and confidence and in such situations the student centred teaching style carries a high risk

of personal exposure, and can be quite threatening. Whilst outgoing types such as Ray appear to thrive, the less overtly confident like Liz will tend to suffer. Even David keeps a low profile and hopes no one will notice he has not presented. There is a tension between the assumption of the value and justification in using a range of teaching styles, and the evidence that some of these styles can be quite threatening for some students. It is worth noting that the critical opinions on teaching styles were most likely to be expressed in writing and in private, through logs and reflections rather than publicly in interviews:

The group work was very difficult in the beginning, with each individual having a different background experience in Facilities. (Reflection #1:MH)

The discussion became very heated and certain members of the group became very vocal and at certain times aggressive. This had an adverse effect on some members of the group and led to some bad feeling towards some members of the group. (Reflection #1:LW)

Responses to questions on teaching styles in interviews tended to be more positive:

Ray: You are facilitating our learning aren't you? We need to go along and learn for ourselves. (Group Interview #3:RG)

It is also worth noting that many annoying aspects of group working lead to lows that are also part of the fragility of the self. These lows include disappointment, tiredness, unhappiness, the input of time and effort, annoyance as well as being fed up. Teaching that is deemed to lack relevance becomes a demotivating force. This in turn can lead to the questioning of the value of the course and is perhaps linked to a more instrumental approach to learning which discourages students from doing more than the bare minimum required to achieve a pass.

The significant point from the data is that different students will have different preferences. Some students simply dislike group work:

The Group work I didn't enjoy, this may have been because I am not at ease working in a Group, but I also felt that the Group work often dominated the programme, often leading to discussion at the end of a session being very rushed, with people not wanting to participate as they were losing interest after a long day or wanting to start their journey home. (Reflection #2:LS)

I also find it hard to join in with group activity work, I tend to sit back, listen and take everything in, as I am not a leader: I am more of an observer / reflector (Reflection #1:CS)

Others have fixed expectations of how they will be taught:

During the two day pre-workshop I began to think it sounds really interesting this. It's different from what I expected in terms of I expected that it would be much more sort of O'level type. Because it's an undergraduate certificate, I expected that it would [be more like] O'level: here is the information, go away and learn it and add your thoughts to it. (Interview #2:JW)

Students were surprised when such expectations were challenged by a different reality:

When I realised that we were going to be given a certain amount of information then go away and do what you will with it, here are some guide lines but it is open to interpretation, given to your thoughts etc, I was really quite surprised but I think I was excited at that point by thinking I'm really going to have go find out a lot more about this it's not just about them giving me information and me saying yes or no. So I went away from that workshop feeling really excited...when I got home I was on an absolute high, 'oh this is fantastic'...Considering that we first thought we were going to be spoon fed it has all completely changed now where I enjoy the 'well lets think about this in lots of different ways' element. (Individual Interview #2:JW)

This last quote does also illustrate the sense of excitement generated by the unexpected challenge of a very different approach to teaching compared with anything previously experienced.

## Theme 4: The Capable Identity

This is the final theme. It is the positive side of the identity dimension. Categories within this theme are, to a large extent, mirror images of the *limitation* and *démotivation* categories within the previous theme. There are three categories within this theme:

- 4.1 Capacities;
- 4.2 Motivations; and
- 4.3 Improvement and Change.

There is a danger that by taking a critical approach to the data, the negative dimensions are overplayed. This theme provides a positive counter balance. The following two extracts, for example, show how some students recognise that managing against the odds despite all the distractions is in itself an achievement:

On a more personal note, I am particularly proud of myself in that I carried out this course, whilst working full time, running a home, being pregnant and subsequently having a baby and I still handed my assignments in on time! (Reflection #2:AJ)

Well here I am at the end of my two year course and after moving house twice including relocating to another part of the country, getting married and changing my job I can safely say whatever life throws at me now will be a breeze! (Reflection #2:HH)

### 4.1 Capacities

This is the flip side of limitations and it would be easy to exaggerate the negative conceptions of the self when some very positive aspects of self-image have emerged from the data. These students are able to draw on high levels of self esteem because they perceive themselves to be mature and of relatively high status as managers in their workplace. This enables them, for example, to see themselves in a relatively equal relationship with the tutors. It is only when they are faced with the unfamiliar in the context of education that they become less confident. There is plenty of evidence within the data of the qualities of adult learners. These are expressed in terms of maturity, experience, status and determination. One of the key paradoxes however is the way in which such positive self perceptions can actually hinder the learning process.

Not all students set out expressing lack of confidence. Some were quite the opposite:

I thought this is not a problem... I don't really see any (problems). You give generous timescales on the assignments. Compared to last year on the H & S Cert where there was less time. This was also equivalent to a first year of a degree so I know I can cope. (Individual Interview #1:MP)

And whilst a great deal has been made of initial anxieties, many students set out on this journey with a very positive outlook:

Looking forward to it. (Individual Interview #1:GF)

Fine I can't wait to get started. (Individual Interview #1:MP)

Students have been critical of group working but they are also positive about recognising the qualities of their peers. This next extract refers to a group work experience:

Ian had a lot of knowledge in his area of work, Health and Safety, but he is also new to facilities management so at times I think he felt the same way as I did. Paul was a very strong person, very experienced in his role at work. An excellent spokesperson, he volunteered to speak on our behalf; David did not volunteer and I thought this to be a bit strange as he is such a strong individual, although David did most of the writing. So we all had qualities to offer the group. (Reflection #1:CS)

Individually as well students do report positive development in terms of some of the academic skills:

A routine kind of developed around the assignment (the wife called it obsession!) - I worked on it most nights and at weekends - just an hour or three at a time. The words began to flow, not brilliantly, but I hoped that the right structure and information was there. (Log: SJ)

## **4.2 Motivations**

Motivations here are split into three areas, those that relate to the nature of the course itself, those concerned with specific credentials and finally those things that would be enhanced by the course. One of the factors attracting students to the course was the mode of assessment, specifically project and coursework rather than examinations. Academic level was also a key factor. There was very little available in the facilities management subject area at this introductory level and many felt or decided that postgraduate level of study would be too high for them at this point in time. Delivery mode was also important and a key feature was the short and intensive periods of attendance which meant limited absence from the work place, and also the two year duration which was seen as not 'too much of a commitment'. Location and reputation

were also mentioned, as was flexibility.

The need for credentials takes several forms. Some saw the course as an opportunity to gain the credibility of a formal qualification, or professional body recognition, to back up the experience they already had in terms of doing the job. For many the Certificate would provide the bridge to postgraduate study. Others simply suggested that it would enable them to 'prove' that they could do the job.

I have identified a third group of motivations as enhancement. This is expressed in terms of what students expected to get out of the course; such as increased self-confidence, the satisfaction of personal goals, career development and promotion and academic development. Other enhancements included the development of academic skills and the reinforcement of workplace practice. Networking was also seen as an important benefit and these students identified the course as *'an opportunity of meeting people from other organisations and having an insight into how they operate'*. (Individual Interview #1:AD)

Clearly one of the key motivators is desire to fill gaps in capability. Although I earlier noted examples of instrumental behaviour, these students do generally seem to be highly motivated and this is reinforced by the quality of determination to overcome difficulties. This is illustrated by the following extracts. The first, from a personal log, shows the positive impact of feedback on motivation and the second, from an individual interview, illustrates the quality of determination even when things are not going well:

I am astounded that I have got such a high mark. I keep reading my comment sheets over and over. This has certainly given me the 'umph' to carry on.... (Personal Log:AJ)

Phil: How do you feel about the prospect of completing, do you feel that is under threat because you have had this loss of motivation?

Adrian: No, I won't let myself not complete, I will not let myself not complete so I will complete. (Individual Interview #2:AD)

Students are motivated by a range of drivers. These are some of the positive motivations identified by students at their pre-induction interviews:

The course also seemed an ideal 'bridging course' onto the postgraduate programme. (Individual Interview #1:DC)

Excited and thought the course was appealing as there were no examinations involved. (Individual Interview #1:RW)

a feeling that here was an opportunity to put my experience into something that proves [I] can do the job. (Individual Interview #1:MH)

Excited and felt opportunity to progress. (Individual Interview #1:GF)

Mixed feelings - YES I'm on the course but also oh no more work. But also relief - chance to get some recognition (Individual Interview #1:MH)

Quite excited and looking forward to starting next week. (Individual Interview #1:DC)

### 4.3 Improvement and Change

This final category serves as a summary of the focus in the data on the positive outcomes resulting from engagement with the course. Much of the data here come from final reflections where students are looking back over the whole two year experience and trying to assess how they have changed as a result.

This is a student working in a group suddenly recognising positive capabilities:

I took a step back and understood why they were doing this, but I wanted to yell at them to leave us alone. Each group put forward what they wanted from us. Then it struck me we had the POWER!!

The whole group came to realise that the power for the whole department rested in our hands.

**It was like a light was lit.** We ended the unit in a team. (Log:RW) (my emphasis)

Moments like this are not uncommon. This category includes all those codes which are measures of progress; doing better, learning, increasing self-belief and self-knowledge, progressing academically. This is well summed up in the code 'minor triumph' which contains the essence of making small, but significant, steps forward. This is well illustrated by Liz, for example, when she reflects back on her performance in the first group exercise and just how much it meant to her that she was able to take responsibility for writing the mission statement.

This category includes changes in personal perception - the way the students see the world, change in practice - what they do in the work place and personal development - how they have changed as individuals. The myriad changes reported by the students in the data are illustrated in the following extracts which speak for themselves:

First Richard:

I know I am developing my skills to learn and also in conversation saying stuff, everybody stops and looks at me strangely to say oh where did you hear that, and I say in this kind of paper and I think oh my god are they going to think I'm an egg head now...Overall I can see development within myself and when it came to October when I was ready to throw it in it was a very low point in my life and I thought what do I want to achieve for the future, is this course going to help me. It was a simple thing I got some paper and wrote down + and - I wouldn't have done this three years ago or even a year ago, it is something you read in the project management book, write all your + and - and that was when I realised...Even just doing basic tasks where I normally would just jump in, I take 5 minutes now have a checklist in my brain, you don't have to write it all down I just have this checklist that I follow down and tick off and let other people do the job which definitely over a year ago I wouldn't have allowed it.(Individual Interview #2:RW)

Then Michael:

When it comes to writing reports even if it is only at work and its only a brief it's just getting the structure right, start, middle and an end really which is why we are doing this, why do you want to do it and the end result. If you did this is what would happen, and I think I've got good at that...I tend to write how I talk, 'I was walking down the...' I do and even when people read my work they say you don't want to do that you put too many words in you write how you talk, how you would stand in a meeting and say, I am changing that slowly and I can see that now because I'll do something and I write it and think no I can change that, I change it round and it sounds better and I've probably used half the words and that's what I think is improving.(Individual Interview #2:MH)

And Paul:

You analyse things different, you look at things more in depth when you sometimes see how someone acts or relates to you, you look at that in a different way, and things like that and it makes you I suppose want to analyse different situations and look into them as to why they happened and things like that yes. (Individual Interview #2:PM)

The range and variety of personal development identified by the students in their final reflections is quite astounding. They comment on the sense of achievement on getting that first piece of coursework submitted (Reflection #2:HH), 'a greater understanding of Facilities Management and the role it plays in today's organisations, but more importantly the course has given a greater understanding of myself' (Reflection #2:LS),

improved confidence and improvements in the standard of work (Reflection #2:LW), developing as a person and achieving a life time's goal of obtaining a qualification (Reflection #2:RW). This was *'a proud moment and one of my most significant achievements of my adult life'* (Reflection #2:PM) *'a truly mind blowing experience'* (Reflection #1:AJ). What is remarkable about these extracts is the passion they reveal but also the extent of the learning which encompasses technical knowledge, generic vocational skills and, most surprising of all, the implications for personal life.

## Conclusions

This has been a difficult chapter to write, not least because of the volume of data generated by this cohort of students over the period from pre-induction interviews in October 2001 to March 2004 and the final submissions and individual interviews. However, by taking different approaches to the presentation of the data, a structure began to emerge with categories slowly coalescing into the four main themes considered above. These themes emerged from the data, they are not a priori or pre-determined and they reflect a very slow process of engagement with the data over a long period of time, a process that involved constant iteration between the data and the emerging themes.

I make a number of general observations about the student data presented in this chapter. First it draws on all 22 student voices. Clearly some of these voices are more prominent than others and the involvement of some of the students was more limited, for a variety of reasons and of course three of the students actually withdrew from the course at different stages. Despite this, the whole cohort is well represented in the data. Second, the data reflect all nine student data collection instruments. Four students were interviewed on three occasions, six on two occasions and three on one occasion; a total of 27 individual interviews. There were three group interviews with two students attending all three, eight students attending two and a further two attending one interview. As for written data, six students submitted logs covering the crucial induction period up to and including submission of the first assignment, and all students (other than those who withdrew) submitted personal reflections at the start and completion of the course; a total of 34 written submissions.

The second general observation on the data is that during the latter stages of the cohort study it became increasingly evident that the point of data saturation had been reached, where no new information was emerging. It was at this point that the decision

was made not to complete final interviews for all students but rather just focus on the chosen four exemplars featured in Chapter 4.

A third point about the data is their quality and colour. I have quoted extensively from the data to demonstrate this quality of 'thick description' of the student experience which is a significant part of what I set out to achieve. Furthermore there does appear to be a degree of consistency in the data both across individual sources and the different types of instrument used.

In summary then, this chapter provides an analysis of the data emerging from the 22 students engaged in the cohort study. It illustrates the relationships between this data and the broad field of study by looking at the categories emerging from the data and the broader themes emerging from the data, as well as the two cross cutting distinctions between the positive and the negative emotional experiences and the learning context and the identity of the individual student.

This chapter is the second of the three data chapters. The first, Chapter 4, looked at four exemplar students by way of simple narrative accounts using their own words. This chapter differs in that it looks at the whole data set from a thematic rather than narrative perspective. The third data chapter, Chapter 6, examines the data drawn from the tutor perspective. The three data chapters will then be drawn together within the final chapter, Chapter 7: Discussion and Conclusion.

# Chapter Six: The Tutor in the Data

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## Introduction

In Chapter 5 I examined the student experience. This chapter focuses on my own experience as tutor. There can be little doubt that learning is an emotional experience that can reach disturbing levels of intensity. Part of the rationale for investigating the emotional dimension of the student experience was to raise my own awareness, as a tutor, of the emotional intensity felt by the students. At the same time, I also wanted to examine the teaching side of this equation, exploring the emotional dimension of the relationships between learner and teacher. To facilitate direct comparison between the student and tutor experience I adopt the same framework as used to present the student data. This is set out in Figure 6.1.

This examination of the tutor experience from my own perspective is based on critical incidents (Tripp, 1993). Critical incidents were recorded in a log over the two years of the cohort study. The Critical Incident Log is reproduced in Appendix J: Critical Incident Log. The intention was to provide a second set of data capturing the tutor experience. I summarise the narrative of my critical incident log in a 'time line' in Figure 6.2: Critical Incident Log Summary. Very briefly the log starts at the beginning of my research at the point in the autumn of 2001 when cohort 2 was signed up to the Certificate in Facilities Management and covers the whole period of data collection up to March 2004 when the last of the students completed the course. The time line highlights some of the main incidents of this period, including a six month absence due to illness, followed by my return to full time working.

One of the features in the student data is the evidence of tensions resulting from the multiple identities of the mature adult learner variously as student, employee, partner, parent and so on. This tension of multiple identities is also experienced by the tutor as teacher but also as researcher, student, colleague and employee. The main focus in this chapter is on my tutor role although I do comment in the conclusions on the implications of these other roles.

## **The Critical Incident Log**

As well as technical memos about methodology and summaries of reading, the log records a series of critical incidents which relate largely to the process of supporting students and the development and delivery of the course. Within the positive/negative binary of my own experience I note what I have referred to as the 'Salzberger-Wittenburg moments' after Salzberger-Wittenburg et al (1983). These 'moments' are the major emotional critical incidents linked to important stages of the cohort experience from my perspective as tutor. Some of these are so emotionally charged as to be recalled as 'moving' experiences. These include, the realisation during the induction of the very first cohort of students on to the new Certificate in Facilities Management, that this was the culmination of so many years hard work in finally bringing the course to fruition. This is precisely the sort of moment Salzberger-Wittenburg and her colleagues describe.

This first 'moment' is book-ended by the last workshop, with this first student cohort, and their graduation some months later. There are several other highly charged emotional 'moments' during the two year period covered by the log, including the recognition that my research was providing very detailed and positive data on how the students were feeling, and a similar moment when I walked into my first workshop after my return to work. The negative feelings or 'pangs' are equally intense. These include anger over lack of funding (for the research project) and a number of incidents reporting a sense of loss and confusion.

The obvious common ground linking the tutor critical incident log and the student narratives is that both cover exactly the same time period and focus on the experience of the Certificate in Facilities Management. This is the same story told from two different perspectives. Both perspectives concentrate on 'feelings' and I, like the students have experienced a broad tension between the positive and negative feelings experienced. Whilst both students and tutor have different roles they share, in part, the same learning environment or context.

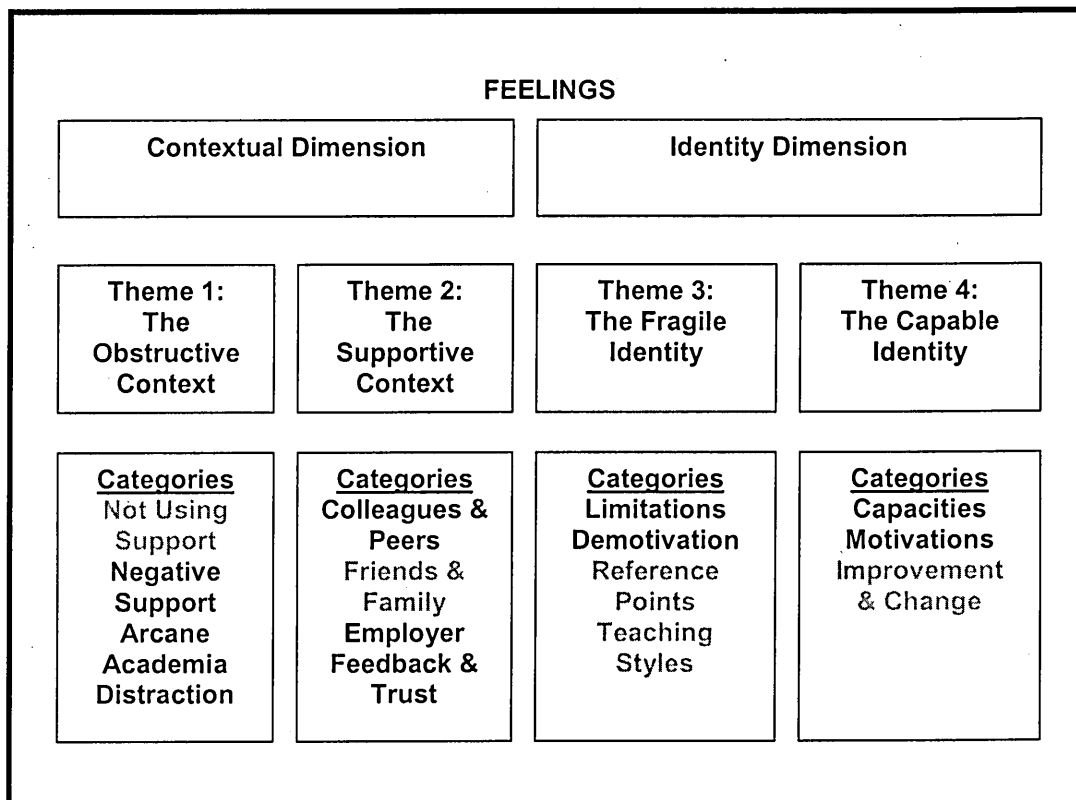


Figure 6.1: Framework for Tutor Data Presentation

Date	Para No. <sup>19</sup>	Event
20 July 2001	3	First Log Entry
30 August 2001	16	Submission of final assignment
23 October 2001	40	Evaluation Steering Group Meeting
23 October 2001	40	First Individual Interviews
19 February 2001	202	First day of cohort 2 unit 2 workshop
19 February 2001	202	First group interview for the evaluation
5 March 2002	234	NTFS application fails
5 March 2002	251	Approval of thesis proposal
19 March 2002	276	Funding for evaluation withheld
15 April 2002	291	Heart attack
9 May 2002	315	We agree to carry on with the study.
10 June 2001	378	Begin analysis of data
12 August 2002	400	First visit to the office
3 September 2002	458	Returned to work
18 September 2002	483	Last workshop for cohort 1
31 October 2002	562	Group Interview 3
5 November 2002	573	Day two of induction of cohort 3
6 November 2002	577	That Eureka Moment!
19 November 2002	629	First Meeting with new supervisor
9 January 2003	782	Writing well underway
13 January 2003	787	Low point about Corporate Review
28 January 2003	835	Accreditation of MBA in FM
18 March 2003	899	Preparation of Documentation
21 May 2003	924	Recognition of quality of data
23 June 2003	990	Degree Validation
18 August 2003	1187	Unexpected PL promotion opportunity
3 September 2003	1203	12 months to the day since return to work
13 November 2003	1388	Graduation of first cohort graduate
30 March 2004	1499	Completed first draft of thesis

**Figure 6.2: Critical Incident Log Summary**

<sup>19</sup> The paragraph numbers refer to the Critical Incident Log, reproduced as Appendix J

In narrative order the following extracts include the main affective highlights of my experience as a tutor over that two-year period.

Yesterday I went into the office for the first time since 11 April a critical incident if you like. Just breezed in as though nothing had happened and that's how it felt I had never been away. Had I done a good job on myself beforehand? Am I still in a state of denial? But it was OK and paves the way for a full return in September. (Critical Incident Log: 406)

Returned to work yesterday. Now this should have been an emotionally charged critical incident if ever there was one but no. It was really strange. Perhaps I was well prepared but it was strange because it seemed as though I had not been away at all. (Critical Incident Log: 459)

Final workshop Project with Cohort 1. Odd that I had not prepared myself. Re-entry to the office had been managed but this one crept up unawares. Understated but warm and welcoming seemed like a really significant event. Walking in yesterday, if I am prepared to admit it, was really quite emotional. But how nice to be back. (Critical Incident Log: 484)

Then it struck me today right at the end of the afternoon. That was it. Two years and we would never all meet again. They will surely now all complete successfully and some will go on to complete the degree but this group will never meet again like this. We said a few words about what it meant to us but it seemed woefully inadequate. I know I can never go back after experiencing this. Such a nice bunch and so much fun. I think this must rank as the best teaching experience to date. (Critical Incident Log: 489)

Also read through the positive side of the statements collected from MTI's [initially termed Mid Term Interviews, these are the second of the interviews undertaken with individual students] - stunning in terms of what we have achieved. Testament to the professionalism of the team but also quite moving when we recognise that this is my legacy, not only for these students - even though I am no longer in direct control but also for the team. Too many people have benefited from this in too big a way in too short a time for it to be insignificant. (Critical Incident Log: 897)

Spent an hour or so last night going through the collected data on paper to draw together material on the first of the categories, Arcane Academia. At one point it started to feel quite emotional. I had struggled for so long thinking about the limitations of the data - is it of any value? and now, as I look at it again in detail - it seems stunning in its colour and meaning - as though I am really getting to the heart of what the students are thinking and feeling - and - I have only just started!...Oh my God - this is working! (Critical Incident Log: 925 - 927)

## Theme 1: The Obstructive Context

In Chapter 5 I argued that much of the context of learning experienced by the adult learner has a negative or obstructive impact upon the learning process. The tutor of course is part of, and inhabits, this same environment and in this section I examine similarities in the ways in which this context impacts upon the tutor's experience in terms of three of the four categories; *arcane academia*, *negative support* and *distraction*. The fourth category, *not using support* only applies to the student experience.

### 1.1 Arcane Academia

*Arcane academia* as a category looms large within the critical incident log and the recorded incidents fall into two distinct types. The first set of incidents is very similar to the aspects of *arcane academia* identified in Chapter 5 that impinge upon the student experience. The second set of incidents reflects my own position as a part of the academic institution. The common thread within the first set of incidents is the mismatch between the Certificate in Facilities Management and standard institutional patterns of curriculum design and delivery:

During the [group interview] someone (I think it was David) asked what was happening with mentors. I misunderstood at first and explained that we had discussed the issue and decided that this would be left up to individual students. It then became apparent that this was nothing to do with us but it seems that Student Services have written to all returning students asking them if they would be prepared to mentor a new student on the same course. A number of points arise;

1. It makes us look foolish that we don't know what other parts of the University are doing.
2. Why did they not let us know they were doing it?
3. And most important it is another illustration of how the course does not fit standard patterns and the institution is unable to get their heads around a course which does not fit. (Critical Incident Log: 568)

This second incident is a further example of lack of differentiation but also illustrates the ease with which external controls can be subverted:

The School wants to raise all course fees by 4% this year. We contacted [the School Manager] to say that this was not appropriate for Cert FM. A couple of days later - faites accomplis! Notification by memo of across the board increases. However no worries because we just ignore it. (Critical Incident Log: 686)

There are many recorded incidents of problems relating to access to facilities for these students. This challenges the assumption that all courses work to standard timetables:

Blackboard will be shut down for maintenance over Christmas just when our students will be wanting to work on their assignments. It will be insecure for a period after the Christmas close down. We get so little notice. If you don't fit the standard course mould, people don't seem to understand. (Critical Incident Log: 689)

Other incidents include the closure of the library at 5.00pm outside standard semester dates (Critical Incident Log: 982) and the occasion when (despite booking) we could not get access to a computer suite that was 'closed for the vacation'. (Critical Incident Log: 986)

These data are interpreted as evidence supporting the view that the course, which does not fit normal patterns of delivery, support and funding, is overlooked because it is different and inconvenient. This has a certain appeal to me and my own *ideology critique* positionality. It conjures a fine image of beleaguered students and their tutors standing shoulder to shoulder in defiance against the institution. But there are alternative explanations. An examination of the second set of incidents under this *arcane academia* heading suggests another interpretation. These incidents are those occasions where I as tutor stand accused of acting as gatekeeper to the elite academic 'community of practice' through language and the taken for granted rules and procedures which are unfamiliar, and even threatening, to the students. On these occasions I become a part of the academic community, contributing to its obscurity through its language and rules.

There is clearly a tension here between my roles as advocate for students and for the course, defending both against the institution, on the one hand and, at the same time, being a component part of that institution. *Arcane academia* is a significant category within both the student and the tutor data but it is experienced in very different ways by the students and the tutor. It also appears to have rather different impacts.

This tension can be illustrated by a number of incidents such as the occasions when I found my enthusiasm for intellectual playfulness running ahead of my desire to communicate in plain English.

Some weeks ago I thought of a [thesis] working title which went something like 'The symbiosis of andragogy: supporting adult returners in the hostile environment of arcane academia'. I was really impressed. I told Laura about it. She was disgusted and pulled a face like sucking a lemon. How

dare I? I purport to challenge the obscurity of academic language and procedures. Enough said! (Critical Incident Log: 1064)

In another revealing incident we had just completed the revalidation of the course which included rewriting all the unit outlines, including detailed assessment criteria. These were written to accord with standard university requirements. Yet when it came to preparing for the delivery of the first of the new units we were forced to rewrite the criteria to make them clear to the students. (*Critical Incident Log: 1369*)

There are many recorded incidents concerning the interface between myself as tutor and the students and the extent to which we take aspects of our academic environment for granted. This includes marking schemes:

During the day I fed back on unit 1 to Liz and Maria. Interesting Liz got 75% for both pieces but was clearly unhappy. It transpired that she did not have a clue about what standard this represented. Her response was I am glad I have passed but is this a good mark? At the time she received it she had actually been disappointed! (Critical Incident Log: 206)

and

I am marking the Unit Four; Managing People assignments whilst the students are here. I looked at Lucia's today and just commented to her how much I had enjoyed reading it. Apparently after I had gone she commented to Laura that she felt up in the air because she hadn't got a clue how she had performed. (Critical Incident Log: 882)

Students pick up on the fact that certain aspects of coursework submission procedures are heavily rule bound but this causes unnecessary anxiety because they are unable to make judgements about which rules are important:

Alison put her bibliography in the wrong place when binding her project for submission. Oooops! So what. She got 72% but she was distraught [at the time] because she thought she would lose marks. (Critical Incident Log: 525)

Thus *arcane academia* increasingly became a significant category within my research. It seemed to offer all sorts of explanations for, among other things, the reasons for students being reluctant to take up support from tutors. So important was this as a theme that I decided to use the third group interview to try to validate its significance. Even though the students seemed to reject the idea, I remained reluctant to let go:

Group Interview three. Good turn out and went OK in terms of trying to validate themes. It seems the students agree with much of my interpretation but do not seem to accept the issue of *arcane academia*. Perhaps I chose the wrong example to experiment with (Unit 4 Module

## 1.2 Negative Support

This is a second common category that appears in both tutor and student data within *the obstructive context* theme. The principal sources of negative support experienced by the tutor are colleagues and the employer. As with the student data this category reflects a balance between positive and negative support involving the same sources. For example, there are many incidents where I complain about the lack of support received from colleagues, but those same colleagues are praised elsewhere in the log for providing a high level of support in my absence. These negative occurrences usually appear as very short lived reactions and their frequent appearances within the critical incident log would suggest they serve a cathartic function as a sort of safety valve, allowing me to let off steam without causing any unnecessary offence. To that extent they may have no analytical significance within *the obstructive context*, but much greater importance for *the fragile identity* theme considered later.

There are many references within the log to occasions where the university appeared to be obstructive, or at best, less than helpful. One aspect of this was the slow response times to needs such as staffing. One of the problems of working with a small team arises because of staff turnover and the need to find suitable replacements as quickly as possible. The loss of key staff members impinges on the ability of the team to deliver the course:

Another problem: Angela, Jane's replacement will not start until after Christmas, putting Jane under pressure with a knock on effect on Ron. (Critical Incident Log: 46)

In recognition of the unique characteristics of the course and its importance as a model for delivery and support, the school had agreed to fund a large scale evaluation project to be run by three of the key tutors; myself, Laura and Jane. Sadly circumstances changed and the promised funding failed to materialise:

Laura, Jane and I met to discuss the next phase of the evaluation project in terms of what we need to do to put in place the instruments around the first workshop next month. But we all feel angry and frustrated about the school's continued delay in providing the funding. (Critical Incident Log: 109)

As well as problems at the institutional level, there are also a number of critical incidents that relate to frustrations about the level of commitment shown by colleagues:

But I feel frustrated with Jane and Laura about the way they are handling this. I have put myself out to 'allow' them to be involved and although their contributions are invaluable it feels as though they have a problem with just getting on with it. My irritation must be apparent! Ultimatum to Sheila give us the money or we abandon the evaluation! I don't think this is entirely unfair although it feels a bit manipulative. If this is not sorted I will end up on my own. (Critical Incident Log: 109)

I would like the other tutors to do the same but they seem reluctant why? (Critical Incident Log: 133)

Jane and Laura called yesterday. Disappointing. They were late and left early and did not seem to demonstrate any enthusiasm whatsoever for the critical incident log which seems to have failed! (Critical Incident Log: 316)

I also report in the log what I saw at the time as a lack of professionalism:

Seems like Jane and me are tuned in at least, don't know about the rest! Meeting started about 10 minutes late. Why is it so difficult just to get 5 people round a table at the same time? (Critical Incident Log: 268)

These are harsh judgements and it was not long before I started to recognise that the other members of the team had probably suffered even more from the loss of funding for the research project:

The evaluation is effectively dead. Jane & Laura dealing manfully (sic) with this situation but I really cannot expect them to show a high level of commitment now. (Critical Incident Log: 276)

One of the issues with colleagues is that we all have our own concerns and agendas and perhaps our expectations of team working are unrealistically high:

This week is unit writing for the degree, but how do I get the others motivated? Apart from Laura who has made a real effort, why does everyone make such hard work of it? We have 15 modules to write. I am taking more than half; no one else has more than 2 so why should I spend all my time on this when I can't get anyone else interested. (Critical Incident Log: 900)

There is also an issue about the difference between my own agenda and that of the business unit (FMGC) and what determines success within the course for me does not necessarily accord with the wider business need:

Conversation with Sheila towards the end of the day. She is financial planning for the next year. How many students can we expect? Lots but let's have some resources to support them - this is too much to expect. Why do I bother? (Critical Incident Log: 902)

Another aspect of *negative support* covered extensively in the critical incident log concerns poor communication. My return to work after illness was carefully managed to avoid too much pressure or stress and I was left much to my own devices. This was helpful in supporting my rehabilitation but there were times when I felt I was being left out of the communication loop:

Another one of those infuriating situations. I went in [to the office] especially for a 10.30 meeting which was called in the first place without any consultation with me, only to find it had been summarily cancelled because something else had come up. Nobody bothered to tell me. I think the phrase is incandescent with rage. (Critical Incident Log: 518)

A series of minor incidents perhaps and this may amount to paranoia on my part. There was the request from 'Landmark' [the University's alumni journal] and my offer to pen something on the Cert FM and the completion of the first Cert FM cohort. Only trying to be helpful but it turns out that there has already been a correspondence by e mail on the subject and I was not copied in. Since my illness I feel generally marginalised and on the fringe of most of what is happening in [the Facilities Management Graduate Centre]. Another example of how I feel when Laura came back from doing a presentation at Leeds General Hospital - I really felt as though I should have been involved. I know this is done for my benefit and it is for the best but that does not make it any easier to bear. (Critical Incident Log: 518)

### 1.3 Distraction

This is the third common category that impacts upon the tutor data and illness is a major distraction. Illness is an unfortunate but unavoidable occurrence and one that clearly had a major impact. However one of the key paradoxes of my own experience over the two years of this study is that being ill did enable me to concentrate more of my resources on research. This is not to suggest that illness was a positive experience because, as I note later under *the fragile identity* theme, this did have a profound impact upon my own sense of identity and self esteem. Illness impacted upon my role as a tutor and led directly to feelings of frustration (Critical Incident Log: 293) anger (299) and bitterness (301).

Another aspect of distraction would have some resonance with the workplace experience of many of the students. This is the distraction of constant uncertainty brought about by organisational change, specifically a major organisational review:

Increasingly depressed. Pathetic! Not about the Doctorate but about the prospect of the Corporate Review and the implications for FMGC. Can we survive? It feels as though this marks the end of 12 years struggle, and, as I work towards the validation of a degree in FM, the culmination of everything, is it worth it when there is no guarantee that it will be allowed to go ahead? I feel as though I am too old and too tired to fight these battles any more. (Critical Incident Log: 788)

Tensions are running high in the office and this is a time of great uncertainty and also great opportunity which is reflected in the high levels of energy - not all I suspect creatively spent. (Critical Incident Log: 1383)

Closely linked to this is the distraction of unwanted promotion opportunities that cannot be ignored:

I come back to find an unexpected PL [Principal Lecturer post] offer which has really unsettled me. I think I know what to do but the consequences of another rejection are almost too awful to contemplate. At the same time I know that I cannot afford not to apply. (Critical Incident Log: 1188)

Other distractions recorded include the lack of continuity imposed by holidays (930) and (1188), although the extent to which these provide refreshment and a break is also noted.

## Theme 2: The Supportive Context

As is the case with the student data there is a tendency to focus on the negative dimension and place less emphasis on those parts of the experience that are much more positive. Within this theme three of the four categories are well represented: *colleagues and peers*; *the employer* and *trust and feedback*. The only category not to be represented is *family and friends*. This is not to suggest that family and friends are unimportant, simply that I made a conscious decision to exclude this from my own log.

### 2.1 Colleagues and Peers

Within the first theme I reflected back on what were sometimes instant and quite unfair judgements about colleagues. These are balanced within this second theme by a longer and more considered view:

Day 1 of the Managing People unit. I owe Laura an apology. She has put in so much work on this unit and it seems to have paid off. A good day which seemed to draw out a lot of engagement on the part of the students.  
(Critical Incident Log: 140)

Full marks to Laura and Ron who just seem to be able to take over with such enthusiasm. Everything just seemed to fall into place while [I] sat back and enjoyed [it].  
(Critical Incident Log: 200)

At the beginning of my illness there was some doubt as to whether I would be able to carry on with my research. Above all it was the support of colleagues that allowed it to continue:

We carry on. The next [group interview] should go ahead as planned on 10/11 June and I need to draft some questions for this. (Critical Incident Log: 318)

It is agreed that we should carry on with the evaluation as planned although I will have to take a back seat. I can hardly be going in to Sheffield to see students if I am 'on the sick'. There are at least a couple of problems here from my perspective:

1. Is this putting too much pressure on Laura and Jane?
2. I more or less lose any contact with the students, which seriously damages my research on the nature of the relationship between tutor and student. (Critical Incident Log: 320-323)

Despite the fact that my unexpected absence had placed my colleagues under a lot of pressure, I could occasionally see through my own self-obsession and recognise just how much they were doing to keep things going:

Had lunch with Ron and Laura. They have clearly done a lot of work preparing the Project unit for 17/18 September. They wanted me to look at the programme and pre course-reading etc. All of which was fine they have some great ideas and I told them so. I find it difficult to accept that for whatever reason they look up to me and value my opinion or even just my approval. (Critical Incident Log: 408)

What is obvious is how everyone has rallied around to fill in during my absence because everything seems to have gone on smoothly certainly as far as the Certificate is concerned. (Critical Incident Log: 463)

There is much in the log, post illness about the paradox of role confusion:

The last two weeks I have experienced a lot of confusion about what my role now is. But I am so grateful that things have been looked after in my absence and the take-over is what I really wanted and it has worked so well. (Critical Incident Log: 486)

## **2.2 Employer**

The employer, or at least in disembodied institutional form 'The University', has come in for a great deal of criticism elsewhere within the critical incident log but it needs to be noted that they did provide a good deal of support during and after my illness:

Exactly two calendar months so perhaps it is significant that I finally, today, get a visit from HR. It was useful to put down some markers and make clear my determination not to continue to be taken for a ride. How could they disagree! So, no pressure. I come back when I am ready and I do what I want to do but all with their support and blessing. (Critical Incident Log: 334)

The return is tinged with a sense of frustration but also recognition that the employer is doing what it can to support me:

It is frustrating not to be able to jump straight in full time but if this is what those who are to look after me want to see, so be it. I don't think I am in a position to argue. Anyway it feels good to be back and I feel relaxed and able to concentrate on doing a few things well. (Critical Incident Log: 461)

## 2.3 Trust and Feedback

Incidents within the *trust and feedback* category relate to my student role (see below) but also to my role as tutor. Positive feedback about the course enhances motivations and augments the positive dimensions of identity. The key locus of trust in my tutor role is within the classroom as facilitator. The problems associated with the shift to student centred learning have been highlighted within the literature review and this is a recurring concern within my critical incident log. There are references to the challenge of undertaking new and varied roles and how this often leads to getting outside my 'comfort zone'. This phenomenon had already attracted the attention of students as was illustrated by comments on lack of FM expertise made in group interviews (see Chapter 5).

The following extract from the critical incident log is typical of my own musings on the role of the facilitator:

How does this work in practice. What we do, (and think of the angst we have experienced about the loss of expert knowledge) is go into the classroom stripped bare of the outer protective shell of expert knowledge. We have to do this with mature students because they have more expert knowledge and we eventually will be found out. We call this facilitation and this is linked theoretically to the concept of andragogy. Although this is well established it is not uncontroversial. This is about the need to create a micro culture that may indeed counter structures and processes within the wider context. (Critical Incident Log)

This relinquishment of the role of expert is a risk. Taking this risk requires trust. This is one of the central concerns of my research and is the key to creating a symbiotic relationship between student and tutor. In Chapter 5 I noted the link between feedback and trust and motivations/demotivation within the student data. This is also evident within my own, tutor data. There are for example occasions when negative feedback led me to examine my commitment leading, on occasion, to instrumental behaviour.

However, just like the students, tutors thrive on positive feedback and need constant reinforcement from reliable sources that things are going well. One important occasion was during the independent review of the course undertaken by a body representing students' employers:

Rewardingly there is still much positive feedback emerging from the students who will meet [the reviewer] at the next workshop. A good example is George who perceives that his participation on the course resulted in success in getting a new job. (Critical Incident Log: 70)

We also, as a course team, drew valuable feedback about the course from the student reflective reports attached to some of the units:

I am marking the submissions from cohort 2 for unit 1. What stunningly honest and revealing accounts! It was never designed in this way but they are excellent vehicles for feedback. Should these be incorporated into the research project? (Critical Incident Log: 142)<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> These reflections were incorporated into my research instrumentation as Reports 1 and 6

### Theme 3: The Fragile Identity

The second pair of themes is concerned with the individual dimension of identity and here again there is a balance between the positive and the negative. With reference to the tutor data, this is examined first through *the fragile identity* and then *the capable identity*. Before this I consider what is meant by identity in the tutor context.

This first passage taken from the critical incident log is about the blurring of identity:

Just as the evaluation and the research project is seen as collaboration between the students and their tutors, so the course itself is a collaboration an explicit feature of which is that the students bring their own experience which becomes the focus of content. Once accepted, the roles of teacher and learner become blurred. So when teacher becomes learner they are subject to the same types of emotional experience which serve to block and to facilitate learning. So there is a mirror image here. (Critical Incident Log: 150)

The idea of the need for mutual trust between tutors and students seemed to emerge from the data. I had been reflecting on what our pedagogy was all about and, in particular, the role of tutor as facilitator and the relinquishment of status as guardian of expert knowledge. This is followed, by pure coincidence, by the recognition of the importance of trust for students:

What are we trying to do? Think of cohort 3. We pose as facilitators. We admit that the students have more knowledge and our role is to help and support their learning. You have to be brave to concede the status of expert and this is only possible when there is mutual trust between the tutor and student. This cannot happen instantly but the model provides some conception of where you think you would like to go in order to help shape your approach. (Critical Incident Log: 625)

Laura came back from interviews with Paul and Lucia. Both had said, among other things, that they had experienced a reluctance to contact tutors for help because of a fear of showing ignorance. Now this would be totally insignificant and unsurprising was it not for the fact that that we had suspected this to be the case. So much so that we had raised this on more than one occasion in group sessions. I need to check the transcripts but my recollection is that the responses included 'we don't have a problem contacting you, we are mature experienced professionals, we prefer to use each other as a resource, and you do not necessarily know enough about FM etc'. In other words 'we are not prepared to admit our fragility in front of our peers.' (Critical Incident Log: 652)

There are numerous critical incidents, within the critical incident log, hinting at my own fragilities as both learner and tutor. Some of these are remarkably similar to

experiences reported by students. Identity reflects multiple roles. For the students these roles include: employee/manager/student/partner/parent. The roles identified within my own log are: employee/researcher/student/tutor. These roles are sometimes blurred and there is also a degree of blurring across the tutor/student roles. What is more, each role forms an important part of the learning context of the other and, as such, are inextricably bound together.

### 3.1 Limitations

One of the most important categories within this theme; *limitations* has already been defined in the context of the student data largely in terms of data coded under 'anxiety' and 'lows'. These appear to be equally significant for the tutor. Like the students I, as an individual, am at the centre of my own learning experiences. Also, like the students I exhibit fragile as well as positive qualities. This fragile self often emerges through what, taken by themselves, appear to be minor incidents but these can have an impact on self-esteem, increasing feelings of lack of purpose and role confusion.

One of the consequences of illness as a distraction was the tension flowing from a controlled return to work supported by the institution. The sense of being well supported by the employer though was balanced by a growing sense of loss of value:

I am also sorry I shall miss cohort 1 unit 5 but I am not sure I would have had much to do with it anyway. In fact beginning to feel pretty superfluous generally! But that is surely a good thing and is after all what I wanted. I would however like to be back for cohort 2 if only for the group interview although there is no reason why Jane & Laura can't do this without me. I wonder if they would come over to meet me to talk all this through? (Critical Incident Log: 303)

This is the beginning of a difficult period where I began to question my role:

Second week back. If last week felt as though nothing had changed this week feels stranger. Ron said I looked a bit lost. What is my role? I am so pleased that my roles have been taken over by others but at the same time I have mixed emotions. There is a) a sense of relief that I am no longer burdened with so much responsibility b) grief for the loss of control and responsibility. (Critical Incident Log: 481)

I have been finding it really difficult to give up the reins of power as Cert FM course leader. I hadn't anticipated this but it makes me feel really peripheral. This I must stress is no fault but my own. (Critical Incident Log: 520)

Fragile conceptions of self are manifested in a wide range of personal *anxieties*. This is probably one of the strongest areas of similarity across the two sets of data. My own anxieties are manifold. They concern the well being of the programme and its students (tutor anxieties) and my own research and the Doctorate (student anxieties). Tutor anxieties include a number of incidents that reveal concerns about objectivity in assessment and even using high grades to encourage students. In terms of the wider institution a good deal of angst is expressed about surviving the Corporate Review and the pressures of internal politics. Another major area of concern has been getting outside my comfort zone (214-218). Part of this was brought about by my own lack of technical FM background (847), (1058) and (1396).

### 3.2 Demotivation

Like the students I have found myself acting instrumentally:

Finished the final draft (Version 15) of the International Perspectives unit. This has been a slog and I am not convinced that it is very good but hopefully with this out of the way I can get back to reading for the thesis and start to concentrate on this and the research project. (Critical Incident Log: 18)

Knock backs and other incidents result in discouragement:

#### 25 February 2002

Crap day. Losing the will to live (almost)

[Post Graduate] course planning I have no motivation to respond to the demands imposed with which I do not agree. I just want to take the least line of resistance and get it over with.

[Conference Proposal] returned for amendment with cryptic comment but I can't get a response from [the referee], it was not a good paper anyway. Why bother in the first place.

[Research] bid rejected - not a high enough priority. What a waste of time. (Critical Incident Log: 224-228)

And at these times you do (just as the students do) begin to question your own commitment:

But the bottom line is why am I killing myself for no reward? If this doesn't change I have to get out. (Critical Incident Log: 232)

And following feedback on the rejection of another funding opportunity:

OK this is all fair comment but I have to ask was it worth the effort? I just don't have the standing. It remains hellish difficult to keep motivated. All this work and sod all recognition. (Critical Incident Log: 234 - 245)

As a tutor a major source of demotivation is also when things go wrong for the students:

One piece of very depressing news though was that David, one of the stars of cohort 2 (almost 5 out of 6 units completed and a likely candidate for further study) may have to withdraw owing to withdrawal of support from employers. Now not only was David a real success story on the Certificate, he was also one of the best supported students from [his] work place...This just shows how fragile things are. (Critical Incident Log: 918)

## Theme 4: The Capable Identity

Again it is easy to overlook the positive dimension within the tutor data. Although I do not record comments relating to the *improvement and change* category within the critical incident log, data under the other two categories: *capacities* and *motivations*, are as significant for me here as tutor as they are for the students in Chapter 5.

### 4.1 Capacities

There is a tendency to concentrate on the things that go wrong and it is important to place due emphasis on the many occasions of recognition of things going well:

First day of cohort 2 unit 2 workshop and perhaps more important the first group interview for the evaluation. I think the workshop was excellent. If anything this group seems more interactive even than cohort 1 and that is saying something. (Critical Incident Log: 200)

The focus group went well too. (Critical Incident Log: 200)

It feels as though somehow we are managing to provide a first class learning experience. (Critical Incident Log: 212)

We did get a very positive report from NHS Estates on the Certificate. (Critical Incident Log: 230)

### 4.2 Motivations

By the same token there is so much within the *demotivation* category (above) that it is too easy to lose sight of all those occasions where I felt motivated:

Saw Sheila yesterday to discuss my return. Feeling really positive now, a month to enjoy and then get back to some serious work. I feel ready for this now. (Critical Incident Log: 396 - 398)

Started marking the Managing People submissions from cohort 2. Just to observe that I actually enjoyed the marking for once because the ways in which the students have responded to the challenge is so varied and entertaining. Of course they are flawed and are no better than any other set of submissions but there is flair and originality here in abundance. A good example is Maria's good and bad management submission it doesn't necessarily address all the learning outcomes but it does represent creativity and I suspect learning, it also raises the question of how we mark it and what we achieve by this and also the way we are constrained by artificial assessment criteria. (Critical Incident Log: 844)

What a nice bunch cohort 2 are! (Critical Incident Log: 879)

Yesterday we held the first formal exam board which I suppose should be a [Critical Incident] but all that I can record is that it went as smoothly as expected. Perhaps what is remarkable is the high success rate with very low withdrawal or deferment. (Critical Incident Log: 889)

Returning last week on the 14th to join the induction for cohort 4. Yet another nice bunch it would seem who performed very well in the Felpersham<sup>21</sup> presentations although we were very aware of just how nervous most of them were about this and how relieved [they were] when it was over. Still they seemed to have a good time. (Critical Incident Log: 915)

Teaching, well done, remains one of the key motivators and its own reward:

I may be wrong but I think this workshop has worked really well. Laura yet again has put in so much work, so professional. The students seemed to get so much out of it. There was a real buzz over the whole of the two days. (Critical Incident Log: 487)

And as a counter to all those concerns within *the fragile identity* theme (above) about losing control:

As a footnote Stewart and I have taken almost full responsibility for the Project Module. I think this has been really good for me. I feel very comfortable with it and also back to the level of involvement I really want and need. (Critical Incident Log: 980)

## The Impact of Other Tutor Roles

Thus far I have concentrated on my role as tutor and how this experience relates to the experience of the students outlined in Chapters Four and Five. In this final section I focus briefly on my other roles of researcher and student. As researcher I learn about the students and their experiences as well as learning about my own practice. In my student role I also am a mature adult learner who studies part time and faces the same pressures to balance work, home and study. This, at the very least, should help me to empathise with the students.

From the *tutor as student* perspective there is much in the Log about the difficulties of finding a focus in the research, sometimes resulting in displacement activities, often being described in terms of being blocked or stuck with this 'stuckness' followed

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21 The name chosen for the fictitious university which is the subject of the first major case study exercise undertaken by the students on the Certificate in Facilities Management.

occasionally by 'Eureka!' moments and significant breakthroughs. This is very similar to data reflecting the student experience within its blockages and '*minor triumphs*'.

Then there are the researcher/student anxieties about lack of focus and trying to cover too much ground, missing something important, philosophical and ethical issues about research interventions and potential bias, contamination from the research into the student experience. There are constant references to lack of rigour in my own work and times when I express concerns about serious methodological limitations and the overall quality of what I am trying to do.

It seems also that as one worry is resolved and recedes, another one eagerly steps up to take its place:

I am concerned about the rigour of these instruments but less worried now about the issue of bias.

I have a methodology for analysis but I do wonder if this is not lacking in rigour.

I wrote the first draft of the instruments chapter this week. It is fairly crude but represents a start. I suppose this is the easiest one to write but it did point up a) the need for much stronger support from the literature and b) my sense of a lack of rigour.

And finally there are what I term the meta anxieties. This is anxiety about anxiety where even as things increasingly fall into place and work seems to be progressing well: *somewhere along the line, maybe just out of sight a major problem is bearing down on me and something seriously bad is bound to happen.*

Within the log there are many expressions of my own limitations as student and researcher. I express doubts about my own practice (6), ethical contamination within the research (44), lack of focus (62), naivety (92), whether the work is up to doctoral level (146), being self indulgent (255), getting enough data, methodological limitations (359), lack of direction (404), lack of rigour (707), conceptual weakness (1163), intellectual intimidation (1366) and complacency (1430).

## **Conclusions: The Symbiotic Relationship**

I have suggested that the relationship between tutor and student can be represented as mutually dependent or symbiotic. To explore the nature of this relationship I

examined the similarities and the differences between my own (tutor) data from my Critical Incident Log and the student data explored in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

One of the most important similarities is that both tutor and student depend upon trust. The student begins to thrive as a learner once trust is established, but at the same time the tutor cannot relinquish the traditional role of teacher, as subject specialist, before feeling confident about gaining the trust of the students. In moving towards mutual dependence, both tutor and student experience obstruction as well as support from a range of sources. The tutor as teacher is better equipped to take advantage of support (or suffers less from obstruction) because he or she is working within a more familiar milieu so that, even where the tutor is forced to come to terms with the new role of facilitator, this is at least taking place within a familiar context. By the same token, the tutor as student also encounters fewer problems in using support. But both tutors and students suffer from low levels of self esteem, especially in their less familiar roles. Other common areas across the student and tutor experience include anxiety, instrumentalism, the fragility of self and role discomfort, motivation and demotivation and minor triumphs. Although both can be seen to experience the effects of the hostile environment, the tutor shows a greater degree of sensitivity to this phenomenon and is at the same time (albeit unwittingly perhaps) a part of it.

So despite the many similarities students and tutor appear to experience academia differently. Despite the apparent equality of the learning/teaching dialogue there is a residual power differential and the tutor retains the dominant responsibility. The implications of the nature of this relationship are discussed in Chapter 7 which brings together the two sets of data.

# Chapter Seven: Discussion/Conclusions

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## Introduction

Chapter 7 provides the final discussion and conclusion of the thesis. In this chapter I summarise the conclusions from each chapter. I then revisit the tentative propositions set out in Chapter 1 and examine the extent to which these are supported by the data. Finally, I consider the limitations of the study and the implications for further research and for practice, and conclude with some personal reflective comments about the Doctoral process.

The realisation that many adult learners experienced intense levels of anxiety, through the process of returning to study, brought me to researching the feelings or emotions linked with this experience. At the same time I began to recognise that I was, as a tutor, experiencing similar feelings. But these sorts of emotions do not seem to be well explored in the literature on teaching and learning. If anything they are avoided. Although the traditional separation of cognition and emotion in learning does now seem to be breaking down, the rational worldview still prevails. Acceptance of the importance of emotion may well be more developed in the management and training fields (especially through the growth in interest in emotional intelligence) although even here it is often sanitised out. In adult education, the shift to a more student centred approach is slowly changing both the role of the teacher and the relationship between teacher and learner. At the same time the move away from the importance of the subject discipline and towards facilitation, implied by this more student centred approach to learning, carries with it a number of risks and one of these risks is the loss of teacher identity.

In 1970, Malcolm Knowles published *The Modern Practice of Adult Education* in which he proposed andragogy as a separate theory of adult learning. But in the final decades of the twentieth century, his widely accepted assumption of the need for a separate theory of adult learning was being contested. It was becoming more acceptable to suggest that there is really no difference in pedagogic terms between adults and children and the most important consideration in developing teaching and learning theories is a focus on the individual and their contexts and settings. Pratt advocates a general model of teaching based on the components of the teaching/learning dialogue and the relationships between them. He examines 'Teacher, Learners, Content, Context and Ideals' as the main elements which can be linked together in different

ways and with varying emphasis to produce a whole series of different models of learning that range from 'Transmission' to 'Social Reform' (Pratt, 1998). These and other models and theories of learning, some of which have particular relevance for adult education, help to deconstruct the components and processes of learning and teaching, but few if any of them address explicitly the emotional dimension of teaching and learning.

This lack of attention in the literature to the emotional dimension of learning and teaching, linked with my own observations of the adult student experience, and a desire to address the barriers my own students seemed to be facing, encouraged me to undertake a more formal investigation. In Chapter 3 I examined the rationale for a research design using my own experience and my own students to examine these issues. I designed a research project as a qualitative study within the interpretive tradition and I saw this as part of a larger project concerned with the development, design and implementation of a work based learning curriculum, delivered part time, to adult returners to study. Operationally the part of the longer study that forms the subject matter of this thesis is a bounded cohort case study.

The case study strategy adopted led to the choice of interview instruments as the primary means of data collection but supported by documentary sources such as reflective reports, logs and diaries. I also planned to collect data recording my own teaching and learning experiences over the same period of time. These multiple sources and perspectives were intended to help 'crystallize' the data. As data emerged from all these sources and from all 22 students in the cohort, over the two years of the study, they were analysed using a thematic content approach and then presented in the form of a series of biographies.

Four examples of biographies are presented in Chapter 4. Then Chapter 5 provides a detailed presentation of the data emerging from all 22 students involved in the cohort study. By coding this data it was possible to examine, first the categories, and then the broader themes emerging from the student experience. The themes were modelled as a matrix with two cross-cutting dimensions: the distinction between the positive and the negative and the distinction between identity and context, producing four themes to cover the whole data set: *The Supportive Context*; *The Obstructive Context*; *The Fragile Identity* and *The Capable Identity*.

In Chapter 6 I used this same framework to present the data emerging from my own log to enable comparison to be made between the student and tutor perspectives of this shared experience of teaching and learning. I explore the links between the student and tutor perspectives as a first step in the exploration of the symbiotic relationship between student and tutor. Within this mutually dependent relationship, one of the most important connections seems to be the high level of reliance on trust. Other similarities and differences are explored. For example, although it may be that the tutor as teacher is better equipped to cope, because he or she is working within a more familiar milieu, both tutor and students suffer from low levels of self esteem, especially when required to take on less familiar roles. Other commonalities across the student and tutor experience include anxiety, instrumentalism, the fragility of self, multiplicity of roles and sources of motivation and demotivation and the ways in which both tutors and students experience the effects of 'the hostile environment' of academia.

## **Revisiting Propositions about Adult Learning**

At an earlier stage of the research design, as I began to engage in the literature on adult learning, I set out my thoughts in terms of five tentative propositions about adult learning. In this next section I take each original proposition, examining it in the light of the data emerging from the study.

### **Proposition 1**

The affective domain has moved from total neglect to a degree of recognition and a breakdown of the cognitive-affective dualism. Both learning and teaching are emotional as well as cognitive experiences, containing extremes of anxiety and uncertainty, relief and elation. Both students and tutors have emotional needs that they need to satisfy within the teaching-learning transaction.

A first observation concerns the use of the word 'transaction' to describe the relationship between student and tutor. I would now prefer the term 'dialogue', not so much to reflect the unattainable ideal of equality between partners but more to escape the economic and financial connotations implied by the earlier term. The idea of teaching and learning as a transaction may fit well with the human capital rhetoric that attaches itself to modern educational policy but does not reflect my own thinking.

The data from both students and tutor confirm that teaching and learning have an emotional dimension. The emotional needs of both students and tutor need to be

satisfied within the learning and teaching dialogue and any attempt to theorise teaching and learning should take this emotional dimension into account. The emotions experienced reflect both positive and negative affect although in the light of the data I would characterise these in more subtle and interrelated ways.

One of my earliest frameworks for analysis recognised that all the data could be distinguished in terms of either positive or negative feelings. There is some support for this binary distinction in the literature on learning and the affective domain. Kort et al (2003) for example make the point about the need to consider positive and negative emotions as parts of the real learning process. The distinction is echoed in Salzberger-Wittenberg's idea that we all experience 'wondrous excitement and anxious dread' (1983:3) when faced with a new experience. This balance of feelings is apparent within the data where it is evident that the students have been moved to the point of transformation by the positive affective experience (Dunlop, 1984) whilst negative feelings expressed at the same time appear as anxiety, fear and apprehension.

Hughes (1999) is critical of such hierarchical binaries that exist through the suppression of the opposite and Haggis (2003) also expresses concerns about the limitations of bipolar models. To see emotion in terms of a positive/negative binary distinction is probably inadequate and I would prefer now to characterise this in terms of a more dialectical and tension-ridden relationship. One of the overriding tensions experienced in both tutor and student data is that between anxiety and anticipation. This encompasses both fear and expectation and there are other tensions between motivation and demotivation. These tensions proved a useful starting point for the analysis of the emotional experience.

This proposition is partly supported by the data that certainly provide evidence of the emotional roller coaster ride experienced by the students and by the tutor in terms of the extremes of anxiety and elation. This affective dimension is more readily recognised now within the literature. The question of how teachers and students use the teaching dialogue to satisfy emotional needs was not explored.

## **Proposition 2**

There are many barriers to learning. We need a better understanding of these barriers if we are to provide suitable support for learners. This support needs to reflect the particular problems faced by the individual learner and needs therefore to be multi-dimensional.

The distinction between attitudinal and dispositional barriers was noted by Cross (1981). My research was first triggered by a desire to examine barriers to learning. I now take the view that typologies of barriers are not especially helpful in developing support for students. The data suggest that lack of trust is one of the most important barriers and trust will only develop over time. Its development also seems to be a function of completion of cycles, especially in relation to assessment.

Tentatively I might also now suggest that the more damage done by previous educational experience, the more cycles are needed to repair and renew trust. This may well be an area to be explored by further research. Thus baggage carried from both school and the workplace informs student conceptions of teaching and learning, influences their behaviour and may make it difficult for them to trust tutors and take new advice that appears to contradict well-established beliefs. Educational reference points or benchmarks, such as school, often result in increased levels of self-doubt and reduced perceptions of academic capability. They create anxieties and influence expectations.

Negative conceptions of self such as low self esteem, at least within an academic context, lead to increased anxiety, demotivation and a further decline in confidence. This negative reinforcement also makes it difficult for students to take full advantage of academic support on offer. By contrast, positive and sensitive feedback provides students with an important means of improving performance. This can result in virtuous cycles which also increase trust and positive conceptions of self and this in turn leads to progress that results in further change and improvement.

In practical terms, the response to barriers is to increase levels of support but support itself can also be obstructive and may even have a dark side. Family support for example can lead to diversion and distraction, although in the data family tension appears to be far less significant than family support, unless dependency upon such sources of support makes it difficult for students to criticise them. Other elements, well intended as a part of the support infrastructure, can, if not properly managed, easily become barriers (pre course reading for example) and these elements may even become sources of intimidation leading to further vulnerability.

There is evidence within the tutor and student data of the impact of distractions. For both, this impinges on their role as students. These include the distraction of employment, including the threat of change and constant uncertainty, the difficulties

experienced in terms of finding a focus, getting stuck, engaging in displacement activities, but also note the similarities recorded in both sets of data about the opposite process of getting unblocked, described by students as 'minor triumphs' and by me, the tutor, as 'Eureka!' moments. For me (and a number of the students) illness is a further distraction.

One of the virtuous cycles already noted within the student data in Chapter 5, concerns the *trust and feedback* category. This is common across the student and tutor data and in the latter case applies to my student role but also to my role as tutor. Positive feedback enhances motivation and results in change and improvement. The opposite of course is also true. Furthermore just as *trust* emerged within the student data as the key to support, this is also important to the *tutor as tutor*. Thus key focus of *trust* in my tutor role is within the classroom as facilitator. The problems associated with the shift to student centred learning have been highlighted (Candy, 1991). Freire expressed this shift in terms of the relinquishment of authoritarianism but not authority (Freire, 1972). But, as noted in Chapter 2, this relinquishment of technical specialism on the part of facilitators can result in 'impostor feelings' (Smith, 1997:419). This is a recurring concern appearing within my own critical incident log, with its many references to the challenge of undertaking new and varied roles.

In Chapter 2 it was suggested that work and learning are different discourses but barriers between them are breaking down as are the different identities. Identification across these discourses requires trust. Hunt, in referring to some artefacts including articles and photographs from the past, comments:

They also provide metaphorical snapshots of periods in the lives of students whose history and development became entwined with my own. In reminiscing, realised that for a few years our individual stories had merged to form another, collective, one from which it would be almost impossible to disentangle who had learned what from whom, who had been the 'teacher' and the 'taught', and which of our activities might be defined as research' (Hunt, 2003: unpaginated)

Where these roles become so closely connected a very special bond of trust is required.

There is a substantial literature on support and the adult learner. A key thread within this literature is the paradox of experience. Boud and Walker (1993) refer to the internal barrier of personal experience, Collins (1998) to the barrier of the acquired stock of

knowledge, Hanson (1996) to experience as a barrier and Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) to experience acting as both reservoir and impediment. Learning theorists seem to suggest that the accumulation of experience makes the process of 'unlearning' and 'relearning' that much more difficult (Kort et al, 2003).

There is backing in the literature for other reasons for not taking up support including, for example, Gallagher et al (2002) who make the point that institutional support comes from an 'alien culture' and students are more likely to trust information that comes from within their own social milieu. Elliott (1999) suggests that the return to learning is of itself a disclosure of lack of knowledge, an existential problem that impacts upon the worker persona, and Hughes (2002) remarks on the surveillance role of managers and the need for workers to portray competence. As an experienced manager you are supposed to know what you are doing. Asking for help is not only an admission of failure it also 'bursts the bubble' and challenges the individual's supposed invincibility as a manager.

The importance of barriers to learning is confirmed by data that lead me to conclude that the reasons for students not seeking support are if anything more complex, manifold and paradoxical than I at first thought. However the distinction between dispositional and attitudinal barriers did not seem to be of major significance to this group of students. This may well reflect the fact that they are a highly motivated group, displaying positive attitudes to learning. Using dispositional barriers to mask attitudinal barriers did not really occur except, perhaps in the case of IT where, just occasionally, it appeared that weaknesses in ability were presented in terms of issues relating to access or local restriction. This is perhaps linked with the overwhelming desire not to show ignorance.

The existence of a problematised power differential is not supported by the data. What is perhaps more important is the existential discomfort of work based and adult learning, arising from the fulfilment of different identities, such as manager and student. Some of these identities carry their own sources of power, such as experience and expert knowledge. The mature student might draw additional power from his/her status in the workplace but, even then, as Ellsworth (1989) suggests, the power imbalance is unavoidable. Boud and Miller (1996a) suggest that students will deny the significance of the power/oppression dynamic and it is interesting, that when this was raised during the second group interview, as a possible explanation for *not using support*, it was dismissed.

However, what is well supported by the data, is the first part of the proposition that support is multi-dimensional in that it comes from a number of sources. But support is also full of tensions. Thus the multiple role of the employer as mentor and line manager can present difficulties as responsibility fluctuates between support and surveillance.

The main categories within this theme seem to revolve around personal support and have a social dimension. This is supported within the literature including Coffield's emphasis on social relationships (2002), Wenger and social learning (1998) and Tennant's focus on the relationship between the person and the social environment (1998). Bonk and Kim (1998) identify the socio-cultural nature of adult learning and the need for collaboration. Similarly Edwards et al (2002) refer to the importance of learning networks. In some respects this theme appears to describe the different elements of the so called *support infrastructure*. One of the first concrete findings to emerge from the early data in this study was the range and variety of modes of support drawn upon by students (Askham and Fortune, 2002).<sup>22</sup>

Knowles (1984) makes the point that past experience of learning can result in students being so conditioned by schooling that they 'demand' to be taught. Silen (2003) identifies a dialectical relationship between 'chaos and cosmos' when students are confronted with student centred learning. Contradictory feelings of uncertainty, frustration and stimulation can all be present when they have to take responsibility for their own learning. Certainly a tension in the data is that students with a preference for teacher centred learning feel poorly served by student centred approaches. This is evident within the early student reflective reports, focussing on the process of group working, especially on the negative impact of the behaviour of strong characters. There is some evidence of a rapid emergence of group coherence and this supports the idea that students need to belong to a smaller group (see de Dreu et al, 2001) There is also evidence here of the emotionality of the group process.

Field and Schuller (2000) note the importance of family and peer influences. In the first individual interviews, students made it clear that they sought the approval of family and friends before committing to the course. Prospective students seemed to readily grasp the impact of study on family life. Partners were obviously seen as important but so were parents and children. Dowswell (1998) comments on role strain and the impact of

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<sup>22</sup> See Appendix A.

study on family life. But there does seem to be a paradox as family members have been identified above as one of the main distractions.

### Proposition 3

Theories and purposes of adult education are highly contested. There are many different models and it is usual to distinguish between the education of adults and children. Distinction is also made between work based and other forms of learning.

The distinction between the education of adults and children no longer seems to be especially significant. The tension between human and social capital however remains in the background and is necessary for our understanding of the current debates about the purpose of higher education. The policy discourses are dominated by the rhetoric of human capital. This proposition was addressed in the literature review rather than in the data, although data on individual purposes of returning to education were explored through the category *motivations* that examined how students see the purpose of their own return to study.

McGuire et al (1993) note that adults usually have more than one motive for participation in education and many find it difficult to articulate them. Hillage et al (2000) provide a number of different models of motivation. Older students and women are more likely to be motivated by personal satisfaction and self-development. Hewinson et al (2000) also note the wide range of and multiple reasons for returning to study as either stick or carrot, negative or positive, push or pull. Silverman (2000) presents a similar typology but this time in the context of motivation for gang membership.

I have identified enhancement as a third group of motivations. This is expressed in terms of what students expected to get out of the course, such as increased self-confidence, the satisfaction of personal goals, career development and promotion and academic development. Other enhancements included the development of academic skills and the reinforcement of workplace practice. Networking was also seen as an important benefit. This is seen by White (1998) as a social act and these students identified the course as *'an opportunity of meeting people from other organisations and having an insight into how they operate.'*

Students experience multiple motivations and their reasons for undertaking the course are usually very clear. Push motivations are linked to the nature of the course. For

example, for many students, the absence of examinations represents a strong attraction and this may well be the result of negative past experience. Pull motivations operate on at least two different levels, the threshold and the incremental (see Aklaghi 1996). Threshold motivations include credentialism and proof. This is the need for certification, the piece of paper that proves to others that you can actually do the job you are already doing. To these students though it is the lack of credentials and paper qualifications that is one of the main limitations to progress in the workplace.

Instrumentalism was a common theme in later individual interviews, as students struggled with competing pressures. I do raise the question of whether instrumental behaviour like this should actually be problematised. This is somewhat controversial. Ottewill (2003) takes the stand that instrumentalism should be avoided but he admits that there are those who see it as inevitable and even desirable. Further consideration of instrumentalism can be found in Mezirow (1997) where it is defined as learning to control the environment and others and takes the form of task orientated problem solving. Jeffery (2003) sees instrumentalism as a compliant response which results from the pressure to deliver and is about playing the system, being shy of engagement and finding out as precisely as possible what the teacher wants. Britton and Blaxter (1999) distinguish between instrumentalism and self-fulfilment orientations to education but that 'this dichotomous approach' leads to oversimplification and such distinctions should be seen as complimentary rather than oppositional.

Motivation also links with *capacities* and with *improvement and change* insofar as one of the higher level motivators is the desire to improve performance through the enhancement of capability. Blaxter (1997) notes that motivation is enhanced where study is complementary, relevant and voluntary. *Improvement and change* is seen by many as the general outcome of undertaking the course. This category includes all those codes which are measures of progress; doing better, learning, increasing self-belief and self-knowledge, progressing academically. This is about process and is well summed up in the code 'minor triumph' that contains the essence of making small but significant steps forward.

This *improvement and change* category includes changes in personal perception - the way the students see the world, change in practice - what they do in the work place and personal development - how they have changed as individuals. Pohland and Bova (2000) note how learning brings about changes in assumptions, perspectives, behaviour and in the self and this is very similar to the changes reported by the

students in the data, all of which points to evidence of transformational learning (Merzirow, 1991, 1992, 1997, 1998). Reference should also be made to Gallagher et al (2002) and the reconstruction of social identity and perception of self identity through learning.

#### **Proposition 4**

The demonstration of ignorance is one of the adult learner's greatest anxieties. And yet the very entry into a learning environment is an admission of limitations. The reluctance to admit frailty is a significant barrier to learning.

Evidence in support of this proposition is mixed. Data do support the idea of existential discomfort and this exists both within the students and the tutor. There appears to be a link here with the concept of trust. Admissions of frailty are made and sometimes overplayed but these are carefully controlled. Whilst students and tutor might be prepared to concede weaknesses in certain domains, they retain ownership over determining what these domains are. The idea of discomfort seems also to link with the concept of trust (some of the literature uses the concept of 'comfort' rather than trust).

The adult education literature offers some recognition of the complex ways in which students see themselves. Elliott (1999) notes the complex mix of qualities and anxieties within adult learners. He suggests that there is a balance between the normal taken for granted qualities and the fragilities of adult learners and so there is a tension or balance between the fragile and the positive qualities of the learner which make up the ways in which the adult learner's self perception is shaped. Barnett (1999) refers to the threat of learning opportunities and the existential anxiety faced by adult returners and James (2003) to low levels of self-esteem and perceptions of being 'thick'.

All students suffer distractions from study and although modern financial pressures are narrowing the distinction between part time and full time study, there is a strong tradition in adult education research concerned with the particular pressures of part time study. Adult returners face particular problems. Dowswell (1998) for example notes the 'role strain' suffered by adult learners, Boud and Solomon (2000) the conflict between the roles of learner and worker and Cornford (2000) considers the tension between the competing needs of the individual and the organisation. Reay et al (2002) terms the balancing act between study and earning money as 'the contradictory double life'. Blaxter (1999) refers to the 'triple shift' of work, home and study and Hughes (1999) the 'three domains'. Hewinson et al (2000) identifies the negative impact of

study on family life and Elliott (1999) writes of the strains of inhabiting 'two discourses' at once. The range of distractions mentioned by students in the data is simply astounding. The different domains inhabited by the work-based learner are clearly a source of tension.

Such sources of tension have a number of implications for how best students might be supported. For example, although students express the desire for more proactive support from tutors, they do generally recognise it as their responsibility to seek support. Furthermore, intervention by the tutor to provide proactive support, may well be seen as an unwarranted or untimely intrusion from the academic domain into the domain of work. Some students express a preference for seeking support from within the workplace even though this might, on the face of it represent a significantly higher risk to the credibility of the individual as employee, anxious not to '*burst the bubble*' of professional invincibility.

There are differences in the conception of self as: learner, employee, and spouse/parent/friend reflecting the study-work-life triad. These differences are also a source of tension. This can be seen in both the tutor and student data. These roles are sometimes blurred and there is also a degree of blurring across the tutor/student roles. What is more, each role forms an important part of the learning context of the other and, as such student and tutor are bound inextricably together. Two of the most important categories and codes within this theme, *trust and feedback* and 'anxiety' appear to be equally significant for students and the tutor.

Again, it is important not to lose sight of the positive dimension of the learner identity, just as Richardson (1997) warns that we tend to problematise the student. In recognising the fragility of the adult returner we cannot automatically assume that they are in some way deficient in study skills by virtue of their adulthood and there is a tension between the fragile and positive conceptions. The existence of a paradox over conceptions of the self is supported in the data. Students do exhibit *limitations* as well as *capacities* and these appear to be linked to their different roles.

The adult educator who embraces the facilitator role faces another challenge. Smith refers to 'impostor feelings' (Smith, 1997:419). This is the sense of fraud which can arise through having to teach outside one's discipline which can result in a loss of professional identity, especially, she suggests, amongst those who lack autonomy. Whilst her paper considers strategies for dealing with this, which include throwing away

the mask and integrating internal feelings with external behaviour, this is only possible where the tutor feels safe and can trust the students. Lee and Wickert (2000) also note to the need for the facilitator to abdicate the role of knower and relinquish expertise if the traditional power differential between tutor and student is to be broken down. Like Smith they also warn that this can result in a loss of identity for the teacher. There are similarities here with Boud and Symes writing on the subject of work based learning and the problem of 'cherished disciplinary territory' (Boud and Symes, 2000:27).

### Proposition 5

The institution maintains a distance between itself and its students through the language of its discourse, its structures, frameworks and regulations whether intentionally or otherwise.

The idea of the existence of *arcane academia* includes the physical environment but is much broader than this. It links with the idea of context that appears in Pratt's (1998) models of teaching and learning. Malcolm and Zukas (2001) also refer to context though they see this as the history and culture of the learner. Both Hanson (1996) and McIntyre (2000) use the term 'setting' and Alheit (1999) and Field and Schuller (1999) refer to learning environments. So much of the learning environment as inhabited by the adult learner seems to have a negative or obstructive impact upon the learning process. The creation of this 'hostile environment', the term coined by Foley (2000) to describe the structure and culture of higher education, is largely, although not wholly, unintentional. The idea that the hostile environment is an intentional creation is well represented in the literature. Brockett and Hiestra (1991) refer to institutional practices and procedures that exclude or discourage and Harrison (1993) refers to attitudes. Tuckett (1996) refers to the marginalisation of adults and Tight (1993) the need to change the higher education experience of adults. Elliott (1999) sees the problem in terms of homogenisation and Gamache (2002) as the nuisance of individual difference.

Paradoxically the University is a major part of the supportive environment but is also the central focus for *arcane academia* and is therefore one of the main promoters of the hostile environment. The difference in levels of power between tutor and student also contribute towards this hostile environment and is a further source of intimidation, increased anxiety levels on the part of students, reduced self-esteem and low levels of self-confidence.

In examining the different voices of students, Kasworm (2003) identifies the entry voice where 'college is a new and sometimes confusing culture of actions, words and evaluative systems'. This then is an alien and 'confusing culture' of rules and regulations, word limits, language, assessment assumptions and other 'academic' matters unfamiliar and even threatening to students new to higher education.

There is a link here with education benchmarks, such as school, against which the new student measures his or her expectations. For many returners though this is a negative experience. Pratt (1998) introduces the concept of the 'wounded learner' and Illeris (2000) suggests that returning to study is a reminder of school with its defeat, humiliation and negative experience and the resultant 'thick wall of defence' that makes further learning more difficult. Postle (1993) blames school for 'omitted', 'distorted' and 'distressed' learning and being dismissed as stupid or thick. The role of school as a negative influence on the adult learner is well known, see for example Cornford (2000) and the concept of 'refugees from learning' and McGuire (1993) who refers to the negative attitudes and stereotypical assumptions that stem from school experience. Cross suggests that adults who hated school are 'are unlikely to return voluntarily to the scene of their former embarrassment' (Cross, 1981:125) but that these students may also be the ones who, having avoided the traditional academic routes, are forced later in life to get to grips with education to realise frustrated ambitions (there is a link here with *motivations*). Thus Tight (2002) notes that the return to study can compensate for thwarted ambitions.

Students do seem to be partly responsible for this environment of mutual mistrust, for , although they want to be supported, they also appear to want to distance themselves from their tutors, on the face of it to maintain objectivity. This gap between tutor and student is perceived by students as necessary to maintain fairness but also makes trust and support more difficult to achieve. This can be compared with the desire of tutors to require distance as the means of protecting their role as gatekeepers of the academic community of practice.

*Arcane academia* as a category looms large within my own critical incident log and the recorded incidents fall into two distinct categories. The first set of incidents is very similar to the dimensions of *arcane academia* identified in Chapter 5 that impinge upon the student experience. The second set of incidents reflects my own position as a part of the academic institution. The common theme within the first set of incidents is the mismatch between the Certificate in Facilities Management and standard patterns of

curriculum design and delivery. One of the consequences of this difference is the perceived failure, on the part of the institution, to differentiate the course in its desire for neat solutions and homogenised products.

But *arcane academia* can also be seen as one of the ways in which tutors maintain a distance from students, acting as gatekeepers (perhaps unintentionally) to the academic 'community of practice'. Wenger (1998) refers to the transition from one social milieu to another, through communities of practice, but Lave and Wenger (1991) had already noted that access to communities of practice is liable to be manipulated and can be denied. Haggis (2003) points to some of the elite assumptions we make about students and the cultures we try to induct them into. If students and tutors do not share cultural assumptions, then establishing trust, one of the essential ingredients in making support work, is even more difficult. If trust is seen as the point at which the distance between student and tutor reduces sufficiently for the student to more fully utilise the support available, there is a tendency for this to be problematised from the student perspective, as though it is for them to take the responsibility for journeying across the gap. If anything this does reinforce the idea of tutor as unwitting gatekeeper.

The existence of *arcane academia* is supported by the data, which if anything suggests that it is manifested in more ways than originally envisaged. I have suggested important links here with the concept of communities of practice and there is a sense in which academics act as gatekeepers, restricting access to the academic community. There is however a danger that this can be over played and there is some evidence in the data that the existence of *arcane academia* is more significant for me as tutor than it is for the students.

## **Implications for Theory, Policy, Practice and Further Research**

Although I set out with some intention of examining the theoretical implications of the characteristics of adult learners, and even thought I might be able to add to theory through a development of my own ideas on the symbiotic relationship between teacher and learner, one of the consequences of the actual study has been a shift away from theory. So although I started my reading by looking at the andragogy/pedagogy distinction, at different learning models and at different perspectives on learning, the empirical data emerging from the study has encouraged a focus on the student experience. This is not to dismiss theoretical models, for these remain important as starting points for understanding, but models, like metaphors, are 'inherently paradoxical' in that they distort as well as provide insight and in 'recognizing theories as

metaphors, we quickly appreciate that no single theory is a perfect or all-purpose point of view'. (Morgan, 1997:5)

Implications for practice however are a different matter. Seen as a piece of action research, it is already clear that the data emerging from this wider study have had very significant impacts upon our practice locally, and we (the course team) have also been keen to disseminate these lessons to a wider audience. The research has improved our understanding of the diversity of students and the importance of not making generalisations in terms of adult, work based, part time, semi-distance and so on. Students vary in their learning styles and their learning preferences are driven by varying motivations and different degrees of instrumentalism and we should, I believe, be far more prepared to relax our preconceived notions of systems and processes and focus on the individual and the support of their learning, and especially the emotional dimension of that learning.

Using knowledge gleaned from this research about the student learning experience, we have attempted to pilot new approaches to assessment, delivery and support. It makes sense to experiment in such a positive environment where, because of high levels of motivation and ability, such experiments stand a greater chance of success. Examples of this include the rolling out of skills development, personal development planning and the use of reflection as a learning tool, all developed on the Certificate course. Experience gained in this relatively fertile area, can then be used to support developments in more challenging learning and teaching situations.

## **Limitations of the Study**

Despite my own misgivings about a range of ethical issues relating to researching my own teaching and my own students, few of these emerged in practice as major issues. One important ethical issue however was the need to respect participants' time. The students were very enthusiastic in their support for the research, and very interested in the outcomes, but they also have busy work and home lives and were unable to enter into open ended commitments of time. Research instruments had to be designed with this in mind. Likewise it had been my initial intention to draw more formally on the experience of colleagues on the teaching team, but for similar reasons the tutor data is limited to my own experience as recorded in the Critical Incident Log.

In any event this was always going to be a limited study, based as it is on the experience of 22 students on a small undergraduate programme over a relatively short period of time. But I make no claims as to the generalisability of the findings. The programme is unique. It is well resourced through non-HEFCE fee income. It deals with small numbers so that students do get a higher degree of individual support and tuition and the whole programme is founded on the principles of providing high levels of customer support.

## **And Finally...Reflections on the Doctoral Process**

Writing this thesis has at times seemed like the process of culinary reduction. You start with copious volumes of data which is first reduced to a text of some sixty thousand words and this in turn is further reduced to the highly concentrated three hundred word abstract and this again is reduced to the regulation twelve words of the title. Those twelve words are carefully chosen. They reflect the balance of dread and excitement experienced by myself and the 22 students of 'Cohort Two' during the two years of the study. These two extreme feeling states are held in a dialectical tension until the development of a mutual trust emerged and helped overcome the anxieties. Of course there is a natural tendency to focus on the negative and this is especially so in the case of this study, which has its roots in course review and critical appraisal, so it was a constant source of surprise to discover, in the data, just how strong the sense of excitement is.

Just as our own students find it challenging to reflect back on their experiences, I now find it very difficult to measure my own personal progress over the last four or more years. I feel slightly embarrassed to admit that it has taken until now to get around to serving my apprenticeship in academic research, but at least I do now feel half way competent as a researcher in qualitative methods. Apart from getting more involved in research this has given me a great deal more confidence as a dissertation supervisor at Masters level and I feel I have a lot more to offer in terms of practical advice on the perils, pitfalls and practicalities of doing research. These things would have been at the top of any competence wish list. What I don't think I anticipated was the sense of liberation based on a better understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of research methodologies and a rediscovery of what it means to be an academic, paid in part to think and work with ideas. But there have also been some very practical developments. I have noticed, and this may be the result of having to read more

critically, that my skills in reading, assessing and feeding back on student work have developed.

The Doctoral process is well defined by journey metaphors. I have lost count of the number of times I have encountered reference, in research methodology texts, to T S Eliot's lines in *Little Gidding*. These refer to the metaphorical journey as a cycle where the end is only a beginning. On the subject of journeys and destinations though I have some empathy with Pirsig's sentiment when he says: 'it is the sides of the mountain which sustain life. Here's where things grow.' (Pirsig, 1974:199). For my own part, having put off the idea of Doctoral level study for so many years through a sense of fear and dread, based on tales of colleagues from the front, the most surprising thing of all is that I have enjoyed the experience. In short the journey itself has been worthwhile, even necessary, whilst the final destination is of secondary importance.

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# Appendix A: Conference Paper

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The European Facility Management Conference  
MADRID, 10 --12 APRIL 2002  
Session: 13  
C5 EDUCATION & TRAINING: NEEDS / OPS

With a Little Help from my friends: Developing and supporting education for facilities staff at undergraduate level PHIL ASKHAM Senior Lecturer The Facilities Management Graduate Centre, Sheffield Hallam University *United Kingdom*

## Abstract

The Facilities Management Graduate Centre at Sheffield Hallam University has a long track record in the education and training of facilities managers through its postgraduate programme leading to the MSc and MBA in Facilities Management. The programme has attracted senior facilities managers from a wide range of public and private sector organisations. Over time it became apparent that there was a demand for a programme at undergraduate level which would provide training opportunities for other staff who did not meet the requirements for entry on to the postgraduate programme. The new undergraduate Certificate in Facilities Management was launched in January 2001 and attracted a first cohort of students, mainly more junior managers and supervisors, specialising in 'soft' services such as catering and laundry services. A second cohort commenced the programme in October 2001 and a third cohort s planned for a start in October 2002. The level of demand for undergraduate education has confirmed our belief that there is a market for professional development at this level that is not being addressed at the present time. Furthermore, the fact that we have received such positive support from senior facilities managers and employers from a wide cross section of organisations suggests that senior facilities managers are keen to promote professional development and training for their staff. This is seen as part of the political struggle to compete and place facilities management on the strategic agenda within their organisations. FMGC is undertaking a major evaluation of the undergraduate Certificate that is exploring, among other things, the particular support needs of these part time returners to study. This is part of a substantial research project that is examining all aspects of the delivery of the award to identify best practice in the provision of professional education and development at this particular operational level. This paper examines the development of the award and evaluates progress to date.

## CV

Phil has over 17 years teaching experience in the School of Environment and Development as Senior Lecturer in Valuation. Prior to that he spent 12 years in general practice/valuation. He has engaged in research and consultancy for a wide range of organisations including work in general commercial and residential valuation, building society valuations and RICS Housebuyer's Reports, compensation claims, rating assessments for 1973, 1990 and 1995 valuation lists, rent reviews, environmental audit an work for the Property Research Unit, Sheffield Hallam University on "The property

boom in Sheffield", "Managed Workspace" and "Supertram". He has written widely on general practice surveying matters as joint editor of 'Mainly for Students', regular monthly feature appearing in The Estates Gazette. Other publications include a Guide to Valuations for Rating and two collections of articles published in the Mainly for Students column (1994) and (1999) and a revised edition of Bean & Lockwood's Rating Valuation Practice, Rating Law: The Uniform Business Rate (1995). Phil joined FMGC over three years ago and has since been involved in the development and delivery of the undergraduate Certificate in Facilities Management and the delivery of training workshops to a range of clients including the Health and Safety Executive, NHS Trusts, English Partnerships and Post Office Property Holdings. He is currently reading for a Doctorate in Education, undertaking research on the impact of emotional experience on the teaching and learning of adult returners to study.

# **With a Little Help from my Friends: Developing and supporting education for facilities staff at undergraduate level**

Presented by:  
Phil Askham and Jill Fortune

## **Introduction**

This paper describes a research project in progress. It involves a longitudinal cohort study of a new undergraduate award in Facilities Management. The paper examines the history and background to the development of the award. It goes on to identify the type of students enrolled on the award and explores their reasons for wanting to return to study at this level. It examines some of the preliminary data collected and starts to consider some of the implications of what the students are saying. Whilst it is far too soon to draw conclusions at such an early stage of the study, the methodology and instruments used to collect data are proving a rich source which appears to have much potential in getting to the heart of the student experience.

## **History**

The BIFM Member Survey of 1999 showed that although 19% of respondents have an undergraduate qualification only 1 % had a qualification in FM<sup>23</sup>. The report speculates that this may be due to the fact that few institutions provide undergraduate degrees in FM. Many members do indicate however that gaining a professional qualification is a future aim.

In January last year the Facilities Management Graduate Centre (FMGC) which is part of the School of Environment and Development at Sheffield Hallam University, successfully validated a work based learning Certificate in Facilities Management. Induction for the first cohort of 22 students took place at the end of January 2001. Such was the demand for the course; a second cohort of 22 students commenced the programme in October 2001 and there are plans to start a third cohort in October 2002.

The story of the development of FMGC's undergraduate Certificate is worth telling. It is in part a story of the changing education and training needs of the relatively immature FM profession. The undergraduate Certificate in Facilities Management is the product of a union between an existing work based course in Estates and Property Management, first delivered by the School in 1992, and the postgraduate programme in Facilities Management which commenced back in 1994. The new programme can be seen as the latest version of a work based learning initiative within the School that has had a long and chequered history. Though its gestation was protracted and the birth not free of complications, at the time of writing the infant programme can be said to be doing well'.

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<sup>23</sup> These figures should however be treated with some caution as the sample size in the surveys tends to be small

The initial programme (1992) was seen as innovative in many ways and has been a focus for the development of a comprehensive and, in some respects, novel support and delivery infrastructure. However, in its early years, success in terms of students completing the programme, was limited. The difficulties seemed to centre on the familiar problems facing mature returners to study. A review of the programme in 1996, identified a whole range of barriers to effective learning in this context (Askham, 1997 and Askham and Green, 1995).

Between 1992 and 2000, the programme was delivered to two corporate clients, the Employment Services Estates Branch (ESEB) and the Estate Management Unit of the Health and Safety Executive. Both organisations are central government bodies who were seeking training and development for staff responsible for managing their respective estates. The need for training arose following changes in the management of the central government estate. Prior to 1994 the role of managing the government estate was the responsibility of the Property Services Agency (PSA). In 1994 PSA was abolished and the responsibility for estate management was returned to individual government agencies under the central direction of PACE (Property Advisors to the Civil Estate). One of the problems faced by these organisations was that staff who had little or no experience or expertise in estate management were charged with a residual estates function, principally as the 'informed client' responsible for procuring and managing estates services.

The recent history of these two clients reflects broader change in the provision of estate services, in particular market testing and outsourcing, and links with the emergence of a broadening out of traditional estate management provision into facilities services.

As the UK economy improved through the mid 1990's, unemployment started to fall. As it began to slip down the political agenda, so funding for training within ESEB was progressively reduced until the numbers of students actively supported on the programme declined to a trickle. At around this time the School was approached by the second government organisation, the Health and Safety Executive, to provide training to support the development of its estates staff. Therefore it is worthwhile here to examine the experience with HSE as this reflects both the transition from traditional estates and property to facilities and the evolution of the Certificate.

### **The Health and Safety Executive**

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) emerged as a new government agency following the Flixborough disaster in 1974. HSE's role is to ensure that risks to health and safety from work activities are properly controlled. This is achieved through inspection of workplaces, accident investigation, enforcement, guidance, advice and research. Initially its headquarters were housed in several buildings in London with a nationwide inspectorate located in 39 'field' offices across the country.

In 1982, as part of a Government initiative to disperse civil servants out of London, HSE's existing Merseyside Headquarters was established in Bootle. The majority of the headquarters staff were dispersed, with those remaining in London being housed in one modern building. The dispersal was a gradual process, with more buildings being acquired as necessary until there were a total of 6 office buildings and a warehouse at the new site.

One of the driving forces behind the dispersal was the availability of low priced accommodation compared with central London. Another factor was the high unemployment in the area and the obvious benefits to the unemployed and the local economy the influx of clerical jobs would have.

An Accommodation Section was formed to oversee the refurbishment of the buildings and relocation of staff. Once the dispersal was complete, this section became responsible for maintaining the site to ensure that adequate, suitable accommodation was provided. In 1993, a small Estates Section was formed in Bootle, which dealt with environmental issues and also had a very limited involvement in some estate matters.

A property strategy, produced by HSE in 1995, highlighted a number of issues, which reinforced the need for a fully co-ordinated estate management structure. These included the fact that HSE's establishment in 1974 and its acquisition of various property interests since then, meant that there would be a preponderance of leases with expiry or break imminent between 1999 and 2009. The strategy also identified that at that time HSE had approximately 42% surplus space above its 'planning figure'. This was a result of the application of old 'Treasury Space Standards' which was an outdated public sector approach to space utilisation. Following the abolition of these, HSE commissioned consultants to advise on an acceptable planning figure taking into account the nature of the work, staff management needs etc. They recommended that 17M<sup>2</sup> per employee would be sufficient compared with the then average of 25M<sup>2</sup>. The strategy also highlighted that continuing pressure on financial allocations required a fundamental rethink on HSE's approach to estate management.

This coincided with the wider policy of Civil Service rationalisation to improve efficiency and achieve value for money. One of the main vehicles for this policy was the 'market testing' or 'outsourcing' of in house services and the privatisation of discrete parts of it. This policy led directly to the demise in 1994 of Property Services Agency (PSA) who till then had ensured that the civil estate was suitably maintained; undertaking surveys, projects, giving advice etc. and subsequently of Property Holdings (PH) in 1996 who looked after estates issues; dealing with such things as acquisitions, rent reviews, licences, disposals and in some instances acted as landlords. The consequence of these changes was that HSE's Accommodation Section was renamed the Estate Management Unit (EMU) and charged with the full responsibility of managing the HSE estate.

To fill the gap left by PSA, HSE commissioned four private sector Managing Agents to look after estates issues and maintain its building stock. In 1999 a further development saw the replacement of the Managing Agents by Facilities Managers as the Estate Management Unit widened its traditional estates role to include services such as security and portering.

## **The emergence of the Certificate in Facilities Management**

As seen from the history through the period of delivery of the Estate and Property Management Certificate programme between 1996 and 2000, the role of HSE EMU developed to perform a wider function than that limited to traditional estates management, extending into a broader FM role. Hence the birth of the Certificate in Facilities Management to be delivered and managed by the Facilities Management Graduate Centre (FMGC).

Locating the new award within FMGC was a subtle but important change. Hitherto the perception of the programme was that of a marginal activity which had little general significance in the wider scheme of property courses run by the school. The link with FMGC provided an opportunity for better resourcing, access to specialist knowledge and expertise and markets in the FM field and most important of all the opportunity to draw on experience gained by the Centre in supporting the delivery of part time work based awards.

FMGC was established in 1993 (then known as the Unit for Facilities Management Research). It launched its Postgraduate Programme in Facilities Management in academic year 1994/95. The postgraduate programme remains a major educational 'product' for FMGC and currently has approximately 60 students completing the varying levels of study.

Initially the programme had two corporate clients, The Atomic Energy Authority and Royal Mail. Because the courses were non-standard it was recognised at the outset that different methods of support were needed compared with that existing on more traditional programmes.

The postgraduate programme was distinct in that modules were delivered in blocks. Generally students on the programme were practising Facilities Managers in full-time employment. Although students were taught directly by tutors during the block weeks, a large proportion of the learning was undertaken prior to or following the taught sessions.

Due to the distance learning nature of the Programme, students had limited direct access to facilities and services on campus as they only visited Sheffield four times during each year of study. They were able to gain access to certain facilities by mail and telephone and as the technology developed students also had remote access to e-mail and a mail conferencing facilities which allows communication with FMGC and course tutors whilst off campus.

Information and learning materials for students were produced in written format and delivered by post to students or distributed during the taught modules. More recently there has been a move towards distribution of materials and information via a virtual learning environment.

The Programme philosophy is based upon the belief that Facilities Management is a distinct management discipline concerned with the management of the overlap between 'people', 'processes' and 'places'. It responds to the fact that the FM profession is increasingly an appropriate vocation for many individuals currently involved in one or more of these three key components of work management. This has highlighted the need for a new breed of managers capable of understanding and

contributing to the overall corporate strategy of organisations - THE FACILITIES MANAGER!

The Programme, whilst containing technically oriented components, aims to promote the understanding that the FM role in any organisation can critically influence overall productivity levels, the ability of the organisation to change, and its potential for continuous success.

Experience in delivering the postgraduate programme gave FMGC access to students who were Facilities staff in a wide range of organisations, many of them senior managers or even Facilities Directors. From conversations with these students what was emerging was that there was a gap in the market for less senior staff who had FM experience but little in the way of formal educational qualifications which meant that they were unable to satisfy the entry requirements of the post graduate programme. This was frustrating their desire for personal and professional development in FM.

Thus the Certificate programme was devised partly as a response to the changing needs of corporate estates clients who were becoming more focussed on wider FM provision and our own recognition of a market need which did not appear to be satisfied by provision elsewhere.

### **The Needs of the Employer**

Demand from potential students had been identified. But it was also becoming evident that the employers also identified particular needs. Price (2002) notes that the status of FM as a profession is still debated and "beset with paradoxes, among them an aspiration to the status of a strategic discipline when most practitioners operate at an operational level in their respective organisations". Price also refers to "an uneasy balance of professional traditions" in FM. Traditionally FM practitioners seem to be drawn from traditional building, surveying and civil engineering backgrounds. But growing numbers are entering with office administration and general management experience.

Employer needs can be illustrated by the position of NHS Estates who played a major role in the initial launch of the Certificate in FM through its sponsorship of 10 students from FM departments in NHS Trusts. The sponsorship was a part of its 'developing capacity' initiative launched in 1999. This project was aimed at providing a training and development framework for FM. NHS Estates saw the facilities function as "charged with the management of the estate and the provision of facilities and services in support of patient care. This role carries strategic, operational, professional and policy responsibilities. The function covers a wide range of services and professions, the management of which demand high levels of technical skills and experience." (Connor, 2002)

But the NHS is competing for staff in a tough market place and needed to find ways to recruit and retain the right calibre of personnel. They already employ knowledgeable and experienced staff from a variety of backgrounds who need to be given the opportunities to develop and access formal FM qualifications and thus form the foundation of the FM function in the future.

NHS Estates agreed as a pilot to support ten students from Trusts in the region to join the Certificate. Recruitment was from FM related staff and the course was promoted through FM associations representing soft services such as cleaning, catering and

laundry but specifically not estates. It was agreed that the number of NHS supported staff on the first cohort would be matched by an equal number of staff from non-NHS organisations to aid development and understanding of alternative FM perspectives.

### **The Evaluation of the Certificate in FM**

The overall purpose of the research being undertaken is the evaluation of an existing programme. This purpose can be broken down into a series of more specific research questions:

- What barriers to learning emerge from this particular learning environment and are we able to identify when and why these barriers occur?
- What are the differences and commonalities between individual's perceptions of these barriers?
- Why do these differences and commonalities arise?
- How can we remove or ameliorate the barriers?
- How do existing systems, including the use of the Virtual Learning Environment, Blackboard ©, and processes interact with these issues and what are the concrete implications for course design, delivery, management and student support arising from the evaluation?

The following research instruments were selected to collect data from the students:

- Baseline interviews
- Individual dialogues
- Reflective diaries
- Group interviews
- Unit evaluation questionnaires and other data from the subject Cohort and the previous Cohort to assist with triangulation.

It is worth noting that the above methodology and instruments were piloted by Askham and Fortune successfully as part of a review of the HSE provision. This earlier review informed the development of the Certificate programme.

## Base line interviews

Initial interviews were undertaken with 12 of the 22 students after they had accepted an offer of a place on the programme but before the induction workshop. The purpose of these interviews was to capture the thoughts, feelings and anxieties of these students at a point just before their commencement on the programme. This provided biographical information on the background of each student that could be used later to examine patterns and differences in terms of issues such as gender, personal life stage and organisational culture.

## Individual Dialogues and Reflective Diaries

To capture the voice of the individual all students have been invited to engage in taped, one to one dialogues with tutors. The dialogues will invite the students to reflect on their thoughts and feelings as they progress through the programme. Not all students were comfortable with the idea of recording their thoughts in this way and to ensure that all those who wished could participate in recording their own feelings, all students have been invited to submit a reflective Diary each time they submit an assignment. Within the Diary they will be encouraged to reflect on their progress at each stage and in particular the emotional highs and lows they experience.

## Unit questionnaires

Qualitative unit questionnaire data will be available for each unit across each of the three existing cohorts. This will provide some means of validity testing and will demonstrate if collaboration in the research process produces a significantly different learning experience for the cohort under investigation. This data should also provide a starting point for developing the agendas for group interviews.

## Tutor critical incident files

Throughout this whole process four key tutors will be keeping their own critical incident logs. These will be important in capturing the emotional dimensions of the teaching experience as distinct from the student learning experience. Tutors will invite each other to comment on the logs and help with interpretation through a series of interviews. One such incident records for example the puzzling response of a student to the grade received after submitting her first piece of coursework. The mark obtained was 75%, a high mark by any standards and one that in the context of the marking scheme indicated work of 'Distinction' level. And yet this student was clearly unhappy. The reason appeared to be that the mark itself meant nothing because there was no benchmark or standard against which she could judge her own performance. The obvious lesson was the necessity to clearly explain the marking scheme used. A broader issue here is the taken for granted language and symbolism of the academic institution. But this is also one of many examples of the insecurity and uncertainty experienced adult learners returning to study.

## Group interviews

Group interviews will be undertaken at critical points during the course. Students will be invited to attend these interviews prior to each unit workshop making a total of six in all. Interviews will be taped and transcribed and each will last for an hour. Each interview will be with a selection of students although the group constitution will change with each interview. The purpose of the group interviews is to identify general themes and issues surrounding the collective student experience and, at the same time to validate

data and analysis from the other instruments. The first group interview was undertaken in February this year.

### Reasons for Enrolling

Data on reasons for enrolling on the course is drawn from baseline interviews with a representative sample of 12 students from the total cohort of 22. They were interviewed after being accepted on to the course but before attending the first formal induction sessions. The timing of the interviews was important in ensuring that responses were not coloured by the initial learning experience. For the most part at that stage their knowledge of the course was gleaned from what they had seen in promotional literature although one student had attended a presentation and at least two had spoken to existing or past students on the postgraduate award.

Students were asked why they thought the course was right for them and what they thought the benefits of participation would be.

The 12 prospective students all gave multiple reasons for enrolling on the course but eleven reasons for applying attracted more than a single response. The most frequently occurring was the need to develop or broaden FM knowledge. Many of the students giving this reason said it was because they were new to FM.

Six of the students saw the undergraduate course as a bridge to studying FM at postgraduate level. Many of these felt they were not yet ready for the PG challenge and needed time to develop confidence and study skills. Three students said they were attracted because they thought the Certificate was the right academic level.

Six students saw networking with and learning from other people from different organisations as the key benefit of enrolling on the certificate.

Five students saw the Certificate as an opportunity for advancement and even promotion within their own organisations or as an opportunity to move on.

Three students were attracted by the prospect of professional (BIFM) accreditation.

Three others were simply attracted by the prospect of gaining a formal academic qualification.

Others variously stated that they saw the course as an opportunity for academic development and progression, as a personal goal and as formal recognition for what they already did in the work place.

Other reasons quoted were academic development and progression, benefits to the organisation, self-fulfilment, personal satisfaction, personal development and an opportunity to reinforce day to day practice.

## The Profile of the Students

The students on the Certificate programme can be distinguished from more typical student groups. First, they are adults, often with substantial experience of working in the field of Facilities Management but with little or no recent experience of formal higher education. Second, they are learning part time and so are subject to competing pressures from families and jobs. Third, they are learning at a distance and so experience limited contact with peer learners, the University, their tutors and other facilities. Finally, they are undertaking a work based certificate which is unlike a conventional course of study in that it provides some flexibility in the curriculum and expects that students will draw heavily on workplace resources as an important means of supporting their learning.

### Profile of Students on FM Cert

Data taken from the application forms submitted by all students shows that 34% of students are female and 66% male. This is significantly higher a proportion of females than is evidenced by the BIFM member surveys. Their average age is 39 years with a range of 27 to 58 years. The largest group is in the 40-44 band.

Students are drawn from a variety of organisations most of whom are sponsoring the student concerned. The highest group, 33% are sponsored by NHS Trusts, reflecting the support from NHS Estates in sponsoring 10 students on the first cohort. 16% of students are from FM companies, 14% from Consignia and 12% from University Estates departments. Others are from HSE, private companies and utility companies.

In terms of job titles the majority, 54% have a job title which includes the term Facilities Management with the next highest group, 21 %, having the title Estates or Premises Management and 11 % Services Management. This seems to reflect other studies, which suggest that traditional estate and property management is a significant source for FMs.

58% of the students describe their role as FM. Of these 31 % claim cover the full range of FM services, 26% soft services 11 % hard services. In an attempt to further examine the background of these students we identified their previous role in employment. The highest group, 38% were previously employed in office management and 18% catering.

In terms of previous, highest qualifications the largest number 33% have achieved undergraduate certificate levels of qualification. The next highest is City and Guilds, a predominantly trade qualification at 18%. On average the highest qualification was achieved 5 years ago. The most popular for this qualification was management, 39% and the next highest were technical qualifications at 17%.

### The typical profile

From this data it is possible to construct a typical theoretical profile. Thus a student studying on the Certificate is likely to be a 39-year-old male working for a health trust. The student left school at 16 but has since studied part time to Undergraduate Certificate level in the management subject area, probably about five years ago. Their previous role was in office management or administration but they are now described as a facilities manager, responsible for managing the full range of facilities services. This supports the findings of Price (2002) who identified a growing number of FM practitioners emerging from office and administrative backgrounds.

## Student Support Requirements

The subject of the first group interview focussed on the student experience after the completion of one unit. The main topic of the discussion was student support. The interview transcript was coded using Nvivo software identifying 23 nodes representing different elements of support used by the students. The discussion covered a wide range of topics including course administration and delivery, library facilities, tutor support, on line support, feedback and peer support. Each of these is considered in turn. They also discussed some of the difficulties they experienced in writing their first assignment.

## Course Administration and Delivery

Students appeared to be impressed by the quality of administrative support especially in terms of receiving paperwork such as pre course reading on time. Many commented positively on the atmosphere of the workshops attended at the University. These were seen as relaxed and something to look forward to.

### *Library Facilities*

The University library was seen as an important and a useful facility especially for local students, although some experienced difficulty in finding what they wanted. One student used the distance learning support centre but they were unable to provide much in the way of help. One distance student had managed to make arrangements with her local library.

### Tutor Support

Some students, when needing help decided to wait until the next opportunity to speak with a tutor face to face. However many of the students found that phoning a tutor was very useful. They found staff in FMGC easy to contact and helpful in terms of technical questions such as how to access Blackboard but also to test out ideas and be pointed in the right direction on assignments.

### On line Support

The Blackboard learning environment was seen as very important especially when the tutors posted material relevant for the assignment. Although the bulletin and discussion boards were little used and this was a source of some disappointment. E-Mail through Blackboard was seen as important although many students reported that they had experienced difficulties using the system. Problems were also experienced with Emerald but these were resolved and the system was found to be extremely useful especially in supporting the writing of assignments. Gee FactFinder was seen as an important resource. In general on line course material was seen as a useful resource but many students desired also to have paper copies of important material.

### Feedback

Feedback on assignments was seen as crucial in supporting the learning process. Interim feedback on assignment drafts was seen as especially important, giving students the opportunity to refine and improve their work before final submission.

### Work Place Support

To many, work place support was critical. But the experience of individual students was variable. Most employers paid course fees and gave students time off to attend workshops. In some cases students were allowed time in the work place to work on their assignments. For many the workplace, colleagues and more senior staff were an important source of information. For others however the pressure of work was such that being given time off simply meant that they had to work harder on their return to the workplace to catch up with a backlog of work.

## Peer Support

Peer support emerges as an important feature of the overall support infrastructure. Small groups of students rapidly engaged in informal contact with one another by e-mail and by telephone. If anything this contact was more important than more formal mechanisms, providing the students with the opportunity to share material and ideas and with moral support when they were finding assignment tasks difficult. Some students went as far as to suggest that without such support they might have given up and withdrawn from the programme.

## Anxieties

Many students seemed to have real anxieties about the requirement for formal referencing using the Harvard system they also expressed exaggerated worries about plagiarism. Students commented that the language used by the academic community sometimes confused them. They were sometimes bemused by simple words that seemed to have different meanings in this new context. For most of the students this was their first experience of a University. Pre course reading was seen as helpful but at the same time could be intimidating and difficult to understand. This led to feelings of inadequacy and anxiety. Other students mentioned the importance of support from families and friends as well as the workplace but all this support carried with it a cost in terms feelings of responsibility. Students were clearly worried about letting these supporters down if they did not succeed. Students commented on the amount of time involved in producing work for assignments including research, writing and time spent getting material and most had experienced difficulties in balancing the time commitment on the course with work, home and social life. Unexpected events such as illness often intervened making work planning difficult.

## Conclusions

The evaluation project is at an early stage. The above comments represent only the first of six phases of data collection. This first stage concentrated on student support, later stages will explore other themes of the overall student experience. It is therefore premature to draw firm conclusions but the data collected to date does indicate that a high level of student support is critical to these students. More important perhaps is the need to provide the widest possible range of support mechanisms so that the students can actually select those that best meet their own personal needs. Above all, when studying at a distance, with limited opportunity for face to face contact, peer support and the networking opportunities that arise from the cohort experience are essential.

Finally, returning to the story of the 'birth' of the Certificate in Facilities Management we are reminded that this is really only the beginning and that:

"the course members do not remain still: they need to be nourished; they make demands on us; they cry out and complain when frustrated or in some mental pain. It dawns on us that the work has only just begun, that our ability to provide the right environment and mental food for the students is yet to be tested. Compared to the tasks ahead, the labour pangs of giving birth to a new venture seem in retrospect, if severe, at least quickly over. We wonder what process we have set in motion, what we have taken on and whether we will be able to sustain the effort over time." (SalzbergerWittenburg et al, 1985)

However from the emphasis placed by these students on informal peer support we might conclude that providing sustenance and the right environment is down, not just to the efforts of tutors and is due to more than a little help from their friends.

## Glossary<sup>24</sup>

Atomic Energy Authority (AEA)	Now the UKAEA, a statutory corporation set up originally to pioneer the development of nuclear energy. Its primary responsibility now is the decommissioning of nuclear installations.
Benefits Offices	Offices in all towns and cities responsible for paying out unemployment and other benefits.
BIFM	The British Institute of Facilities Management, the main professional body in the UK with a membership of about 6000. BIFM is the main body which accredits FM courses in the UK and also allows entry to the profession through its own examinations.
Blackboard	The virtual learning environment introduced by Sheffield Hallam University providing a range of on line information.
Block Weeks	Delivery of teaching on the postgraduate programme is concentrated in weeks of study lasting for a week.
Cohort	A group of students studying together on a course or programme.
Consignia	This is the new global corporate name for the Post Office renamed in 2001. This is a government owned public company.
Emerald	An on line database of Journals dealing mainly with the management subject area.
EMU	Estate Management Unit. A small department within HSE set up to take responsibility for the HSE estate following the abolition of Property Holdings.
ES	The Employment Service, a central government agency responsible for managing job centres and benefits offices. In 1997 this function became part of the Department for Education and Employment, a government ministerial department.
ESEB	The Employment Service Estates Branch, the department within the Employment Service responsible for managing Employment Service buildings.
Flixborough	In 1974 a chemical plant in Lincolnshire in the east of England suffered a devastating explosion which resulted in the deaths of 28 people.

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<sup>24</sup> The Glossary was added to this version of the paper to explain elements unique to the UK context, to a European audience

GEE FactFinder	An information data base including material on a range of FM topics
HSE	The Health and Safety Executive, a UK central government agency responsible for all matters relating to health and safety at work.
Job Centres	Offices in all towns and cities in the UK providing a range of services to employers and people seeking employment.
Leases	The formal contract between the owner of property and its occupier (tenant). Until recent years leases of commercial property typically lasted for 25 years.
NHS Estates	An executive agency of the Department of Health responsible for providing advice and guidance on all aspects of Estates and Facilities.
NHS Trusts	The National Health Service is divided into local Trusts running local hospitals and other local health facilities.
Nvivo	A software package used for analysing qualitative data such as interview transcripts
Civil Estate.	PACE Property Advisors to the An umbrella organisation set up after the abolition of PSA and PH to provide general advice to agencies who inherited day to day responsibility for their own estates.
Postgraduate	Pg, this is the next academic level after undergraduate of degree study
Property Holdings	Property Holdings (PH) replaced PSA in 1994.
PSA	The Property Services Agency, a central government agency which was responsible for managing all property held by central government agencies. PSA was abolished in 1994.
Royal Mail	The government body responsible for the postal service in the UK.
Treasury Space Standards	The Treasury is a central government department responsible for all aspects of the formulation and execution of financial and economic policy. The space standards are seen as generous compared to the private sector.
Undergraduate	Ug, this is the normal progression for students entering Higher education (university) after leaving School at 18.

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# Appendix B: Early Student Reflection

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Memorandum



**Facilities Management Graduate Centre**

Sheffield Hallam University Unit 7 Science Park Sheffield S1 1WB UK  
Telephone +44 (0) 114 225 3240 Fax + 44 (0) 114 225 4038  
Email FMGC@shu.ac.uk/fmgc

To: Laura and Ron

CC:

From: Phil

Date: Feb 23 2000:

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Subject: Gordon Wilson's reflection submission

These extracts are taken from Gordon Wilson's submission for Unit 3 Learning Outcome 6 - responding to change. I think they are a fascinating insight into the process the three of us have been through - I am particularly interested in the "emotional" context which comes over very clearly and which can so easily be overlooked by us. Given that Mike is one of the more senior members of [name of organisation deleted] staff, we can only begin to imagine the of fear and apprehension for which we have been responsible over the last two years! I feel a thesis coming on.

The introduction of the SHU training programme immediately divided the Unit into two camps; those that had signed up to complete the course on joining the Unit - the promotees; and those who had the requirement imposed on them without consultation - the majority of staff. I, along with the other two people joining the Unit, were resigned to 'the change', although we were concerned about the burden of completing the course being added to the task of learning a new post and all the normal anxieties that go along with it. The other members of staff were displaying feelings of anger and frustration - 'we didn't sign up to do this qualification!', 'we weren't consulted!', 'we are not getting paid any more money!', 'what's in it for us?'. There were also concerns that staff would be handicapped by their level of knowledge and more senior members of staff would therefore have an advantage - further division. People felt threatened, what if they failed?, would they lose their status amongst colleagues?, will their 'proper job' suffer as a result and therefore their appraisal markings? Anger and frustration gave way to apathy, although we knew it was coming, most people decided to put it out of their minds. After all, management may change their minds, current workloads could take priority, we will worry about it when it happens, until then let's forget about it.

The first barrier to be overcome, was to convince people that the course would be beneficial to them and the competencies learned would aid them and make them more efficient in their job..... The Unit was introduced to Phil Askham and his team who introduced the course, described what it entailed and started the process of convincing us that we had the wherewithal to complete the course, citing the experience of other government departments who had gone before us. One of the main barriers to the process was that most staff had left school a number of years before and many had no experience of doing such a course. The fear of being left behind, or not being able to complete the course was a worry for most of us. To overcome this, each of us was interviewed separately and a skills audit was taken of the knowledge we had, and how we could use this knowledge in undertaking each of the learning outcomes. The SHU team also described how the learning outcomes were not a test of our knowledge but a vehicle for improving or gaining knowledge in certain key areas. We would be asked to put forward our own ideas and experiences as part of the process which would make each of our portfolios unique and equally deserving of merit.

The process was not all doom and gloom. There were a number of positives already identified: academic qualification, learning something new, the confidence the knowledge gained would bring when dealing with contractors/consultants etc.

The first Unit was to be satisfied by the completion of a test at our offices in Bootle. Before the test we were given an informal interactive lecture introducing us to the history of landlord and tenant and how the process had evolved from medieval times to the present day. People were encouraged to discuss issues with colleagues and relate their experiences. The test was a fairly straightforward, recording some of the things we had learned that morning. Even those colleagues who had no previous knowledge of estates had no difficulty in achieving a pass mark. This process had a number of positive effects: it galvanised us together as one group with a common goal; it gave comfort in the knowledge that this was not 'rocket science' and what we had to learn was within our capability; and gave us the momentum we needed to start the process. We were 'unfrozen' and ready to take on the next module.

In the next Unit, staff were given a selection of options from which they could make a choice of six learning outcomes. To help us in the process, the SHU organised a series of discussion groups looking at the various outcomes and how they might be satisfied. Following this, Staff were given a one to one session with a member of the SHU team to discuss in detail how we as individuals might tackle each of the learning outcomes and possible sources of information to help us. I think it was at this stage that a mistake was made. The staff knew that they had three years to complete the whole course. We had approximately 4 months to complete the first Unit and submit it for examination and marking by a Board. For the next few months, we were left to our own devices. Unfortunately, the momentum gained in attending the workshops and one to one interviews was lost as the pressure of our normal work became a major restraining factor.

Because the goal was so far in the distance, I like others continually put it off until another day. The days became weeks and drifted into months. When the SHU team returned some months later, they found that little progress had been made. The trouble was, the SHU training had a low priority in the working day of the staff. There were no 'Reinforcements' as behaviourists call them to keep the momentum

going and to encourage us to complete the learning outcomes. As a result the exam board had to be delayed and a new date for completion of the Unit was given.

When we met with the SHU team to discuss why the momentum had been lost, it was obvious that all the original restraining factors were back in place and we had returned to our 'frozen' state. We had accepted that we needed to do the course work but we lacked commitment. We discussed how the Unit should be tackled and how we could maintain momentum. This resulted in four positive steps:

- a) a timetable for completion of each Unit which could be reviewed by the Head of [our department]
- b) the introduction Support Groups to encourage one another and share ideas and information.
- c) a commitment from EMU management that staff could set aside specific times in their working day to do course work or could spend a working day at home.
- d) staff were encouraged to submit their draft learning outcomes for interim assessment and feedback.

The delay in completing the last Unit meant that the timescale to complete this one was tight. To help the staff complete this Unit on time the steps above have been used again. To save time, the members of SHU were divided into teams and allocated one learning outcome. Each group collected evidence and background material for their particular learning outcome and made it available for their colleagues to use."

"One of the biggest hurdles for me, is overcoming the inertia brought on by fear and dread of starting a large undertaking such as this. I work better if I have series of smaller targets to achieve, rather than one large one and I am sure the same is true for my colleagues. This is how I planned each learning outcome:

- a) I concentrated on one learning outcome and thought about the main points I would need to cover. I put these main points down on paper as headings below the title of learning outcome and added an 'introduction' and 'conclusion'. I now had the framework for the document.
- b) Looking at the main headings, I thought about the evidence or other documentation I would need to illustrate my commentary and any reference material I would need.

With the framework in place the, all I needed to do was fill in the blanks under each heading. By arranging the headings in sequence, the documents tended to flow in a logical order and I ensure I cover each of the main points. This is a technique I have used many times when long letters or documents and have recommended it to colleagues."

# Appendix C: Pilot Interview Transcript

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June Smith  
03 April 2000

Transcript  
Tape Question 1 and Response

Hi June its Phil Askham.

First of all thanks for agreeing to pilot this particular interview style with you. As I said in my letter I think and I hope there will be a number of benefits for both of us including the very likely probability that you can use the tapes as evidence of reflection when you come to complete the final unit of the course.

When you E mailed me to say you were prepared to help, you said you were looking forward to the experience. And given that it's new to both of us I think we probably share a bit of anxiety but I'm sure that it will work well. Anyway, as I said over the phone, I'd like you to respond in your own time and your own words, on the tape You can take as long as you want and as many takes as you feel necessary until you're happy with your responses. I'd like you then to return the tape to me and I will follow up with some further questions.

***For this first session, I'd like to start with a fairly general question. So, June, could you tell me about your feelings about being involved in the Certificate in Estates and Property Management. Can you remember how you felt when it was first suggested that you needed to complete the qualification? Can you recall any particular occasions when you experienced strong positive or negative emotions as you went through the process?***

That's all for this time. I really look forward to hearing from you. Thanks a lot June. Bye for now.

Hello Phil in answer to question one, you asked me to tell you a little bit about my feelings about being involved in the Certificate in Estates and Property Management. Well the first feeling that comes into mind is the feeling I have of constant worry most of the time. I feel a little resentful because I have to give so much time to achieving the Certificate. There's also a constant pressure for me anyway, worrying that whether I will be totally committed and giving that commitment, also a feeling of panic sometimes. I'm sure that's more to do with my personality that erm I will never get this completed in time especially the units erm. Also I worry that if I didn't do this, if I didn't complete the Certificate this will/could be frowned upon by managers within my office and also, more so a feeling of letting myself down.

My initial, or one of my initial feelings was that oh I am too old to be carrying out academic studies when I never did any of this in my past. This is the first time I have ever attempted to do anything like this, erm also er a feeling of why am I really doing this, will it make a difference to me after completing the Certificate?

I do remember thinking when I first started on unit 2 or thinking that maybe at the end of the Certificate I would have to be more involved in the actual managing of the estate > and do I want to do well at this. I did ask the question to many of my colleagues, > I'm sorry, > what is the main aim for us to achieve the Certificate. I even asked some of them what their feelings were on this. I do think that one of my strongest feelings is I know that I aim to complete the Certificate by the said time and there are a lot of negative and positive thoughts along the process but I really feel as though I want to achieve this, its more I think for my own self development and the achievement, the academic achievement, is, I think, personal to me.

You asked if I could remember how I felt when it was first suggested that I needed to complete the qualification. Well yes I can, I remember that I joined the section a year after my other colleagues were obviously a year into the qualification and I was **told**, not asked, "Oh now your one of us you'll have to complete the Certificate in Estate and Property Management". My initial reaction was well, OK if that's what it takes to stay here. I then remember asking a number of colleagues again their own thoughts on this and why is it that everyone had to do the qualification. I didn't learn that erm initially it was the managers who had to do this but that the lower grades were given the choice and the feelings from them at the time, beacuse I wasn't involved, was that they should do it so that that meant that everybody within estates management was totally committed erm. My feeling after learning this was that OK they were given the choice but I wasn't and that this obviously means that if a new member of staff joins the section and no matter what grade they are that they will have to be committed to doing this. I'm not too sure if this would put people off applying for a job and also, on the other hand, if, say for example it was me, I completed the Certificate and then say after about two or three months it could be that I then myself make a decision to move on to somewhere else in the organisation or as is the new developing careers together within the organisation encouraging people to move from one division or section after about 3 yrs. I feel that the achievement of the individual on the certificate a lot of what has been learnt on the estate or the managing of the estate will be lost, not to themselves, because I am sure they will be carrying this information with you, but to the section involved.

On a more positive feeling, I do remember saying to myself well I really want to do well on this.

I also hoped that it would give me a confidence and more knowledge in my role as a member of the team.

You asked me to recall any particular occasions when I experienced strong positive/strong negative emotions as I went through the process. Well to start the strong positive emotions. One of the emotions I felt was that working in a unit with 17 people, as I say 11 of these people are actually managers, but it brought everybody together as a team because we were all able to achieve the same thing and I think that brought everybody along the same line of thinking, if I'm making myself clear, erm the occasions when we attended the workshop and people would be split into separate groups, I felt that by yourselves splitting us up into groups achieved more because it was a balance of managers with lower grades whereas I think if people had their own choice they would have gone into little huddles of people that they felt comfortable with. And myself I felt "Oh gosh I'm with sort of

managers here that know more than me" but I did feel more positive at the end of it because we all made contributions and the groups I was in, they'd say that's good and we'd write it down and I thought, well yes my comments are valuable after all, erm, also back in the working environment, I felt that because we'd all have our own learning outcomes to do but again we worked well together this is my experience in collecting lots of evidence, lots reading material and making it available for everyone to look at and this was a way of people communicating, even if I work in an open plan environment with 17 people who all get, on but I still feel as though people were in their own groups and would only talk to each other when they really had to but I think for me something strong and positive coming out of this was that it did bring people together to achieve the same outcome also..... I'm sorry I'm going to have to stop there for a second, can't get my thoughts together..... Sorry about that.....

Another strong positive feeling or emotion that I had was when I had feedback from my outcomes on unit 2 and more so on unit 3. As I say I haven't completed units 1 and 4 as yet as I came in at the start of unit 2 erm I really wasn't sure whether I would have achieved what I set out to do and I was a little bit worried about the feedback but I can say that my feelings were of surprise. Also after completing 2 units out of the 5, definitely acquiring some knowledge about what happens in Estate and Property Management and I have appreciated and learnt more of the theory behind the concepts and structure of what happens in an organisation and of course its people.

As for the strong negative emotions I've felt, these are in no order I'll just try and explain them as I go along. A negative feeling I had as I was going through the process was one of..... Sorry about this, losing my thought..... The environment, my working environment as I've said is an open plan office but in order to do research, typing, reading etc, I could not concentrate at work. I also work part time, 5 hours a day and I'm lucky enough to have a PC at home so I did all my work at home. But the negative emotion I am coming to is that I would work possibly one day a week to try and achieve one learning outcome so I would try and do it on a weekly basis. But bearing in mind that I have done a lot of research in the library and information in my working environment reading and then having to type the notes up, and of course this had to be done at home, and due to other personal commitments i.e. having a family, a lot of the time I would start working late at night, working into the early hours of the morning which would of course lead to the emotions of feeling tired, sometimes, I have to admit feeling a little bit tearful and thinking as it got to 2 o'clock in the morning "oh I give up I don't think I can complete this"..... erm

I also find myself distancing myself from hearing, talking to other members of staff about the units. Again I know this is me talking about my own feelings but the negative responses I heard were as long as they get a pass, not totally committed > and I would have to distance myself and think Ok I'm not to listen to any of this I've just got to think I am totally committed to this myself for my own reasons just to get on with it – I don't mean distancing myself as in not talking to other people but not talking too much about my feelings in completing the units.

I'm also not too sure that this actual Certificate and its title Estates and Property management erm is the correct title for the outcomes or should I say for the units. I mean as far as attaining sound practical skills and the expertise necessary > and

how you go about looking at new properties, the process from start to finish, the building structures etc, this to me is more about what goes into the title.

One of the most important negative emotions for myself, as far as I'm concerned is the actual interview that took place to discuss units 2 and 3 erm again this comes down to my personality coming up to 47<sup>th</sup> birthday and still after all this time I cannot cope with an interview situation erm, quite confident on a work basis, working with colleagues, I've got no problem with talking to > anyone but when it comes to myself talking about the things I've done then an interview situation with people sat across the desk even if its one person, one to one or two to one, then I'm afraid that panic just sets in.

No matter how much preparation I've done beforehand I know that the situation is to discuss what I've actually done myself. I'm not too worried about the questions being asked of me. I'm not worried about saying I don't know anything but > for me that was probably the worst emotion I had I got myself into a little bit of a state, sort of the night before and the next morning. No matter how much I say does it matter at the end of the day but erm just cannot sort of, > I can't accept the way I feel and I think by doing talking into the tape, while I actually feel nervous talking to you on a tape but I think its a good experience and I certainly hope that I will improve as time goes on.

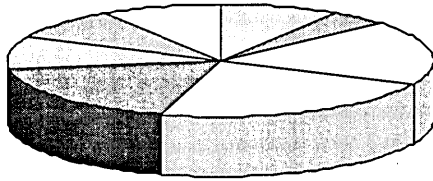
Phil I hope this has answered the three parts to the question that you gave me. Again I don't feel confident that I've said all that I should. Again this is a learning thing for me but I'm sure, well I hope and I will appreciate if you could give me some feedback on how it came across to you.

OK thank you bye

## Appendix D: Demographic Details of Students Involved in the Cohort Study

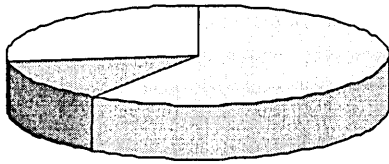
	Organisation	Age	Gender	Highest Qual	Date	Years Since	Current Role
1	FM Service Provider	37	F	A level	1983	19	Account Manager
2	FM Service Provider	42	F	NK	NK	NK	Facilities Manager
3	FM Service Provider	35	F	NVQ	2002	0	Facilities Manager
4	Building Services Government Agency	35	M	City and Guilds	1992	10	Divisional Manager (Maintenance)
5		47	M	A level	1973	29	HEO
6	Public Corporation	48	M	U/G Cert	1993	9	Facilities Manager
7	Public Transport Agency	49	M	City and Guilds	1987	15	Infrastructure co- ordinator
8	NHS Trust	39	F	NVQ	1999	3	facilities Customer Care Officer
9	University	58	M	U/G Cert	1992	10	Facilities Manager
10	FM Service Provider	44	M	City and Guilds	2001	1	Facilities Manager
11	NHS Trust	47	F	City and Guilds	1995	7	Deputy Support Services Manager
12	Limited Company	38	F	U/G Cert	2000	2	Property Supervisor
13	Limited Company	39	M	Diploma	2001	1	Facilities Manager
14	Government Agency	27	M	Degree	1997	5	Estates Manager
15	University	28	F	Degree	1999	3	Facilities Manager
16	Financial Institution	30	M	HND	NK	NK	Facilities Analyst
17	NHS Trust	43	M	U/G Cert	1999	3	Facilities Management Co- ordinator
18	FM Service Provider	33	M	City and Guilds	1999	3	Facilities Manager
19	University	26	F	NVQ	1992	10	Facilities Manager
20	University	36	M	O level	NK		Facilities Manager
21	Public Utility	40	M	NVQ	2000	2	Commercial Officer (procurement)
22	FM Service Provider	27	M	GCSE	1991	11	Premises Manager

### Highest Qualification



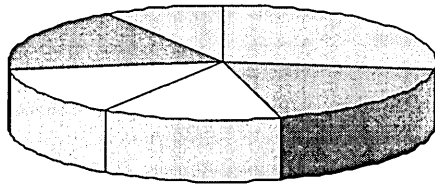
- ☐ A level
- ☐ NK
- ☐ NVQ
- ☐ C + G
- ☒ U/G Cert
- ☐ U/G Dip
- ☐ Degree
- ☐ O level/GCSE

### Job Title



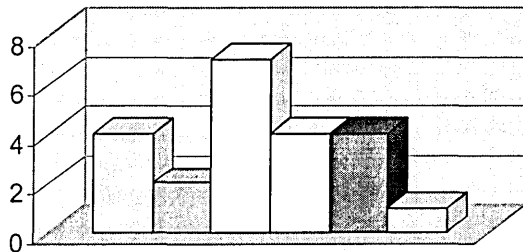
- ☐ Facilities Manager
- ☐ Estates/Property Manager
- ☐ Other

### Sponsoring Organisation



- ☐ FM Service Provider
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Govt Agency
- ☐ NHS Trust
- ☒ University

### Age



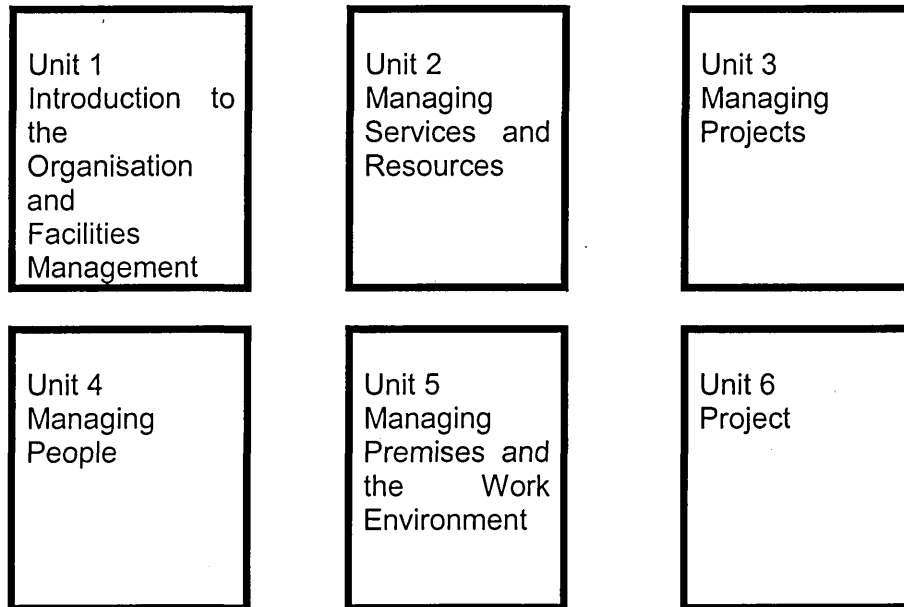
- ☐ 25-29
- ☐ 30-34
- ☐ 35-39
- ☐ 40-44
- ☒ 45-49
- ☐ 50+

# Appendix E: Course Structure and Overview

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Extracts taken from the Study Guide for students

## 1. Programme Structure



## 2. PROGRAMME AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aims and objectives will be to:

offer the full range of Facilities Management products to a wide range of corporate and "open access" clients by creating a "user friendly" and easily understood framework, accessible to the full range of staff within the Facilities Management industry make explicit possible routes for progression from UG to PG level benefit from the sharing of best practice in terms of student support and administration as well as potential economies of scale provide a coherent academic planner for learners in order that they can more easily understand the level and means of study appropriate to their needs.

3. Indicative timetable for the award, progression and deadlines unit by unit over a two-year period

Dates	Activity	Days Attendance
Year One		
January	Induction Workshop	2
January	Unit 1 Workshop	2
<b>April</b>	<b>Unit 1 Submission Deadline</b>	
May	Unit 2 Workshop	2
August	Unit 2 Submission Deadline	

September	Unit 3 Workshop	2
December	Unit 3 Submission Deadline	
Year Two		
January	Unit 4 Workshop	2
April	Unit 4 Submission Deadline	
May	Unit 5 Workshop	2
August	Unit 5 Submission Deadline	
September	Unit 6 Workshop	
December	Unit 6 Submission Deadline	

This is indicative but the guiding principles are that there should be three months between unit workshops and the submission date for coursework for that unit and secondly that there should be enough time between the submission deadlines and the following workshops so that detailed feedback can be given to students before commencing the next unit.

The provision of a clear and specific programme of study at the outset is a response to the need, identified in the critical review, for a clear structure for the award with specified submission deadlines.

#### 4. Admissions Criteria:

Admission to the University Certificate will normally require candidates to be 18 years of age, be working in the field of facilities management or its support and be involved in making decisions in that area and to satisfy one of the following conditions:

Either

GCSE Grade C or above in English and Mathematics and at least two 'A' level subjects; or

a BTEC Certificate or Diploma with 3 merit grades at level III; or

the equivalent qualifications which meet the requirements of the course; or

Advanced GNVQ or

a mature student who can meet the requirements of the course and benefit from it (i.e. a minimum of 21 years of age with relevant work experience).

#### 5. Teaching and learning philosophy, strategy and methods

The School's Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy was published in September 2000. This document recognises the needs of an increasingly diverse student body and the growing culture of lifelong learning, the need for flexible delivery, learning assessment and feedback which is facilitated by communications and information technology and an emphasis on skills development.

It emphasises the need to foster deep learning approaches and the provision of a supportive learning environment and infrastructure.

The strategy identifies key trends that define future needs and the approach to teaching learning and assessment:

Diversity of students and a growing culture of lifelong learning  
Flexible delivery, with time, pace and place increasingly chosen by students;  
Continued reductions in HEFCE income for teaching, demanding skilful resource deployment, continued efficiencies in teaching delivery and growth in full cost courses;  
Learning, assessment and feedback enabled and facilitated by communications and information technology (C and IT) where appropriate;  
Emphasis on the development of employability skills and reflective practitioner skills, for future flexibility and responsiveness to career change.

Four of the five explicit School LTA objectives are explicitly addressed within the Teaching, Learning and Assessment strategy of the Certificate:

Objective 1: To ensure that students develop as reflective practitioners and independent lifelong learners.

Objective 2 To support student success, retention and academic progress by making provision flexible and responsive to the varied needs of the students.

Objective 4: To enable staff to provide effective and efficient delivery by disseminating and supporting good practice and innovation.

Objective 5: To continue to improve learning resources.

The balance of delivered subject input, skills development and personal tutorial support for this award is developed on the back of considerable experience of delivering the award to a mix of open access and corporate students over many years. Teaching and learning methods are also informed by the recent critical review. The action points raised in by the critical review are addressed as follows:

The provision of written and electronic guidance material including study guide and reading lists as well as advice on how to access materials

Workshops directly related to unit learning outcomes

Detailed guidance on word limits and assessment criteria for all assessed work

Variety in assessment, full information and support for all assessment methods.

6. Student learning hours for each unit by type - Refer to Unit Information Table on Page 39

Each 20-credit unit has a diet of 200 notional hours, which will include time spent in workshop attendance; personal tutorial support and self directed study.

Balance of supported learning time to directed and independent learning time

The balance is heavily weighted in favour of self directed study and this reflects the general trend in all modes but is seen as appropriate for a work based award where the key focus is on the opportunities for learning provided within the work place. Students will be explicitly required to underpin theoretical knowledge by relating this to personal experience and practical examples.

#### Intensity of study

It is difficult to prescribe the intensity of study, which will in part depend upon experience and work place opportunity. However the expectation of completion of the Certificate within a two-year period should be seen as equating to at least one full day of study per week on average over this period.

### 7. ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

#### Assessment philosophy, strategy and methods

The key drivers behind the assessment strategy are:

Equality

Diversity

The use of explicit assessment criteria

Transparency of purpose and method

Practicability

An appropriate formative/summative balance

The provision of constructive and timely feedback.

There is an explicit recognition of the potentially threatening nature of all forms of assessment for many students on this type of award. Students will be provided with interim feedback before submitting any written work. Where appropriate mock assessments will be undertaken to prepare students for assessment forms such as interviews and examinations.

Assessment methods will include the portfolio, which has been well developed through earlier versions of this award, interviews, presentations, essays, reports, reflective statements and examinations.

### 8. STUDENT SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

One of the aims of the Facilities Management Learning Map is to benefit from a holistic approach to student support where administrative and academic teams work together. This follows the existing infrastructure on the Postgraduate Programme in Facilities Management which is well established and responds to the specific needs of part time students returning to or unfamiliar with academic study at this level. The structure and form of student support and guidance provision on the Postgraduate Programme in Facilities Management has been developed in a manner sensitive to the particular needs of students who are learning independently, the aim being to foster their development in a way which will encourage lifelong learning. These support and guidance systems are, therefore, appropriate for the Facilities Management Learning Map. Additionally, in addressing student support needs we have also had regard to the issues raised in the Critical Review.

Student support will include the following components:

Guidance during induction aimed at student centred learning with explicit recognition of the needs of returners to study

Administrative student support

A "Help Line" telephone number and e-mail address providing access to the Course Administrator, who will direct the student to the appropriate support service or tutor

Peer support, facilitated mainly through FirstClass e-mail Conferencing

A detailed Study Guide will be provided to all students upon registration and introduced during the Induction Programme to ensure familiarity with the content

Web based learning resources

Academic student support through the Academic Guidance Tutor and, where applicable through a personal tutor

Central support services

Material on skills development including "Key Skills on line". It is important to note that Students will be directed to skills development material at the appropriate points in time during the learning process. This will occur both through workshops and direction to the relevant Key Skills supporting material.

Access to the Distance Learner Support Service. The Induction Programme will inform the student on how the service operates, incorporating both on and off campus learning centre facilities.

FirstClass e-mail and conferencing. An introduction to the system will be provided during the Induction Programme.

Each of the above components already exists to support students on the Postgraduate Programme. In addition employers will be expected to provide work place mentors who will ensure, among other things, that students will be given access to opportunities, within the workplace in support of their studies.

9. UNIT INFORMATION TABLE (incorporating assessment schedule)

AWARD TITLE : University Certificate in Facilities Management

YEAR: One

	Unit title Introduction to the Organisation and Facilities Management	Unit title Managing Services and Resources	Unit title Managing Projects
Unit code	UCFM 01	UCFM 02	UCFM 03
Semester of delivery	N/A	N/A	N/A
Core/ Desig/ Option	C	C	C
Level	1	1	1
Credit points	20	20	20
Assessment modes and weighting	Essay 50% Workshop Report 50%	Portfolio 100%	Report 100%
Unit to unit Co / Pre requisites	None	UCFM 01	UCFM 01
Number and breakdown of Student Learning Hours by type* (eg. Lecture, Seminar, Lab, Workshop or Directed/independen t)	W 32 Hours PT 12 Hours SDL 156 Hours	W 16 hrs PT 12 hrs SDL 172 hrs	W 16 hrs PT 12 hrs SDL 172 hrs
Unit leader and School			
Unit banding	A	A	A

AWARD TITLE : University Certificate in Facilities Management

YEAR: Two

	Unit title Managing People	Unit title Managing Premises and the Work Environment	Unit title Project
Unit code	UCFM 04	UCFM 05	UCFM 06
Semester of delivery	N/A	N/A	N/A
Core/ Desig/ Option	C	C	C
Level	1	1	2
Credit points	20	20	20
Assessment modes and weighting	Report on Procedures 50% Reflective Report 50%	Essay 50% Exam 50%	Report 80% Personal Statement 20%
Unit to unit Co / Pre requisites	UCFM 01	UCFM 01	UCFM 01
Number and breakdown of Student Learning Hours by type* (eg. Lecture, Seminar, Lab, Workshop or Directed/independen t)	W 16 hrs PT 12 hrs SDL 172 hrs	W 16 hrs PT 12 hrs SDL 172 hrs	W 16 hrs PT 12 hrs SDL 172 hrs
Unit leader and School			
Unit banding	A	A	A

# Appendix F: Individual Interview One:

## Interview Schedule

---

Evaluation of the Certificate in Facilities Management  
Pre-induction Interviews

Name of Interviewer:

Name of Interviewee:

Date of Interview:

Questions – answers to be recorded in the space provided and clearly referenced if continuation sheets are necessary

1. Can you recall how you felt about the Certificate in FM when you first heard of it?
2. Did you follow up your enquiry immediately? (if there was no action on their part try to establish how the enquiry progressed, contact later, contact from us -why was this?)
3. Thinking about the information you received do you think this helped you to understand what exactly what you were applying for?
4. What do you feel was the most useful information provided? brochure/casual personal contact/interview?
5. Why did you feel that this course was 'right' for you?
6. Having decided to apply, I would like you to try and remember how you felt at each of the following stages of the process:
7. Phoning for further information on any aspect of the course
8. Completing the application form
9. Talking to other people about the course eg colleagues, employer/line manager, family, members of course team at SHU
10. Interview with the Course Leader – it would help if you could split this into how you felt both pre and post interview
11. Receipt of the formal offer of a place
12. If you needed further information you clear about who to ask and how did you feel about approaching them?
13. What do you think the main difficulties will be for you?

14. (Personally - academic/personal life professionally)
15. How do you think you might cope with the difficulties?
16. Have you thought about your support needs – what sources of support are you expecting? (peers, workplace, SHU - academic/admin)
17. What do you expect will be the main benefits from participating on the course?
18. How do you feel – right now - about starting the course?

Notes

# Appendix G: Interview Protocols

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## **Agreement for Student Participation in: The Evaluation of the Certificate in Facilities Management**

### **Group Interview Sessions:**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the evaluation of the Undergraduate Certificate in Facilities Management. The research is being undertaken by Phil Askham, Jill Fortune and Sarah Fidment. The aim of this research project being to gain a greater understanding of the experience of adults returning to study on a part-time and part-distance basis. This will assist with the ongoing development of appropriate methods of delivery and student support for this type of course.

The purpose of the Group Interview sessions is to explore thoughts, feelings and perceptions in relation to your experience on the Certificate in Facilities Management. We are interested in your views and will encourage you to participate in the discussion. You should note that critical observations are particularly helpful in this process and we seek individual and collective views. Please also note that the purpose of each session is not to achieve consensus.

The sessions will take place before the planned unit workshops, at Sheffield Hallam University. As we need to limit the group size for this type of interview it will not be possible to interview everyone each time. Therefore, we will send out personal invitations for each of the planned sessions.

The group interviews will be recorded on tape so that we can be sure interpretations are accurate. The recording machine will be controlled by one of the group members and all members will have the right to request that the machine be turned off at any point during the session.

Those present will include the group members and two members of the research team.

### **General Points:**

- Tapes and any transcripts will not be used in conjunction with any part of the evaluation or for any other purpose without the express consent of all participants.
- The research team may wish to publish the results of the research to assist the University and other interested parties in gaining a better understanding of the experience of students on programmes like the Certificate in Facilities Management. Publication may be through academic papers written for journals and conferences or the results of the research might be presented in seminars or workshops. If you do consent to publication in any form, you will be given the opportunity to comment on the material and request any alterations or amendments you see fit.
- Unless you wish otherwise the whole process will be confidential.
- You will be free to withdraw from any session at any stage.
- Each participant will be provided with all transcripts from the group interview sessions and on request, copies of tapes. You may wish to use these as part of the evidence of your own reflections on the course as part of the assessment for Unit 6, the Personal Statement.

## Facilitator's Crib Sheet

### Introductory Statement

The purpose of the evaluation is obviously to inform our thinking about the way in which the course is supported and delivered. You're the most valuable source of information without question. I think it is important for you to understand that what is said is absolutely confidential and it doesn't go beyond this room for each session unless you choose otherwise. We won't use any tapes or transcripts in conjunction with any part of the review or for any other purpose without first seeking your consent and unless you all agree to that then we simply won't use them. You'll also be given copies of transcripts and evaluations resulting from those transcripts and if you want you can have copies of the tapes. You might want to use the transcripts as part of your critical reflection for unit 6, that is a possibility.

So you'll have an opportunity to look at the transcripts and if you've got any comments or if you want to make any clarification you will have that opportunity. What we would like to do is encourage you to discuss your views. I've got some questions that I'm going to ask and it's a sort of semi-structured format but there's plenty of opportunity to divert from that if necessary and we'll see where it goes. We will finish at 10.00 o'clock, the hour will go very quickly I'm sure. But it's your views we're interested in, we're not looking for pats on the back. We want a critical discussion, we want to explore your thoughts, your own personal thoughts and feelings and the purpose of this is not for you to reach a consensus because you'll have different views. Some things you'll agree on some not, is that OK?

Just so we can recognise the voices for the poor soul who's got to do the transcriptions, if you could just say your names.....

## Questions for Focus Group 1 - 19 February 2002

What systems are in place to support individual needs/group needs?

### Facilitator Prompts:

Do students know what forms of support are available and who they should contact?

- Academic staff
- Administrators
- How do they feel about contacting the above?

Forms of contact:

- Telephone contact
- E-mail
- Blackboard
- workshop material postings
- pre-course reading postings
- links to web sites - key skills on-line/articles
- communication - tutors/group/one to one

Distance Learner Support services

Workplace support?

What is your experience of these support systems?

### Facilitator Prompts:

What type of support do you value - academic, peer, administrative - one more than another?

Support mechanisms - do they prefer one more than another eg telephone rather than e-mail

If you had a query was this dealt with quickly?

Was the query answered satisfactorily?

Did you find the Blackboard environment:

User friendly?

Useful?

Is there anything you feel we could do to support you better?

### Facilitator Prompts:

- Academic support
- Administrative support
- Encourage peer discussion?

# Appendix H1: Initial Codes and Categories

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NVivo revision 1.3.146

Licensee: Communication and IT Services

Project: All Data Categories User: Sedat Date: 03/06/2004 - 10:02:33

## NODE LISTING

Nodes in Set: All Tree Nodes

Created: 24/09/2003 - 13:04:50

Modified: 03/06/2004 - 10:01:04

Number of Nodes: 163

- 1 (1) /Arcane Academia
- 2 (1 1) /Arcane Academia/Academic intimidation
- 3 (1 2) /Arcane Academia/Language
- 4 (1 3) /Arcane Academia/Word Count
- 5 (1 4) /Arcane Academia/Reading
- 6 (1 5) /Arcane Academia/Harvard
- 7 (1 6) /Arcane Academia/Procedures and Regulations
- 8 (1 7) /Arcane Academia/Uncertainty
- 9 (2) /Time
- 10 (2 1) /Time/Management
- 11 (2 2) /Time/Work Worries
- 12 (2 3) /Time/Balance
- 13 (2 4) /Time/Pressure
- 14 (2 5) /Time/Distracted
- 15 (3) /Learning Process
- 16 (3 1) /Learning Process/Problems with CW
- 17 (3 2) /Learning Process/Learning Style
- 18 (3 3) /Learning Process/The writing process
- 19 (3 4) /Learning Process/Group work
- 20 (3 5) /Learning Process/Assessment
- 21 (3 6) /Learning Process/Instrumentalism
- 22 (3 7) /Learning Process/Learning from Experience
- 23 (3 8) /Learning Process/Minor Triumphs
- 24 (3 9) /Learning Process/Communication
- 25 (3 10) /Learning Process/Progress
- 26 (4) /Support
- 27 (4 1) /Support/Workshop Atmosphere
- 28 (4 2) /Support/Access to Staff
- 29 (4 3) /Support/Dependency
- 30 (4 4) /Support/Optional
- 31 (4 5) /Support/power
- 32 (4 6) /Support/Subjectivity
- 33 (4 7) /Support/Failure
- 34 (4 8) /Support/School
- 35 (4 9) /Support/More Proactive
- 36 (4 10) /Support/Pride

37	(4 11) /Support/Image
38	(4 12) /Support/Course team
39	(4 13) /Support/Admin
40	(4 14) /Support/Telephone
41	(4 15) /Support/Library
42	(4 16) /Support/Course structure
43	(4 17) /Support/Distance
44	(4 18) /Support/workshops
45	(4 19) /Support/SHU
46	(4 20) /Support/peers
47	(4 21) /Support/Financial
48	(4 22) /Support/Employer
49	(4 23) /Support/Family Support
50	(4 24) /Support/Information
51	(4 25) /Support/Reading
52	(4 26) /Support/Colleague support
53	(4 27) /Support/Feedback
54	(4 28) /Support/Blackboard
55	(4 29) /Support/E Mail
56	(4 30) /Support/Emerald
57	(4 31) /Support/Problems with IT
58	(4 32) /Support/Gee
59	(5) /Motivation
60	(5 1) /Motivation/Course factors
61	(5 2) /Motivation/Demotivation
62	(5 2) /Motivation/BIFM Recognition
63	(5 4) /Motivation/Credibility
64	(5 5) /Motivation/Bridge
65	(5 6) /Motivation/Qualification
66	(5 7) /Motivation/Proof
67	(5 8) /Motivation/Recognition
68	(5 9) /Motivation/Credentials
69	(5 10) /Motivation/Academic Progression
70	(5 11) /Motivation/Self confidence
71	(5 12) /Motivation/self Development
72	(5 13) /Motivation/personal Goals
73	(5 14) /Motivation/Career Development
74	(5 15) /Motivation/Improve practice
75	(5 16) /Motivation/Skills
76	(5 17) /Motivation/Networking
77	(5 18) /Motivation/Opportunity
78	(5 19) /Motivation/Knowledge
79	(5 20) /Motivation/Enhancements
80	(6) /Feelings
81	(6 1) /Feelings/Anger
82	(6 3) /Feelings/Ups and Downs
83	(6 4) /Feelings/Relations with colleagues
84	(6 5) /Feelings/On completion of Unit
85	(6 6) /Feelings/Balance of
86	(6 7) /Feelings/Anticipation
87	(6 8) /Feelings/Confidence

88	(6 9) /Feelings/Excitement
89	(6 10) /Feelings/Inspiration
90	(6 11) /Feelings/Elation
91	(6 12) /Feelings/Relief
92	(6 13) /Feelings/Surprise
93	(6 14) /Feelings/Pleased
94	(6 15) /Feelings/Enjoyment
95	(6 16) /Feelings/Good
96	(6 17) /Feelings/Proud
97	(6 18) /Feelings/High
98	(6 19) /Feelings/sense of achievement
99	(6 20) /Feelings/Enthusiastic
100	(6 21) /Feelings/Low Expectation
101	(6 23) /Feelings/Resentment
102	(6 24) /Feelings/Lack of Confidence
103	(6 25) /Feelings/Disappointment
104	(6 26) /Feelings/Responsibility
105	(6 27) /Feelings/Guilt
106	(6 28) /Feelings/Panic
107	(6 29) /Feelings/Burden
108	(6 30) /Feelings/Short changed
109	(6 31) /Feelings/Had enough
110	(6 32) /Feelings/Grief
111	(6 33) /Feelings/Resignation
112	(6 34) /Feelings/Stress
113	(6 35) /Feelings/Boredom
114	(6 36) /Feelings/Disbelief
115	(6 37) /Feelings/Dissatisfaction
116	(6 38) /Feelings/Sick
117	(6 39) /Feelings/Stupid
118	(6 40) /Feelings/Deflated
119	(6 41) /Feelings/Tired
120	(6 42) /Feelings/unhappiness
121	(6 43) /Feelings/Staleness
122	(6 44) /Feelings/Realisation of Power
123	(6 45) /Feelings/Conflict
124	(6 46) /Feelings/Disagreement
125	(6 47) /Feelings/Disappointment
126	(6 48) /Feelings/Domination
127	(6 49) /Feelings/Aggression
128	(6 50) /Feelings/Frustration
129	(6 51) /Feelings/Agitation
130	(6 52) /Feelings/Misunderstanding
131	(6 53) /Feelings/Tensions
132	(6 54) /Feelings/Arrogance
133	(6 55) /Feelings/Bias
134	(7) /Self
135	(7 1) /Self/Limitations
136	(7 2) /Self/Confidence
137	(7 3) /Self/Comfort zone
138	(7 4) /Self/At work

139 (7 5) /Self/Lack of confidence  
140 (7 6) /Self/Personal Change  
141 (7 8) /Self/Self esteem  
142 (7 9) /Self/Not like a student  
143 (7 10) /Self/Angst  
144 (7 11) /Self/How others see you  
145 (7 12) /Self/Too Old  
146 (3) /Anxiety  
147 (3 1) /Anxiety/Having the Skills  
148 (3 2) /Anxiety/Know when to stop  
149 (3 3) /Anxiety/Nervous  
150 (3 4) /Anxiety/Return to Study  
151 (3 5) /Anxiety/Showing Ignorance  
152 (3 6) /Anxiety/Understanding the question  
153 (3 7) /Anxiety/Fear  
154 (3 8) /Anxiety/Comfort Zone  
155 (3 9) /Anxiety/Uncertainty  
156 (3 10) /Anxiety/Ability  
157 (3 11) /Anxiety/Exposure  
158 (3 12) /Anxiety/On Hand in  
159 (3 13) /Anxiety/The wrong approach  
160 (3 14) /Anxiety/Doubts  
161 (3 15) /Anxiety/Inexperience  
162 (3 16) /Anxiety/Vulnerability  
163 (3 17) /Anxiety/Apprehension

# Appendix H2: Final Themes, Categories and Codes

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NVivo revision 1.3.146

Licensee: Communication and IT Services

Project: All Data Categories User: Sedat Date: 03/06/2004 - 10:57:02

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Modified: 03/06/2004 - 10:54:52

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| 3  | (1 1 1)  | /Not Using Support/Access to Staff          |
| 4  | (1 1 2)  | /Not Using Support/Dependency               |
| 5  | (1 1 3)  | /Not Using Support/power                    |
| 6  | (1 1 4)  | /Not Using Support/Failure                  |
| 7  | (1 1 5)  | /Not Using Support/More Proactive           |
| 8  | (1 1 6)  | /Not Using Support/Pride                    |
| 9  | (1 1 7)  | /Not Using Support/Image                    |
| 10 | (1 1 8)  | /Not Using Support/Distance                 |
| 11 | (1 2)    | /Negative Support                           |
| 12 | (1 2 1)  | /Negative Support/Relations with colleagues |
| 13 | (1 2 2)  | /Negative Support/Information               |
| 14 | (1 2 3)  | /Negative Support/Reading                   |
| 15 | (1 2 4)  | /Negative Support/Responsibility            |
| 16 | (1 2 5)  | /Negative Support/Guilt                     |
| 17 | (1 2 6)  | /Negative Support/Problems with IT          |
| 18 | (1 3)    | /Distraction                                |
| 19 | (1 3 1)  | /Distraction/Time Management                |
| 20 | (1 3 2)  | /Distraction/Work Worries                   |
| 21 | (1 3 3)  | /Distraction/Anger                          |
| 22 | (1 3 4)  | /Distraction/Work Life Study Balance        |
| 23 | (1 3 5)  | /Distraction/Time Pressure                  |
| 24 | (1 3 6)  | /Distraction/Resentment                     |
| 25 | (1 4)    | /Arcane Academia                            |
| 26 | (1 4 1)  | /Arcane Academia/Academic intimidation      |
| 27 | (1 4 2)  | /Arcane Academia/Language                   |
| 28 | (1 4 3)  | /Arcane Academia/Word Count                 |
| 29 | (1 4 4)  | /Arcane Academia/Reading                    |
| 30 | (1 4 5)  | /Arcane Academia/Harvard                    |
| 31 | (1 4 6)  | /Arcane Academia/Procedures and Regulations |
| 32 | (1 4 7)  | /Arcane Academia/Problems with CW           |
| 33 | (1 4 8)  | /Arcane Academia/The writing process        |
| 34 | (1 4 9)  | /Arcane Academia/Understanding the question |
| 35 | (1 4 10) | /Arcane Academia/The wrong approach         |

36	(2)	Theme 2 Supportive Context
37	(2 1)	/Supportive Context/Colleagues and Peers
38	(2 1 1)	/Colleagues and Peers/peers
39	(2 1 2)	/Colleagues and Peers/Colleague support
40	(2 2)	/Friends and Family
41	(2 2 1)	/Friends and Family/Family Support
42	(2 3)	/Employers
43	(2 3 1)	/Employers/Financial
44	(2 4)	/Trust & Feedback
45	(2 4 1)	/Trust & Feedback/Workshop Atmosphere
46	(2 4 2)	/Trust & Feedback/Feedback
47	(2 4 3)	/Trust & Feedback/Communication
48	(3)	Theme 3 Fragile Identity
49	(3 1)	/Limitations
50	(3 1 1)	/Limitations/Having the Skills
51	(3 1 2)	/Limitations/Know when to stop
52	(3 1 3)	/Limitations/Comfort zone
53	(3 1 4)	/Limitations/Nervous
54	(3 1 5)	/Limitations/Return to Study
55	(3 1 6)	/Limitations/Showing Ignorance
56	(3 1 7)	/Limitations/Self esteem
57	(3 1 8)	/Limitations/Angst
58	(3 1 9)	/Limitations/Fear
59	(3 1 10)	/Limitations/Too Old
60	(3 1 11)	/Limitations/Uncertainty
61	(3 1 12)	/Limitations/Ability
62	(3 1 13)	/Limitations/Exposure
63	(3 1 14)	/Limitations/On Hand in
64	(3 1 15)	/Limitations/Lack of Confidence
65	(3 1 16)	/Limitations/Doubts
66	(3 1 17)	/Limitations/Panic
67	(3 1 18)	/Limitations/Inexperience
68	(3 1 19)	/Limitations/Vulnerability
69	(3 1 20)	/Limitations/Apprehension
70	(3 1 21)	/Limitations/Sick
71	(3 1 22)	/Limitations/Misunderstanding
72	(3 2)	/Demotivation
73	(3 2 1)	/Demotivation/Instrumentalism
74	(3 2 2)	/Demotivation/Disappointment
75	(3 2 3)	/Demotivation/Burden
76	(3 2 4)	/Demotivation/Short changed
77	(3 2 5)	/Demotivation/Had enough
78	(3 2 5)	/Demotivation/Grief
79	(3 2 7)	/Demotivation/Resignation
80	(3 2 8)	/Demotivation/Stress
81	(3 2 9)	/Demotivation/Boredom
82	(3 2 10)	/Demotivation/Disbelief
83	(3 2 11)	/Demotivation/Dissatisfaction
84	(3 2 12)	/Demotivation/Deflated
85	(3 2 13)	/Demotivation/Tired
86	(3 2 14)	/Demotivation/Disappointment

87	(3 2 15)	/Demotivation/Frustration
88	(3 3)	/Reference Points
89	(3 3 1)	/Reference Points/School
90	(3 3 2)	/Reference Points/Not like a student
91	(3 3 3)	/Reference Points/Low Expectation
92	(3 3 14)	/Reference Points/Stupid
93	(3 4)	/Teaching Styles
94	(3 4 1)	/Teaching Styles/Learning Style
95	(3 4 2)	/Teaching Styles/Group work
96	(3 4 3)	/Teaching Styles/Assessment
97	(3 4 4)	/Teaching Styles/Conflict
98	(3 4 5)	/Teaching Styles/Disagreement
99	(3 4 6)	/Teaching Styles/Domination
100	(3 4 7)	/Teaching Styles/Aggression
101	(3 4 8)	/Teaching Styles/Agitation
102	(3 4 9)	/Teaching Styles/Tensions
103	(3 4 10)	/Teaching Styles/Arrogance
104	(3 4 11)	/Teaching Styles/Bias
105	(4)	/Theme 4 Capable Identity
106	(4 1)	/Improvement & Change
107	(4 1 1)	/Improvement & Change/Personal Change
108	(4 1 2)	/Improvement & Change/Learning from Experience
109	(4 1 3)	/Improvement & Change/Minor Triumphs
110	(4 1 4)	/Improvement & Change/Progress
111	(4 1 5)	/Improvement & Change/sense of achievement
112	(4 2)	/Motivation
113	(4 2 1)	/Motivation/Course factors
114	(4 2 2)	/Motivation/BIFM Recognition
115	(4 2 3)	/Motivation/Credibility
116	(4 2 4)	/Motivation/Bridge
117	(4 2 5)	/Motivation/Qualification
118	(4 2 6)	/Motivation/Proof
119	(4 2 7)	/Motivation/Recognition
120	(4 2 8)	/Motivation/Credentials
121	(4 2 9)	/Motivation/Academic Progression
122	(4 2 10)	/Motivation/Self confidence
123	(4 2 11)	/Motivation/self Development
124	(4 2 12)	/Motivation/personal Goals
125	(4 2 13)	/Motivation/Career Development
126	(4 2 14)	/Motivation/Improve practice
127	(4 2 15)	/Motivation/Skills
128	(4 2 16)	/Motivation/Networking
129	(4 2 17)	/Motivation/Opportunity
130	(4 2 18)	/Motivation/Knowledge
131	(4 2 19)	/Motivation/Enhancements
132	(4 3)	/Capacities
133	(4 3 1)	/Capacities/At work
134	(4 3 2)	/Capacities/On completion of Unit
135	(4 3 3)	/Capacities/Anticipation
136	(4 3 4)	/Capacities/Confidence
137	(4 3 5)	/Capacities/Excitement,

138	(4 3 6)	/Capacities/Inspiration
139	(4 3 7)	/Capacities/Elation
140	(4 3 8)	/Capacities/Relief
141	(4 3 9)	/Capacities/Surprise
142	(4 3 10)	/Capacities/Pleased
143	(4 3 11)	/Capacities/Enjoyment
144	(4 3 12)	/Capacities/Good
145	(4 3 13)	/Capacities/Proud
146	(4 3 14)	/Capacities/High
147	(4 3 15)	/Capacities/Enthusiastic
148	(4 3 16)	/Capacities/Realisation of Power

## Appendix H3: Category Descriptors

Theme 1: The Obstructive Context		
Category	Description	Codes
Negative Support	This is the 'dark' side of support. Almost every part of the support infrastructure has a negative as well as a positive dimension. This includes malfunctioning IT, system problems and lack of ability. lack of or limited access to hardware. Other support negative include information overload, difficulties with pre course reading. There is also the pressure of support where students feel a sense of responsibility to supportive families, friends and the workplace and the fear of letting people down. There are some instances of ridicule and jealousy from work colleagues as well as resentment from family members.	/Relations with colleagues /Information /Reading /Responsibility /Guilt /Problems with IT
Distraction	This category is about the pressure on time and especially the balance between the "triple shifts" of work/life/study. It is also about the inability to manage time and issues such as procrastination. Distractions also include health problems and family matters.	/Time Management /Work Worries /Anger /Resentment /Work Life Study Balance /Time Pressure
Arcane Academia	This is manifested in a number of ways. There are the arcane rules and regulations of the institution, especially those surrounding the assessment process. It includes problems with the formalities of things like the Harvard system. There are also a range of problems relating to the non standard nature of the course, inflexible academic structures and the desire for homogenisation. For students this is also about the range of things they find daunting about the "hostile" and unfamiliar environment.	/Academic intimidation /Language /Word Count /Reading /Harvard /Procedures and Regulations /Problems with CW /The writing process /Understanding the question /The wrong approach

Theme 2: The Supportive Context		
Category	Description	Codes
Colleagues and Peers	This category covers those occurrences of positive support provided by peers (fellow students) and colleagues in the work place. It covers positive social interaction and working together.	/peers /Colleague support
Friends and Family	Like colleagues and peers this category includes all those positive occurrences of support provided by friends and family members.	/Friends and Family Support
Employers	This category relates to positive support provided by employers. For many this is financial, in terms of the payment of course fees but also the provision of time and other resources to do the course. Some employers also provide encouragement in terms of reading and commenting and generally helping with coursework submissions	/Financial
Trust & Feedback	Formal formative feedback on coursework submissions from tutors as well as the value of interim feedback on drafts. Trust develops through a positive and supportive atmosphere especially within the workshops.	/Workshop Atmosphere /Feedback /Communication

Theme 3: The Fragile Identity		
Category	Description	Codes
Limitations	This category includes expressions of anxiety and a wide range of concerns about personal and academic frailties. Lots of anxieties are about returning to study as well as lack of experience skills and knowledge. Sometimes bordering on the paranoia this is brought on by negative experience of education in the past. There are more extreme cases of anxieties which are manifested in terms of almost physical symptoms	/Having the Skills /Know when to stop /Comfort zone /Nervous /Return to Study /Showing Ignorance /Self esteem /Angst /Fear /Too Old /Uncertainty/Ability /Exposure /Lack of Confidence /Doubts /Panic /Inexperience /Vulnerability /Apprehension /Sick /Misunderstanding
Demotivation	This category includes expressions of instrumental behaviour. Sometimes this is pragmatic and reflects resource limitations and/or time pressures. Secondly it covers occurrences leading to demotivation which can be physical such as tiredness as well as psychological such as boredom.	/Instrumentalism /Disappointment /Burden /Short changed /Had enough /Grief /Resignation /Stress/Boredom /Disbelief /Dissatisfaction /Deflated /Tired/ Disappointment /Frustration
Reference Points	All those occasions where reference is made usually to formal past experience of education. School is the most common of these but college, night school and NVQ's all get a mention. The category is concerned with how these experiences influence expectations of what university will be like. There are also manifestations (especially of school) expressed through choice of language.	/School /Not like a student /Low Expectation /Stupid
Teaching Styles	This category deals with teaching and learning styles and is mainly	/Learning Style /Group work

	<p>concerned with the actual workshops. there is a focus on the concept of student centred learning which is problematic for some and for other requires adjustment as well as some concentration on the trials and tribulations of group working. There is also the challenge of being exposed to different ideas from new sources and the need to begin to "unlearn". Codes also refer to the behaviour of other students in workshop, group work and other contexts</p>	<p>/Assessment /Conflict /Disagreement /Domination /Aggression /Agitation /Tensions /Arrogance</p>
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Theme 4: The Capable Identity		
Category	Description	Codes
Improvement & Change	This category relates to all those occasions where changes and improvements are identified. Students in particular relate back at the end of the course and record the many ways in which they have developed and progressed academically, professionally and personally. This also records those interim occasions where students make important breakthroughs.	/Personal Change /Learning from Experience /Minor Triumphs /Progress /sense of achievement
Motivation	This refers to the very wide range of motivations for doing the course. Much of this comes from the initial interviews where students discussed there reasons for undertaking the course. Reasons include the desire for recognition and credentials as well as the genuine desire to improve and learn. Other see it as the passport to progression in terms of both career and academic development	/Course factors /BIFM Recognition /Credibility /Bridge /Qualification /Proof /Recognition /Credentials /Academic Progression /Self confidence /self Development /personal Goals /Career Development /Improve practice /Skills /Networking /Opportunity /Knowledge /Enhancements
Capacities	Although students express many limitations they also have strengths. Much of this relates to their perceptions of how they perform in a work context. This category also covers the positive expressions of delight, pleasure and satisfaction resulting from study.	/At work /On completion of Unit /Anticipation /Confidence /Excitement /Inspiration /Elation /Relief /Surprise /Pleased /Enjoyment /Good /Proud /High /Enthusiastic /Realisation of Power

## Appendix J: Critical Incident Log<sup>25</sup>

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- Paras 20 July 2001
- 5 - 6: International perspectives. Completed draft and sent to [Supervisor]. Whilst this seems OK in terms of the assessment criteria, I do wonder about the publishability. This is a case study of bad practice - would anyone want to read it? It also seems very trivial and obvious. It didn't work because we failed to support the students. Should we then be surprised?
- 30 August, 2001
- 17 - 18 Finished the final draft (15) of the International perspectives unit. This has been a slog and I am not convinced that it is very good but hopefully with this out of the way I can get back to reading for the thesis and start to concentrate on this and the research project.
- 23 October, 2001
- 41 - 44 First steering group meeting...Discussed the proposal in some detail and one of the issues is the need to rewrite it in plain English - suitably chastised.
- Also started the first base line interviews. These are useful but I am conscious having done two that they are also an intervention in the support process and so confirming my fears about possible contamination across from the research project into the student experience of the course.
- 46 Another problem Angela Jane's replacement will not start until after Christmas, putting Jane under pressure with a knock on effect on Ron.
- 70 Rewardingly there is still much positive feedback emerging from the students who will meet [the independent evaluator] at the next workshop. A good example is George who perceives that his participation on the course resulted in success in getting a new job.
- 72 There are some frustrations over the research funding.
- 109 Laura, Jane and I met to discuss the next phase of the evaluation project in terms of what we need to do to put in place the instruments around the first workshop next month. But we all feel angry and frustrated about the School's continued delay in providing the funding. But I feel frustrated with Jane and Laura about the way they are handling this. Have put myself out to "allow" them to be involved and although their contributions are invaluable it feels as though they have a problem with just getting on with it. My irritation must be apparent! Ultimatum to Sheila give us the money or we abandon the evaluation! I don't think this is entirely unfair although it feels a bit

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<sup>25</sup> I have abridged the log where necessary to protect anonymity and out of tact. All names have also been changed and where these concern students and staff members the chosen pseudonyms are consistent with those used within the data chapters in the thesis. I have also removed those parts deemed not to be relevant. These are mainly memos and other passages relating to reading and methodology etc.

manipulative. If this is not sorted I will end up on my own.

17 January 21, 2002

140 Day 1 of the Managing People unit. I owe Laura an apology. She has put in so much work on this unit and it seems to have paid off. A good day which seemed to draw out a lot of engagement on the part of the students. There was a really good presentation on...HRM which provoked a lot of thought and provided some really good frameworks for the students in developing their coursework.

142 am marking the submissions from cohort 2 for unit 1. What stunningly honest and revealing accounts! It was never designed in this way but they are excellent vehicles for feedback should these be incorporated into the research project?

146 [Supervisor's] comments suggest that I need to review and refine the research questions and these need to be at doctoral level and the key to this is my question 5 which looks at the relationship between the emotional dimensions of teaching and learning. And yet the majority of my instruments only look at the student experience. My own CI log becomes so important and yet thus far my ideas on this are under developed.

150 Just as the evaluation and the research project is seen as a collaboration between the students and their tutors, so the course itself is a collaboration an explicit feature of which is that the students bring their own experience which becomes the focus of content. Once accepted, the roles of teacher and learner become blurred. So when teacher becomes learner they are subject to the same types of emotional experience which serve to block and to facilitate learning. So there is a mirror image here. So, if I am researching the students to discover the truth about their experience why should they not research me to discover the truth about my experience? Is this radical or just plain stupid?

193 Sense of relief! It seems I can proceed.

200 And full marks to Laura and Ron who just seem to be able to take over with such enthusiasm. Everything just seemed to fall into place while the old grey wizard sat back and enjoyed. □

202 Just a note here to remind me of issues surrounding language and the extent that our taken for granted discourse can be a problem to students. This is so simple and yet so important. This will be evident in the transcript.

203 First day of cohort 2 unit 2 workshop and perhaps more important the first group interview for the evaluation. I think the workshop was excellent. If anything this group seems more interactive even than cohort 1 and that is saying something. The focus group went well too.

204 Later reflecting with Jane about the extent to which these students seem to be ready to take responsibility for their own learning. Even though we obviously provide such comprehensive support, unlike say PVM where the more you offer the more they expect.

206 During the day I fed back on unit 1 to Liz and Maria. Interesting Liz got 75% for both pieces but was clearly unhappy. It transpired that she did not have a clue about what standard this represented. Her response was I am glad I have passed but is this a good mark? At the time she

received it she had actually been disappointed!

208 Maria showed both her star quality and her fragility. She was suspicious are you giving me a good mark just to encourage me. Also note the impact of feedback which is perceived as negative and the tendency to focus on this rather than the good points. This is such a sensitive issue.

212 It feels as though somehow we are managing to provide a first class learning experience.

214-218 It was an interesting and challenging day for me with so much to do and so many hats to wear:  
 The group discussion  
 The spoof lecture  
 PVM (yuck!)  
 LG forum (survived it I think) but why no feedback...This underlines my insecurity about getting outside my comfort zone and into FM this is not right and I need to be careful.

220 Interview with Maria does seem to underline my concerns about objectivity in assessment. She is disturbingly close to the truth I suspect about wanting to use grades to encourage she is brighter than she thinks!

225-232 25 February 2002  
 Crap day. Losing the will to live (almost)  
 PVM course planning I have no motivation to the demands imposed with which I do not agree. I just want to take the least line of resistance and get it over with.  
 Salford Paper returned for amendment with cryptic comment but I can't get a response from K it was not a good paper anyway. Why bother in the first place.  
 NHS Estates bid rejected n not a high enough priority what a waste if time.  
 BUT we did get a very positive report from NHS Estates on the Certificate.  
 But the bottom line is why am I killing myself for no reward? If this doesn't change I have to get out.

235-245 5th March 2002  
 Last Friday met D re NTFS application. Very strong and would be a credit to the University if it went forward but one of the other three was better! Pulled no punches in feeding back. The comments of those who sat in judgement:

1. The application was not very exciting
2. There was little indication that I had an impact on the University
3. The project appeared to have limited impact only 22 students.

I don't see what I can do to respond to 1 and 2 above but I can see that I understood the project and this could have been done better as D seemed impressed with my enthusiasm as I talked through the issues

4. The submission represents a huge body of work but how distinctive it is? Obviously not very! I need to make clear what is different about me and how I stand out.
5. The citation could have been better developed in relation to certain elements in the submission
6. There was not enough on reflection and how much change this actually engenders

7. I appear to have peaked! This was a reference to the fall off in publications but this is clearly as a result of the EdD  
 OK this is all fair comment but I have to ask was it worth the effort? I just don't have the standing. It remains hellish difficult to keep motivated all this work and sod all recognition.

251 Met [supervisor] to discuss my final submission. OK. Good feedback and it would seem that I have addressed most, if not all the concerns about my proposal. It would seem WE HAVE A DISSERTATION.

268 Seems like Jane and me are tuned in at least don't know about the rest! Meeting started about 10 minutes late why is it so difficult just to get 5 people round a table at the same time?

274 I have a real worry now. We are getting some written logs and if we can keep up this level it would be OK just. I would prefer more. But no tapes. How do we address this? My research methodology is going to look very thin if it consists only of 6 group discussions a few logs, my own log and some interviews with staff.

276 Also the evaluation is effectively dead. Jane and Laura dealing manfully (sic) with this situation but I really cannot expect them to show a high level of commitment now.

278 Talked to Laura about coding and it strikes me that I need to get to grips with this greater depth. OK what I have so far seems descriptive and superficial. She had looked at group session 1. Like me found lots about support but little about emotion. I think that emotion trigger words are not really what we need to look for. Some of this is threatening to the individual and they seem to exhibit symptoms of denial. So, for example when Maria spoke of how she turned to LW for support at a time of dire need she said yes of course she would also talk to tutors for this support. I feel that what she was actually saying was no I daren't do this and I need someone else I can trust and feel comfortable with. But she can't admit this especially when we are offering ourselves so freely.

15 April 2002

292-303 Madrid disaster!  
 Always knew there was something doomed about this trip. I don't know how long I shall be stuck here but it is TOTAL frustration. I'm not concerned about what I am missing nor how long I shall be off and it is interesting to reflect upon what might be meant by coming back "on my own terms". I was really sorry though not to have had the opportunity to deliver my paper I was looking forward to it and I think I would have got some feedback  
 made some contacts  
 possibility even have recruited  
 As it was [a colleague] presented the paper God knows why. I didn't ask him to, I certainly didn't want him to it probably did more harm than good. He clearly has his own agenda.  
 This is surely proof that we cannot go on at this pace any longer I have been saying it for years now perhaps the bastards will really take notice and I can join the ranks of the selfish lame ducks and spin out my time to retirement.  
 I am also sorry I shall miss cohort 1 unit 5 but I am not sure I would have had much to do with it anyway. In fact beginning to feel pretty superfluous generally! But that is surely a good thing and is after all

- what I wanted. I would however like to be back for cohort 2 if only for the group interview although there is no reason why Jane and Laura can't do this without me. I wonder if they would come over to meet me to talk all this through?

Talking to Laura however seemed to straighten this out a bit in my mind in terms of how important it is. She talked about the impact upon her and Ron, especially in the context of the Cert students being in for unit 5 and even the impact upon them a critical incident? But also the emotional dimension is this a good or a bad thing. Something to be harnessed or to be avoided.

9 May 2002

316-323 Jane and Laura called yesterday. Disappointing. They were late and left early and did not seem to demonstrate any enthusiasm whatsoever for the critical incident log which seems to have failed! But I must confess that I did not have the energy to pursue this either.

What was useful was to talk about what we do now.□We carry on. The next focus group should go ahead as planned on 10/11 June and I need to draft some questions for this. One issue might be the impact on the students of my absence but Laura also felt that a larger number of students in this group were becoming more dependent in terms of needing more in the way of feedback on interim submissions are we encouraging this in some way and is it a good thing?

It is agreed that we should carry on with the evaluation as planned although I will have to take a back seat. I can hardly be going in to Sheffield to see students if I am "on the sick". There are at least a couple of problems here from my perspective:□1. Is this putting too much pressure on Laura and Jane?□2. I more or less lose any contact with the students, which seriously damages my research on the nature of the relationship between tutor and student.□I do wonder if I can carry on on this basis.

11 June 2002

334 Exactly two calendar months so perhaps it is significant that I finally, today, get a visit from HR. It was useful to put down some markers and make clear my determination not to continue to be taken for a ride. How could they disagree! So, no pressure. I come back when I am ready and I do what I want to do but all with their support and blessing.

30 July, 2002

396-398 Saw Sheila yesterday to discuss my return. Feeling really positive now a month to enjoy and then get back to some serious work.□ feel ready for this now.

12 August 2002

401 Going into the office tomorrow heavily symbolic also booked a week in the Lakes similarly symbolic hopefully of return to normality. Pressing on with coding and have almost got up to date with data so far. Some patterns are merging

14 August 2002

404 Finished coding of logs which means that only the reflective writing to complete. Some patterns are emerging but I cannot work out where, if anywhere this is taking me it all seems a bit haphazard and lacking in direction.

406 Yesterday I went into the office for the first time since 11 April a critical

incident if you like. Just breezed in as though nothing had happened and that's how it felt I had never been away. Had I done a good job on myself beforehand? Am I still in a state of denial? But it was OK and paves the way for a full return in September.

408 Had lunch with Ron and Laura. They have clearly done a lot of work preparing the Project unit for 17/18 September. They wanted me to look at the programme and pre course-reading etc. All of which was fine they have some great ideas and I told them so. I find it difficult to accept that for whatever reason they look up to me and value my opinion or even just my approval so be it.

September 3, 2002

459-463 Returned to work yesterday. Now this should have been an emotionally charged critical incident if ever there was one but no. It was really strange. Perhaps I was well prepared but it was strange because it seemed as though I had not been away at all. □ It is frustrating not to be able to jump straight in full time but if this is what those who are to look after want to see so be it. I don't think I am in a position to argue. Anyway it feels good to be back and I feel relaxed and able to concentrate on doing a few things well. □ □ What is obvious is how everyone has rallied around to fill in during my absence because everything seems to have gone on smoothly certainly as far as the certificate is concerned.

481 Second week back. If last week felt as though nothing had changed this week feels stranger. Ron said I looked a bit lost. What is my role? I am so pleased that my roles have been taken over by others but at the same time I have mixed emotions. There is a) a sense of relief that I am no longer burdened with so much responsibility b) grief for the loss of control and responsibility.

18 September 2002

484 Final workshop Project with Cohort 1. Odd that I had not prepared myself. Re-entry to the office had been managed but this one crept up unawares. Understated but warm and welcoming seemed like a really significant event. Walking in yesterday, if I am prepared to admit it, was really quite emotional But how nice to be back.

486 The last two weeks I have experienced a lot of confusion about what my role now is. But I am so grateful that things have been looked after in my absence and the take-over is what I really wanted and it has worked so well.

487 I may be wrong but I think this workshop has worked really well. Laura yet again has put in so much work, so professional. The students seemed to get so much out of it there was a real buzz over the whole of the two days.

489 Then it struck me today right at the end of the afternoon. That was it. Two years and we would never all meet again. They will surely now all complete successfully and some will go on to complete the degree but this group will never meet again like this. We said a few words about what it meant to us but it seemed woefully inadequate. I know I can never go back after experiencing this. Such a nice bunch and so much fun. I think this must rank as the best teaching experience to date.

Friday 4 October

518 Another one of those infuriating situations. I went in especially for a

10.30 meeting which was called in the first place without any consultation with me, only to find it had been summarily cancelled because something else had come up. Nobody bothered to tell me I think the phrase is incandescent with rage.

520 I have been finding it really difficult to give up the reins of power as Cert FM course leader. I hadn't anticipated this but it makes me feel really peripheral. This I must stress is no fault but my own.

525 CI Alison put her bibliography in the wrong place when binding her Project for submission. Oooops! So what. She got 72% but she was distraught because she thought she would lose marks.

31/10/02

563 FG3 good turn out and went OK in terms of trying to validate themes. It seems the students agree with much of my interpretation but do not seem to accept the issue of arcane academia. Perhaps I chose the wrong example to experiment with (Unit 4 Module Outline). Despite what they are saying I still think this is an issue.

567-571 CI: Student support and the mentor letter

During the FG someone (I think it was Alan asked what was happening with mentors. I misunderstood at first and explained that we had discussed the issue and decided that this would be left up to individual students. It then became apparent that this was nothing to do with us but it seems that Student Services have written to all returning students asking them if they would be prepared to mentor a new student on the same course. A number of points arise.

1. It makes us look foolish that we don't know what other parts of the University are doing.
2. Why did they not let us know they were doing it?
3. And most important it is another illustration of how the course does not fit standard patterns and the institution is unable to get their heads around a course which does not fit.

5 November 2002

575 Day two of induction of cohort 3. Did some analysis of feelings prior to course. Not sure that this is in any way conclusive but see my report. We all felt pretty laid back about the induction.

November 6, 2002

601 Relinquishing the role of expert is a risk, which requires trust. My research is about how we set about creating a symbiotic relationship and the problems and issues and barriers we face. There is a central narrative about what happens in the classroom. How is this approach to teaching and learning different and is it sustainable? IN addition the counterpoint is provided by the student experience and again by the tutor critical incident log.

625 What are we trying to do? Think of cohort 3. We pose as facilitators. We admit that the students have more knowledge and our role is to help and support their learning. You have to be brave to concede the status of expert and this is only possible when there is mutual trust between the tutor and student. This cannot happen instantly but the model provides some conception of where you think you would like to go in order to help shape your approach.

651-656 CI: Trust

Laura came back from interviews with Stan and Kath. Both had said,

among other things, that they had experienced a reluctance to contact tutors for help because of a fear of showing ignorance. Now this would be totally insignificant and unsurprising was it not for the fact that that we had suspected this to be the case. So much so that we had raised this on more than one occasion in group sessions. I need to check the transcripts but my recollection is that the responses included we don't have a problem contacting you, we are mature experienced professionals, we prefer to use each other as a resource, you do not necessarily know enough about FM etc. In other words we are not prepared to admit our fragility in front of our peers.

This is critical in that it supports our first instinct and it validates the methodology that parallels the group and individual records as a means of reaching a more complete truth.

It is Critical because if we rely on group feedback and even traditional questionnaires we could get completely the wrong impression and take the wrong corrective action.

685-686 CI Fee Income

The School wants to raise all course fees by 4% this year. We contacted JD to say that this was not appropriate for Cert FM. A couple of days later - faites accomplis notification by memo of across the board increases. However no worries because we just ignore it.

688-689 CI Blackboard

Blackboard will be shut down for maintenance over Christmas just when our students will be wanting to work on their assignments. It will be insecure for a period after the Christmas close down. We get so little notice. If you don't fit the standard course mould, people don't seem to understand.

706 - 707 Analysis

I analyse as I go and try to keep on top of this. I cannot afford any backlog because I constantly need to feed back my observations to the group. I have a methodology for analysis but I do wonder if this is not lacking in rigour.

722 I am making much progress and so I should with this golden opportunity to put in so much time (itself a source of guilt and embarrassment) and, if anything, I have fewer anxieties and concerns than was the case a couple of months ago when I wrote my summary for [supervisor]. But a new Meta anxiety has crept in this has all been relatively painless and I am still enjoying it somewhere along the line, maybe just out of sight a major problem is bearing down on me and something seriously bad is bound to happen.

9 January 2003

783 Did a final draft of Chapter 3. What I have I think is a reasonable description of methodology and methods as they stand at the moment. Encouraged by the two examples of grounded theory Alzheimer's and sexual abuse I have adopted a very intimate style that makes extensive use of first person. I am conscious that this may be criticised but I would need to be persuaded before changing it as it feels comfortable.

13 January 2003

788 Increasingly depressed. Pathetic! Not about the Doctorate but about the prospect of the Corporate Review and the implications for FMGC can we survive? It feels as though this marks the end of 12 years struggle,

and, as I work towards the validation of a degree in FM the culmination of everything is it worth it when there is no guarantee that it will be allowed to go ahead? I feel as though I am too old and too tired to fight these battles any more.

20 January, 2003

816 A series of minor incidents perhaps and this may amount to paranoia on my part. There was the request from Landmark and my offer to pen something on the Cert FM and the completion of the first Cert FM cohort only trying to be helpful but it turns out that there has already been a correspondence by e mail on the subject and I was not copied in. Since my illness I feel generally marginalised and on the fringe of most of what is happening in the unit. Another example of how I feel when Laura came back from doing a presentation at Leeds General Hospital - I really felt as though I should have been involved. I know this is done for my benefit and it is for the best but that does not make it any easier to bear. Reflecting on this what is really interesting is that I do not feel like that at all over PVM what I wonder is the difference?

28/1/03

836 Accreditation

A hard battle to get people to recognise a) what we do b) its quality. It is a hybrid which does not fit any existing pigeonhole and certainly not the accreditation of work based learning.

30/1/03

844 CI Marking

Started marking the managing people submissions from cohort 2. Just to observe that I actually enjoyed the marking for once because the ways in which the students have responded to the challenge is so varied and entertaining. Of course they are flawed and are no better than any other set of submissions but there is flair and originality here in abundance. A good example is Maria's good and bad management submission it doesn't necessarily address all the learning outcomes but it does represent creativity and I suspect learning it also raise the question of how we mark it and what we achieve by this and also the way we are constrained by artificial assessment criteria.

4 February 2003

847 CI winging it

Winging it again this time at DBA level. It actually went well but was this not because of the quality and willingness of the students to engage in and enjoy the debate. I don't know but I do feel exposed by my lack of FM background.

18/2/03

876 I have spent a lot of time thinking about the literature review. I thought I had four clear themes: The policy framework, AE, Barriers and the affective domain. However I made a number of false starts and could not find a way in which did not seem prosaic and lacking in direct relevance. I then did some modelling using Nvivo mapping connections between the points in the review and a significantly different pattern emerged with a centring on the adult as student. It is possible to follow the links to generate narrative. Brilliant, it feels like a significant breakthrough.

879 What a nice bunch cohort 2 are!

- 882 CI Marks  
I am marking the unit 4 Managing People whilst the students are here. I looked at Lucia's today and just commented to her how much I had enjoyed reading it. Apparently after I had gone she commented to Laura that she felt up in the air because she hadn't got a clue how she had performed.
- 889 Yesterday we held the first formal exam board which I suppose should be a CI but all that I can record is that it went as smoothly as expected. Perhaps what is remarkable is the high success rate with very low withdrawal or deferment.  
11 March 2003
- 897 CI Positive Affect  
Also read through the positive side of the statements collected from MTI's - stunning in terms of what we have achieved. Testament to the professionalism of the team but also quite moving when we recognise that this is my legacy, not only for these students - even though I am no longer in direct control but also for the team. Too many people have benefited from this in too big a way in too short a time for it to be insignificant.  
18 March 2003
- 900 This week is unit writing for the degree, but how do I get the others motivated? Apart from Laura who has made a real effort, why does everyone make such hard work of it? We have 15 modules to write. I am taking more than half; no one else has more than 2 so why should I spend all my time on this when I can't get anyone else interested.
- 902 Conversation with Sheila towards the end of the day. She is financial planning for the next year. How many students can we expect? Lots but let's have some resources to support them - this is too much to expect. Why do I bother?
- 907 Also, I reiterate, the module outlines. Laura has been great, Jane has helped, Boris has put in a bit of time (and left me with even more work) but Ron and Sheila for \*\*\*\*\* sake, they just take leave. I have forced myself to be here despite the sunshine, despite the patio to be laid. I bet it rains next week. Why bother?
- 910 You know I have all these stupid anxieties: is it good enough? Am I good enough? Is it self indulgent twaddle and, the most absurd of all - it is going well, too well, just around the corner there is something really bad. Perhaps after all it is OK and there is something good and worthwhile here. I still don't know and I fear that some [one] will pull me back down to earth with a bump.  
20 May 2003
- 915 Took a month off around Easter and two weeks away, returning last week on the 14th to join the induction for cohort 4. Yet another nice bunch it would seem who performed very well in the Felpersham presentations although we were very aware of just how nervous most of them were about this and how relieved when it was over. Still they seemed to have a good time.
- 918 CI: AO Support  
One piece of very depressing news though was that AO, one of the stars of cohort 2 (almost 5/6 units complete and a likely candidate for

further study) may have to withdraw owing to withdrawal of support from employers. Now not only was AO a real success story on the Cert, he was also one of the best supported students from the work place. We are assuming there has been a change of management or something. This just shows how fragile things are.

21 May 2003

925 Spent an hour or so last night going through the collected data on paper to draw together material on the first of the categories, Arcane Academia. At one point it started to feel quite emotional. I had struggled for so long thinking about the limitations of the data - is it of any value? and now, as I look at it again in detail - it seems stunning in its colour and meaning - as though I am really getting to the heart of what the students are thinking and feeling - and - I have only just started!□□927: Oh my God - this is working!

27 May 2003

930 What a pain holidays can be. Stop start all the way.

980 As a footnote Stuart and I have taken almost full responsibility for the Project Module. I think this has been really good for me. I feel very comfortable with it and also back to the level involvement I really want and need.

982 Cl: Library closes at 5.00 pm□

18 June 2003

986 Cl: Can't get into the computer suite which is "closed for the vacation"□

988 This was the last workshop for the cohort 2 students.

23 June 2003

992 I really feel quite bemused. It seems a case of grotesque lack of professionalism to obstruct the passage of the award as well as wholly pointless because it will happen despite [the validation panel chair's] machinations. I wanted at first to give him the benefit of the doubt but what other explanation can there be? If there is a genuine problem about authority, why was this not picked up until last Thursday and even then why did he continue with the validation?

1042 How about a title:

"The symbiosis of andragogy: student support in arcane academia's alien culture"

1044 - : Cl Becky Grant E mail

1051 From: BG (cohort 3)

To: Laura

Sent: 30 June 2003

"Not looking forward to tomorrow. I hate the workshops because I'm there to learn it all rather than just get the certificate, and I hate the fact that I can't contribute a lot. Apart from the workshops I'm really enjoying the course and I've learnt such a lot since I started.□It's a really shame about Joy. We seemed to be in the same boat and I really got on well with her. I tried to persuade her to stay on the course but she obviously wouldn't."

1058 Cl: I don't know enough

On Wednesday I went to London with Sheila to see [CEO of a professional body]. Complete waste of time - they want support but they

- don't want to pay for it. As he was talking through all the things he wanted, I realised - this is not for me, I shouldn't be here, I don't know enough.
- 1064 CI: Obscurity of language  
Fri: Some weeks ago I thought of a working title which went something like "The symbiosis of andragogy: supporting adult returners in the hostile environment of arcane academia". I was really impressed. I told Laura about it. She was disgusted and pulled a face like sucking a lemon. How dare I? I purport to challenge the obscurity of academic language and procedures. Enough said!
- 1103 Under AA there is nothing on inflexible structures or homogenisation but this is not surprising as they are unlikely to emerge from the student voice - is this significant?  
30 July 2003
- 1163 The process of analysing the narratives has brought to light some inadequacy within my categories. Each time I think I have it cracked some new conceptual weakness seems to occur to me. This is proving to be rather taxing but I do think that I am moving forward to conceptual consistency and depth - so keep going.  
18 August 2003
- 1188 Back after another long break but this one was like summer hols. A two week heatwave in the Lakes. Lots of walking and total relaxation. Now I come back refreshed and ready to tackle the analysis chapter once again. Actually there is virtually nothing to do in the office which is a bit disconcerting and I come back to find an unexpected PL on offer which has really unsettled me. I think I know what to do but the consequences of another rejection are almost too awful to contemplate. At the same time I know that I cannot afford not to apply. Shit!  
3 September 2003
- 1205 12 months to the day since returning to work. Interviews today so kept well clear.
- 1343 - CI/my anxieties  
1351 Is it doctoral level?  
Getting outside the comfort zone  
My absence  
Normal anxieties - losing sight of the coastline  
Stupid anxieties  
Self indulgence  
demotivation  
role confusion and marginalisation  
October 2003
- 1369 CI Rejection of my own assessment criteria for the skills unit. These are unsuitable for human consumption  
5 November 2003
- 1372 CI Becky's struggle to be heard in the team work exercise  
1383 Tensions are running high in the office and this is a time of great uncertainty and also great opportunity which is reflected in the high levels of energy - not all I suspect creatively spent.  
13 November 2003
- 1389 CI Graduation a SW moment as the first cohort graduate  
1399 Am I invisible? I don't know whether this will turn out to be just another

grumpy moment or whether in fact my time at FMGC is coming to an end. I can't tolerate the lack of professionalism in certain parts of the office at the moment and the thought of having Ron as a line manager is just one step too far.

# Appendix K: Sample Interview Transcript

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*Focus Group 1*

Tuesday 19th February 2002

Facilitators: Phil & Jane

Attendees:

Lucia Wayne, Maria Shaw, Daniel Charles, Stan Gill, Adrian Trent, Helen House, Steven Johnson, Liz Simmons, Lester Lowe, Ray Green

Phil I have circulated the notes which explain what the process is about, the notes that I've handed around are just a statement of the ethical position in terms of confidentiality and so on, so you can read that so that you understand exactly what we are doing and why and what we are going to do with the information.

Obviously we are undertaking quite a large scale evaluation of the Certificate in Facilities Management and we've picked on this cohort to do what we describe as a longitudinal study. So you are going to be evaluated out of sight over the next two years.

First of all thanks for agreeing to participate because it really is helpful to us to be able to get in touch with how you're thinking about the issues. I think you need to appreciate that everything that is said during this session and everything that appears through the other instruments is totally confidential and any thing that is said in this room will not go beyond this room unless you should say otherwise. So you are in control of the material and that's the most important thing to appreciate. We won't use anything, any of the tapes, any of the transcripts, any of the analysis, or evaluation, unless you approve it and if one person is not happy about material being used that's it, so you've got an individual right of veto. That all sounds a bit heavy but I think you do need to understand that at the outset, we will obviously feed things like transcripts back to you for comment and we will also be talking to you about our evaluation of what's set, to some extent through subsequent group sessions but also in other ways as well.

So you will have an opportunity to look at transcripts to clarify anything to change anything you are not happy with. What's most essential with this sort of group discussion and it is a discussion rather than a group interview, is that it is a discussion between yourselves and we are just going to sit and listen as far as possible. I'll prompt you with a few questions because obviously you need a bit of direction in terms of what we are looking for, but I think the ideal situation is for you to engage in a discussion amongst yourselves. It's most important that you realise that we are not looking for consensus, they'll be different views and you're not here to agree things necessarily, if you don't agree with what's being said then I'm sure you'll say so.

We've got an hour, we will finish at 10.00 and that time will go very quickly,

it's your views we are looking for, we are not looking for a pat on that back, what is most valuable is the sort of critical comment, because in that way we are able to use that information to improve what we are doing. Is that OK, all clear? Good let's get on then.

Just for the benefit of whoever's going to be transcribing this, perhaps we can just go around and you can say your names and that will be easier for the transcriber to recognise your voices.....[real names deleted].

OK, I want to concentrate on support mainly, so can I ask you what systems are in place to support your individual and group needs in undertaking the Certificate.

Stan Do you mean the support from work or the support from here?

Phil Both if you like, if you want to start with support from here, I think both are important.

Stan On the occasions when I've needed support, I have rang up and managed to have my questions answered. One of the problems I had was that I missed session with the computers, I had to go back to work, so I was a bit behind on that, I had problems finding things the guy I spoke to couldn't help me immediately, he got back to me later on and managed to point me in the right direction, but I think I still need some help actually, for that immediate problem I had it was solved.

Phil You say you still need some help in that respect, do you have a clear idea about what to do about that.

Stan I was waiting until I came here for these two days and ask someone to sit down with me and go through it. Support from work, they allow me the times to do things at work, but I'm working extra hours everyday anyway, so finding these extra hours to do any work for college, although in theory they do say you've support, and equally support one of the guys doing another course at college, in reality it doesn't work out, we're short of numbers, made redundancies. It's very difficult.

Phil Is that everybody's experience in the context of work support, because certainly on the basis of the interviews we did with 12 of you before you started, support from work was one of the most important factors, but how does that translate into reality, is Stan's experience typical?

Ray I've found that work has really been supportive, you know I've said I've got to spend some time doing this and really it hasn't been a problem, although there is a knock on effect that the work is still there to be done. You've just got to fit it in, you know, but as far as anything that I wanted from work to help me with the first two assignments they were very forth coming from individuals in the company. But it has been difficult trying to mix work and the assignments, and as well not just the work but obviously fitting it into the home life as well so it'll be all the more difficult for me. The support from the university, to be quite honest in those first parts I didn't really feel that I needed that much, the Adsetts centre was great, you know I went

there to the library and got the books that I wanted, it was easy to get them, and I went on the bulletin board a little bit, but it seemed to die off you know, it was an initial load of people on there and they just died off, there was a comment that came from yourself actually about some reading that you'd picked up on and posted it on their, but really that wasn't that much use really, I don't think anybody used it. But it could have been good but I don't think it was used.

Phil Why do you think that is? Because I agree with you.

Lucia Certainly I was in contact with certain people all the time and I don't know whether others were the same but I got talking to people on the course and that interaction carried on after and there was a lot of toing and froing between ourselves, and I think Steven, Maria and I ended up using our own e-mail addresses because it was quicker. So to be quite honest that was one of the main reasons I stopped using it because I worked closer with certain people and that was it.

Phil Maybe the bigger group is just too large to accommodate the sorts of discussions you want to engage.

Ray I didn't even use the e-mail facility at all.

Adrian I tried to use the e-mail facility and basically ended up in a right mess with it. Was told basically that my e-mail address wasn't recognised, so I did try to contact support and they told me to contact the tutors, so I thought well give it up.

Lucia I tried to use it at work and I couldn't. I was using the e-mails and couldn't get it to work when I returned to work, maybe that's why I've made a conscious decision to do it myself and ring round.

Phil I mean in terms of some on-line support then, which we're getting into, we set up Blackboard as a virtual learning environment,. We see it very much as an adjunct to a whole range of other support mechanisms and I think you can over play its importance, it is important but it's not the only thing, I think there are access problems, there are technical problems, which are emerging, how do people feel about the importance of the on-line bit of the support?

Adrian Very important.

Ray I was quite pleased that it was there if I needed it, but I just felt that as I was doing it I didn't really need it that much. What I found, you know we were pointed towards the Harvard writing style yes, I read that once, I don't really get this, if you like rightly or wrongly I sort of wrote my own style, the only one that I really took notice of was the bibliography with the Italics writing that, but the rest of it was in my own sort of style, because I couldn't really get a grip of what I was meant to do as regards the Harvard writing style was concerned.

Phil That's a developmental thing, sorry...

Adrian I thought the Harvard style was basically referencing and I thought

basically from your point of view it said just put a little note by the side of the quote, if you like, and then fill out whereabouts it was in the quote, is that right, that's what I got from just looking on Blackboard.

Phil It's a developmental thing and the most important thing, the first lesson to learn is to reference every source that you use. Getting to the formalities of a particular referencing style, and it might surprise you to know that there are literally hundreds and hundreds of different citation styles of which Harvard is just one, and there are dozens of versions of the Harvard style. Actually getting down to the details of how you actually put the information down is far less important at this stage, because it's something you will pick up as you go along. It's interesting that this one thing that really seems to worry students at the outset and yet aside from the need to actually quote sources and develop that habit, it's not that important at this stage.

David But do you still not lose marks for not doing appropriately?

Phil You will do as you get further into the course, but not at this first stage.

Ray Correct me if I'm wrong Phil, but I thought that with our two assignments was if you like a big learning process for all of us and like from your point of view marking these you look at those and thinking, right there getting a drift of what we're meant to be doing and you know in our feed backs you've given us that how perhaps we can do something differently or better next time, and then obviously the next assignment is looked at probably more critically than the first, am I right in that, you've got to give us some sort of leeway in the first ones coming into brand new, thinking well am I right here, am I doing this right, and hopefully you're going along thinking you're doing fine and then you get the feedback which is I think great because you can react to that.

Jane Did you feel during that process though that you could not contact somebody within the course team to just perhaps to have a quick chat about the style we were looking for?

Ray No, I knew that was always available and I know we spoke about and I didn't do it actually, but sending it in first for a proof reading with yourselves and then you know giving us some feedback from that. I just felt that as I was getting into it I didn't really, I just felt I didn't need to do that because I thought in my own mind it was right, a bit naive but so, I knew the support was always there, and there was a couple of times that I did ring up about certain things, and yes the questions were answered.

David I used the support two or three times and I found it exceptionally helpful I really did, I think my contact for whatever reason appeared to be Laura all the time, whenever I rang it was Laura. I thought Laura was exceptionally professional in the remarks she gave and the assistance, I had some problems with Emerald I must admit, but I sent an e-mail and it was promptly dealt with and sorted out, and I found Emerald as far as the on-line help of getting in was exceptionally helpful in writing my second

assignment, but I must admit I was a bit stuck until you actually put that 'informed client' business on it.

David That really opened up everything and you bring everything into context and they're just right, you know, my biggest problem, my second assignment when I've actually physically done it came to about 5,000 words, it was really hard pruning it down because I'd just waffled, that was the biggest problem, but yes the on-line support I thought was good from my point of view.

Lucia And I think that's when a lot of the mails stopped to smile, once we got that little....because everybody seemed to be looking for something and once it appeared it was like phew we can get on with it now.

David Yes, that was it, I think that was it, once you'd got that you could relate that back to your workplace or to where ever and it gave you then an opportunity to talk about really all those particular set points which were laid down with reference to the informed client, I was struggling with that.

Adrian I was fortunate enough, I live local, so I could nip into the Adsetts Centre and I went through dozens and dozens of FM books and couldn't find anything about 'Informed Clients' well found various things just touching it on briefly, but nothing that I could actually find any meat in until that came along.

Lucia I actually wrote on a BIFM course last year and I had all the contacts on that, I emailed them all and said you know has anybody heard of it, and they all came back and said no, but when you find out what it is I got my answer

Daniel Phil I thought you'd just made it up.

Phil Well no I think that [EMPLOYER NAME DELETED] made it up. Daniel did you find it any easier because it is a formally recognised concept in [EMPLOYER NAME DELETED].

Daniel Yes, I think I do. Can I just say that I contacted [EMPLOYER NAME DELETED] help line basically, and I got a letter three days later saying I'm sorry I don't understand this, and the question was raised exactly as I'd put it as you put it for us, so I thought haven't got much hope here.

Adrian I'll have your e-mail address then Daniel.

Phil Liz, you might have picked this up, stuff within the NHS documentation which refers to it, but you're right there is not much theory, we found one reference in Bernard Williams when we searched and then we panicked because we realised we'd set the test that was rather difficult, but having got that you managed to contextualised it and it worked, so I hope it wasn't too frustrating an experience. That second piece is actually quite a challenging exercise, you'll be challenged in different ways with subsequent work, but I think that's as challenging as it's likely to get. So

it's a major step to have resolved that one.

Ray I think Phil if you hadn't have placed that there I would really really be struggling with that.

Phil OK, but I mean that points to an important lesson doesn't it, if you find yourself in that situation again when you've got a complete block, you know we are asking you to do something and you just can't find a way into it, what do you do.

David Contact you really.

Phil And what would you expect to get from us.

Daniel Sorry, I'm not with it.

David I think if I'd have rang you up and said I've got a complete block, I would have expected something back, well go and look in this book or go and look in that book or we will post something on-line for you, and like you actually physically do. I don't know whether you guessed that people were struggling and you did that or whether you had some requests already from people who had got mental blocks.

Phil We knew it was a problem from the first cohort so we'd already researched that and found that information and it worked last time once we'd got over that, but I think that's important to understand, it can be very lonely and very frustrating, I know from personal experience and to be stuck on something like that can become so frustrating that it can actually completely floor you.

David I think what would have been beneficial if we'd actually had that bit of paper with all those descriptions of the 'informed client' on from the beginning, because then instead of wasting in my perception a couple of weeks of hunting around, talking to people, them two weeks would have been better spent physically getting on with the job as opposed to routing and routing.

Daniel But isn't that all part of why we're here.

David Yes it is.

Phil There's got to be some pain,.

Lucia It also gives people an excuse not to look with them, it did, because I couldn't find it so I thought oh I'll leave it until next weekend, I'll have another go at it next weekend.

David Yes, I noticed a couple of e-mails, I don't know who they were from I can't remember but, I've been cooking this weekend, I've got the kids and I'm going to look at it next weekend, as soon as one come, next weekend said I'm having a drink this weekend so I'm putting it off again.

- Helen Timing was the worst wasn't it over Christmas. Everything that's going on.
- David Fitting it in with your family life.
- Lucia We all left here thinking we were going to tackle it and get it done before Christmas, and then once you get back to the real world and you realise you can't do that because of all these constraints, working constraints, working constraints with the best will.
- Ray Yes, that's right, I mean I said to myself get this done before December and then it'll be out of the way and I actually finished it on the 10th January.
- Stan I ended up having to take holidays to get some work done on it, because as I said before, although the company supports you in theory in practice it's very difficult to find the time, in fact even when I was at home I kept getting e-mails from work.
- Adrian I must have been looking for something different in support from work, because I was just happy that they'd paid for the course and they'd given me the time to come to the course and my work on the course basically I did at weekends, and I'm sure that they would have supported me in other ways if I'd have asked, I was just glad to get it paid for basically.
- Phil That essay was quite a severe challenge and I think you responded to it magnificently, what about the first bit, the reflection on the workshop.
- Stan I found that more difficult of the two to be honest.
- Phil I think it's fair to say that I haven't enjoyed reading submissions, and I read most of them as much as I did reading those because I wasn't there so it was quite revealing. The idea was to give you a fairly relaxed approach to writing something about what you've experienced, which was largely descriptive, little bit analytical, actually most of you got that analysis and evaluation in really well as you'll understand from the marking received, but how did you feel about doing it, Stan said he found it difficult.
- Steven I found it a dreadful struggle actually.
- Lucia I thoroughly enjoyed it.
- I spent hours on it and thought I'd really got into it, I'd spent three hours used 300 words, I got a beer out and I watched rugby on television and that was a bad day because Ireland beat Wales as well.
- Ray I found it, I've just probably done myself a favour, because when we were actually doing it I was writing notes all day long, and when I actually got back and looked at the amount of notes that I'd got I thought I will post these. I wrote those notes via the computer, because I'd sort of made notes all the way across because Tim was there saying from this point on, this is what we want to be evaluating, so I was just frantically writing

whatever I could and then tried to put that in, I found that as not as difficult as the second part.

Adrian I didn't write on the workshop because obviously I didn't attend, I found it more difficult knowing how you wanted me to cover what I'd got to cover, but it was difficult.

Stan I actually struggled for weeks thinking, how do you write something you think, when you think something if it happens in a micro second, how do you put that into 2,000 words, then I thought do they really want to know what we are thinking, I think I rang you didn't I and you put my mind to rest, but honestly I made lots of notes but when I got back home in the cold light of day the notes didn't seem the right thoughts they were just incidents that were happening, they weren't thoughts. The language that the university use, it's the first time I have been to a university, I've been to college, I went to Blackpool college, I went to Wirral technical college and its the language that you use as well.

Phil What sort of things Stan, give us an example.

Even the word essay left me thinking for about three minutes essay? At college it was an assignment or homework

Phil That's Maria's favourite word.

Stan You were told what to do, you were asked a question or if it was something like mathematics but to write an essay and to put in it how we feel, it reminded me of when we came back from school and the teacher asked us what we did during the holiday like that.

David There were a couple of things that I did to help me pull the two things together. One of them, I didn't class it as an essay I actually classed it as a report as we write a lot of reports, so a) I classed it as a report and the other thing that I did was I actually did my index first. I actually started at the top and said right I want to talk about this, this, this and this, so I actually got my headings laid out, OK I changed them all around later but once I got my headings I then got onto the Dictaphone and I spent two hours and I just waffled onto the Dictaphone, then just typed it all out and then took everything out of it that way and took all the waffle out and just spoke about what we needed to do, that's how I tackled the first one and I did exactly same for the second one.

Stan I think I did the same, because what happened I had problems with working, health problems anyway so I didn't touch it for a month so by the time I got down to thinking about essay, what am I suppose to do. I began to leave it, it go so late in the day that I couldn't leave it any longer, I had to sit down and do something and in the end I did it, but I had forget the fact that I was asked to do an essay.

Jane Just going back to Daniel's point about doing things at weekends, did people find a barrier in that they couldn't actually contact anybody at the

University if they came up with a problem during the weekend, or was that not an issue?

Adrian I think all you do basically is make a note to contact somebody during the week if you need to I think, that's the way I look at it.

Ray Yes, one part of the first part, I felt a little bit guilty about including the minutes of the meeting that we had in there, because I felt like as if it was almost cheating and I wasn't quite sure whether I should or not. What those minutes did for me was how better would you be able to describe how the meeting went than with a set of minutes, so in the end I put them in, it described what was going on but I did feel is this plagiarism, am I cheating here, I didn't really know.

Phil Plagiarism is a big issue, but it comes back to the point that was made about referencing, if you reference your sources you can't be plagiarising and it's as simple as that, and if something like that is relevant to you and it means something in the context of what you are writing then stick it in. Obviously there is a limit to how much you can put in your text before it becomes overwhelmed by the additional material, and that point it goes into an Appendix, and there is a degree of skill in deciding what to put and where, but that's perfectly valid you shouldn't feel guilty.

Before I forget, picking up the point about language I would just say, yes this is one of the issues, the University has it's own language just the same as most organisations but it's also a sort of academic language, I think you need to challenge anything that you don't understand, because the probability is that it means something very simple, but I think it is very important that you get into that habit because we slip into this, it's our environment. I've been here for 18 years and it sort of comes out of the pores, you just can't help it, so that is just a point to remember, do challenge us because we talk a lot rubbish most of the time, as you are about the find out.

David As far as the first assignment was concerned I found it exceptionally useful to submit a draft and get some comments back from it, I don't know whether that affected the marks that I got for the first assignment in the end because I did take note of what Laura said and made the changes to the assignment before I submitted the final version, but I did find that exceptionally helpful to get comments on the draft.

Phil But I know from personal experience that it's a really scary thing when you submit that first assignment and however good it is you haven't got a clue yourself, you know you think this is garbage, because somebody who's not here spent the first couple of paragraphs that he or she couldn't write and couldn't spell and thereafter 2,500 of almost perfect prose with no spelling mistakes, so I think it is important to have that opportunity just to be reassured, just to be told that what you have done already is worthy of pass and you can improve it. I think those of you who do want to submit, do by all means because we will comment on anything and we'll try and help you, because it's not a test, you know writing an assignment of any

description is not a test, it is there to make you learn, so there is no mystique about it, there is no secret as to how you get a good mark.

Just in terms of other areas of support, has anybody used the distance learning support service yet.

Lucia Yes

Phil How did you find that?

Lucia To be honest not good, I wanted a particular book and it took about 4 weeks to come, by the time the book came I'd finished I couldn't wait so I just returned it, and to be fair I didn't need it in the end because it was too late, but I struggled to get onto Blackboard for ages, every time I tried to get in I wasn't able to get to anybody, at the time the server was down, so when I eventually got the time to go in and the server was up and check this book I wanted, and that was actually at the weekend, so I rang and left a message on the answer phone and give them their due they did ring me back on the Monday but then the book took about 4 weeks to come, the book was in stock but she said it's not in our library its at another library.

Phil Did anybody else have an experience?

Helen I actually joined the Lincoln University Library because I find it easier after I've used them because I thought oh my God I'll forget to send the books back, you know so I joined Lincoln so I could physically go and have a look and see what there was and they were very helpful.

Adrian Yes, I'm fortunate to be local and they really are helpful in there, I know it's dead easy to say if you are living miles away you can't do it, but they really are helpful, even though I couldn't find anything when they showed me the books.

Ray I'll agree with that one when I came here, but one mistake I did make was I went up to the computer, ordered every book there but they were actually on the shelf and went up to the counter and said they'll all there, she said well are they in stock, yes on the shelf, well go and get them then. I actually thought that all I had to do was go up to the computer and order the books and they'd be waiting for me, but they weren't.

Phil What about pre-course reading, that's probably a good one at this point in time, was that helpful.

Daniel If you can understand it yes.

Lucia For the next workshop

Phil Yes.

Ray Yes I mean the pre-course reading for this course, if we'd had that for the first one, I think.....

- Lucia Half of us wouldn't have turned up.
- Phil That's why you didn't get any, that is absolutely why.
- Steven I've read it several times and the first time it when straight over the top of my head, and the second time I didn't even see it and the third time I started taking notes and try to figure out exactly what we are meant to be doing on the next unit. I kept reading and reading, I went into that Gee fact finder which I think is excellent, that's been on Blackboard all the time but I didn't know what it was so I didn't bother going in to it, although there's some great stuff for work actually. It's very good, but you can only read so much until I get started there is no point.
- Phil I think you have to use it as it's intended as a resource to dip into and to support you as and when you need and you may go back to it after the workshop and more things will make sense. Don't expect to understand everything first off, and don't panic if you find the language impenetrable because some of it is, we purposely put some more difficult more academic bits in there to let you know what it's about and just because it is there does not necessarily means it's good.
- Ray We all found that, I mean you are obviously reading someone's opinion on how things should be, and I found myself questioning why am I really agree with that because it's an opinion isn't it. Some of the harder stuff, you read it and what they are actually saying, can you just please say it in simple terms and I think there is one paragraph at the bottom that say's "in simple terms the facilities management must support the core business" I though well why couldn't you say that instead of writing 3 pages on it.
- Steven Lucia would like more pictures in it.
- Phil Well it is intimidating isn't it.
- Adrian I could understand most of the words, I couldn't understand the charts.
- Lucia I must admit those charts, I looked at them and thought they were not the right type.
- Phil **(Start of tape, Phil didn't let it run on enough)** What do you think about the admin support? As we regard that very much as part of what I describe as the support infrastructure, how has that been generally?
- Lucia Very impressed that the fact the day before we were due to send out the first lot of assignments in the paper work for the second lot arrived on the door step. It was oh no.
- Ray I must admit that I was so relieved that I'd handed it in, great, it was a real weight of my mind, but as far as the way the course is put together, it's great, it's relaxed. I was looking forward to coming today and getting on with it really because I knew it was coming and that same feeling again as

we had with the first two assignments and have that until this one is submitted.

Lucia Will we feel like this for the next two years?

Phil Well the first group are still pretty happy and there're well on the way to finishing, they finish in November and it's amazing how quickly the time goes and how you plough through those items.

Jane They want to know what happens next.

Lucia What will happen next

Phil We are talking to them about, we are saying what do you want? If there is sufficient interest we could carry on through a Diploma stage and then a Degree stage using the same approach, but it would probably take another 3 years after the Certificate to get them to degree level, there is also the Postgraduate programme for those who want to go that far that is a possibility. So we won't leave you high and dry, I mean we will talk to you about that as we progress.

David I think its easy learning, there is no rush, and you're not trying to fit it in!!!

David We've gone from October when we attended November up until now really to get two assignments done, I know that we had to have them in for January, but from January where we submitted that to date I think the only thing we have had to do really is some reading isn't it, so we have in theory had a holiday as such, it isn't like I presume when you are on a Postgraduate course that you are actually working from day to day and there is not particular breaks in it or anything of that nature, so there's not pressure, the stress of producing the work, in such a hurry.

Adrian I found it more difficult being away for them, in fact being away and then coming back, the first couple of weeks your still there, you don't want to start, no leave that, and then when you've got to hand it in, I've got Christmas in between, that's my fault but really it did go quite smoothly, I was just wondering how many hours people put into these assignments. I've added it up and it must have took me 50 hours for these 5000 words altogether.

Phil That's scary because I've just submitted an assignment and I spent two full days just checking the bibliography, that was all and that took two days and I was thinking gosh how long has it taken me to write these 7000 words - I just dread to think.

Adrian I just worked it out because as I said I've been doing it at weekends, how many hours a day sort of thing, I just wondered if anybody else had, it's not just the writing.

Stan It's the time going to the library looking for books like some of the others who said they'd been to libraries, I went to two different libraries in my area

and couldn't find anything, but I got books out and did some reading and it all adds up. That's the time consuming part.

Phil We are going back to the assignments, but I guess that's the sort of centre of what you do, did you go through highs and lows as you were going through that.

Helen Especially when I'd thought I lost my work on the computer, suddenly I sort of clicked out for some reason and though oh my god, I'd just finished doing the report for the workshop and I'd lost it, it was panic stations and somebody rang, I can't talk I've got to find words of working, eventually I found it I don't know where it had gone, but talk about panic because you think you've just spent that length of time and then it's gone.

Ray I just kept thinking that times coming up, the 14th January is coming and I haven't done enough, I kept building up I will spend some time tomorrow, then something else will come along, I think I've got a choice here I have to do that, I really did feel at some point really under pressure god how am I going to get it done, I've got to get it done, just do it. It was dedicating that time that I felt at one point really quite under pressure to get it done, but like I said the elation I felt after finally finishing it, printed it all of, brilliant. Definitely highs and lows for me.

Phil Did anybody get to the point where they just felt so frustrated that they wanted to pack it in?

Maria Yes, Lucia was my support, if it wasn't for her I would have jacked it in, I didn't have the courage to ring you at that point, but I took it on holiday and I sat down and I did make myself write 100/200 words a day, and my friend was there "you haven't done your homework, you haven't done your homework, get out there and do it", so I went and did some, and then I thought I've got plenty of time, I've got to get back to work, and I kept thinking about, thinking about the informed client, talking to various people, my manager, thinking well she can't be the informed client she hasn't got a clue, and then there was a series of events, my sister was getting married, it was Christmas then New Year then we had this office move and it was just too easy to keep putting it off, and then it came to the date and I thought I've got a week left to do it, what can I do, what can I do. Every time I tried to get on to the site I didn't know what I was doing and eventually I got on and there was an e-mail from Lucia saying did you have a good holiday, so I thought yes had a brilliant holiday thanks Lucia, and then we got talking and really she inspired me to ask for extension, the support from my manager was, yes you've been busy at work I'll support you if you want an extension, which was great, I needed to hear that, I didn't want him to say why haven't you done it? we've paid for this, but before Lucia was really pushing me I thought I can't do it, I can't do this now there is too much going on, and then it started to flow and I would write a whole ream. I did headings, and every now again I would post a copy to Lucia and she would have a play around and say "what about this, what about that" and in the end yes, I wrote it all up and took the headings out.

Lucia     She did it, I did not do any work.

Phil     So, if when you are in the same process doing the next piece of homework, you encounter the same sort of desperation and you feel like jacking it all in and you daren't speak to me to tell me, coward, would you cope.

Maria    I will not ever get to that stage again.

Phil     But what if you do.

Maria    I would be very embarrassed to have to ring Lucia again and say shit I've done it again.

Phil     But you've got a phone a friend that's what they are there for, or you can ask the audience.

Maria    Yes, but there'll come a point when she'll think for Christ sakes can't she stand on her own two feet, have I got to do her homework as well as mine. I will not let it get that far again. I'm not frightened of asking for help, but it was just the deadline had gone, what happened it's my fault I'm the one without discipline, I never looked on Blackboard, I never went to the library, I never read anything, I haven't read the pre-course, because when it came this reading, I thought I can't read this now I've got my assignment to do and I can't read it now because by the time we get here I'll have forgotten it anyway. So I left it and I left it, I was going to do last night and then we went down the bar.

Phil     Anybody else experienced real sort of desperate lows through that process.

Lucia    I did, I did....

Phil     What did you do phone Maria.

Maria    You're joking.

Lucia    No I phoned Steven and we had quite a few discussions on the phone and I sent Steven what I'd done and he came back to me and said in a nice polite way it's crap, I don't understand what Vertex do and all he said was structure it all. On the essay bit I'd written an essay like you'd write an essay at school, it hadn't occurred to me to structure it. So once I'd structured it and picked out what I had to do, I was on version six and somebody still didn't understand what Vertex did, so I was in desperation point.

Ray     One of the things that I felt as well and I don't know if anyone else did but thinking I've got to get it done because for a start I'll only let myself down, I don't want to let my company down, I'd only let my family down, it was something I want to do and it was about not letting anybody down, anyone

that's involved in me doing this course, I didn't want to let anyone down, because you know I think to myself well that's too bad to do that. The people that have put the faith in me, the company that have paid for the course, support there from my family to do it, and at one point I was thinking God, if I don't do this it's got bigger implications that if I just fail the course. That was something that played on my mind as well.

You just mentioned about not letting people down and being abandoned, one my lowest points was because I didn't do anything in the first month because of personal circumstances I ended up having to spend quite a lot between Christmas and New Year and I can't get thing done, then I got pressure from the family because I'm stuck in the spare bedroom when we should have been visiting relatives and things like this, so that was a real low for me, I'm not complaining about it because I new what position I was in, but when I was at home and my wife is coming in and looking for things that are not in this room and she's never goes in this room, that's the time I switched off.

Jane So having these discussions and saying about these high and lows is there anything that we could better to support you, with perhaps encouraging peer support between yourselves more effectively, or something we could as a course team?

Daniel I feel a bit guilty because as you know at [EMPLOYER NAME DELETED] at one stage there were 18 people doing a very similar course so I've got more support and I haven't had any of these feelings at all, with 20 odd people from the other course, there is tons of resource and reference materials, so I've not had any of these feelings, and I think you can benefit more from using e-mail and things like that.

Adrian When you go onto that 'Rovers Return' you never know if you were expected to answer, I thought and I suggest to everybody these things that come through and then I'm thinking I'm about to answer this or no somebody else will answer sort of thing, I no you shouldn't if you've got a point of view you should more or less say no I but I think its this sort of thing or yes I agree or I've got so and so, that's what it's all about that's what you told us in the first two days in the induction, it's not about suffering on your own.

Phil I think one of the central elements is the cohort experience, there I go again using another university word, but the group experience is bringing people together and that's one of the most important functions I think of these workshops, not actually what we teach you in a formal sense it's what you learn from each other, and having people from such a diversity background is a really valuable resource. How best you tap into that whether it is through general discussion, although I suspect not, obviously more effective of the more closer knit relationships that you build with individuals which is more manageable and probably more useful, but I think those are some of the most important support elements, over which I suspect we have no control we can only encourage it.

- David Out of the other cohort I mean they are well into it, do they share each others phone numbers with the whole group or e-mail addresses.
- Phil There has been sorts of similar levels of inactivity in terms of the discussion board, that's the first thing I would observe, the structure of the group is slightly different because we have got 8 people from Consignia and 10 from NHS trusts, although they are different trusts, so they might just as well be from different organisations. To be honest I don't know really what discussion goes on, there is some evidence from the assignments that they are sharing things, for example somebody working within a university suddenly found some stuff from higher education funding council which used the phrase 'informed client' or 'intelligent customer' whichever it was and they actually passed that around to everybody, and somebody from NHS found something and that was passed around, so there is evidence of that going on but I don't know how extensive it is.
- Ray I don't know if there is anything that you can do, because I feel that you are doing as much as you can really with support, because I think a lot of it is between us as a group to interact more and that's our responsibility, you can only encourage that, going back to the question is there anything you can do, I can't see that there is any more you could do, you're always available, answer the questions that we want I don't really know if there is anymore that you can do.
- Lucia Yes, in the outside world it happens that people do gel in groups don't they, you know you do sort of gel to certain personalities and I think that's what happening.
- Jane And location as well I think makes a different.
- Lucia Although the people that live closest to me, although I did contact them, neither made any effort to get together or anything I think it's just personalities really isn't it.
- Maria One thing that did occur to me when I was going to ring one time, was that you were probably in one of these teaching sessions with another group of students on another course and I wouldn't be able to get you from 9-5, who's Ad Offer.
- Jane She's the course administrator.
- Maria I didn't think it was a real person.
- Jane I think it may be worth if I actually bring this mysterious named person down to meet everybody, we actually have a help line policy within the University where we identify that the tutors are doing what they are paid for, so as a support team we actually man the phones and take any calls that we can and try and help in those situations, so perhaps if we actually introduce you to Ad and you can see a face when you ring.

Maria When I phoned and introduced myself as Maria, oh hello Maria, I thought who's that I didn't recognise the voice and she said it's Ad, so it is a real person.

Jane She knows you but you probably haven't had the opportunity of meeting her, because the transition happened, when you were here last time, she took over the role that I was doing.

Lucia Did we have a letter.

Jane Yes, it was in writing, but sometimes in writing it doesn't always sort of, until you actually meet somebody.

Phil We've got the student data base so we have got all our students, photographs and contact numbers and records of conversations, reminders which we've all got access to, so when we go into that your face is staring out from the computer and I had a problem with Liz because your home and work telephone numbers were mixed up, I hope I didn't get him out of bed.

Liz You were not really popular I have to admit not when it was the third afternoon at 2.00pm

Phil My apologies, we've sorted it out now. Anything else anybody wants to add before we finish. Has anybody sort of noticed any difference in terms of work and how you see things or is it early days yet.

Jane The only thing it's done for me is really decided it for me once and for all that I need to manage my time better and be more constructive. I seem to go from crisis to crisis.

Phil I've been trying to do that for about 30 years it gets worse rather than better.

Stan I'll give up then.

Phil OK, anything you want to add Jane.

Jane No, we've covered all the issues.

Phil That's great, that's precisely what we want it's really really useful, so you'll get the transcripts, assuming you it's recorded alright, "Jane, I've made notes" and you'll have the opportunity to comment on anything, change anything before the next occasion, and the idea is that we will run these sessions at the beginning of each workshop, but it is not our intention that the same people necessarily need to be involved all the time, so it can be a sort of rolling group, so don't feel obliged to come to everyone just because you've been involved in this first one. We'll invite everyone and take it from there, so it's entirely up to you.

David I think it's a nice opportunity for everybody to share their experiences over

the last two assignments.

Phil It's really useful for us.

Adrian I was just going to say what do you get out of it. Is it hoping to improve your performance if you like.

Phil We did something similar, Daniel referred to his workplace with [EMPLOYER NAME DELETED] where we ran the sort of predecessor course, and we went up to [EMPLOYER LOCATION DELETED] Bootle and we did 3 x 2 hour session with almost all the staff who were involved, all 18 of them, and essentially this course came out of those discussions, that formed the critical review and actually what we discovered by talking to people in this sort of environment and listening to them talk to one another, we discovered some quite alarming things about what we probably should have been doing but were not doing, hence the nature of the support that we have developed for this course.

So yes, ultimately we hope to achieve improvements in delivering what people need, and I think from your perspective when you come to the final unit which will ask you to reflect back on the whole experience, so it's another piece of reflective writing, you'll be able to use the transcripts as a prompt, as evidence in whatever way you want so there will be quite a lot of material.

David Did you do the same with the other cohort.

Phil No, we've picked on you because of the timing as much as anything, so all we get from them is the on-line evaluations plus we did talk to them.

David I just wondered if there was any major changes that have happened on this course from what they had previously said,

Phil I don't think there are any major changes but there are lots of minor changes, in terms of how we deliver the workshops particularly, one of the things that we have done for example for the assignment for this unit is we have actually slimmed down what we are asking you to do, so we are much more focused on a smaller number of learning outcomes and is beneficial hopefully to yourselves.

The problem is we evaluate, we change and when you are delivering something, in the traditional sense you are delivering a course over a number of years, and each time you deliver it, you change things and some times those changes don't actually work and it's interesting because one of the factors, one of the variables if you like is you, each group of students has a different personality. You are different from the first group and any subsequent group will probably be different again, it's down to individuals. So some times you can't legislate for that, some times something doesn't work because it doesn't work for that particular group but it might work with another, so it is actually quite difficult, but yes lots of minor changes.