

WestminsterResearch

<http://www.westminster.ac.uk/westminsterresearch>

A framework for student staff partnership in higher education

Curran, R.

A DProf thesis awarded by the University of Westminster.

© Dr Roisin Curran, 2017.

The WestminsterResearch online digital archive at the University of Westminster aims to make the research output of the University available to a wider audience. Copyright and Moral Rights remain with the authors and/or copyright owners.

Whilst further distribution of specific materials from within this archive is forbidden, you may freely distribute the URL of WestminsterResearch: (<http://westminsterresearch.wmin.ac.uk/>).

In case of abuse or copyright appearing without permission e-mail repository@westminster.ac.uk

A FRAMEWORK FOR STUDENT
STAFF PARTNERSHIP IN HIGHER
EDUCATION

ROISÍN CURRAN

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements of the University
of Westminster for the degree of
Doctor of Professional Studies (Higher
Education Practice)

March 2017

Abstract

This research project is situated in an area of interest in contemporary HE, namely 'students as partners'. The study explored the experiences of staff and students working in partnership as part of a national What Works Change Programme at Ulster University. Using a phenomenological approach, one-to-one semi-structured interviews were carried out with staff and students (n=14), which aimed to capture rich descriptions of the lived experience of individuals. A surprising feature of the data revealed that there was a high level of consensus between staff and students in how they described their lived experiences and the impact that partnership working was having on them. The data produced two main themes which articulated the benefits of partnership working: personal development, and enhancement of the learning climate. In addition, challenges associated with partnership working are revealed and include: time, resistance, and capacity of both staff and students. These insights bring new understanding to stakeholders at Ulster in relation to how these findings can help us think more holistically about student engagement from three dimensions: emotional, behavioural and cognitive. The importance of remaining vigilant to the emotional dimension of student engagement is argued as this can act as a catalyst to change thinking and behaviours. Focus groups (n=5) were subsequently carried out with institutional stakeholder groups at Ulster. This evaluation set out to assess the value of the interview findings for the purposes of developing a framework, including more specifically, a Guide for staff and students on how a 'students as partners' approach might be implemented at Ulster in order to develop capacity for student engagement.

Recommendations for all relevant stakeholders at Ulster are made to support the implementation of a 'students as partners' approach. Whilst specific to Ulster, there are valuable learning points, which may be extended to the HE sector more generally.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2
Tables	8
Figures.....	8
Acknowledgements.....	9
Author's Declaration.....	10
Chapter 1 Introduction, background and context	11
1.1 Introduction.....	11
1.2 Higher education context	11
1.3 Ulster University and Change	16
1.3.1 Change Programme I: HEA Students as Partners Change Programme (2012-13)	17
1.3.2 Consultation with staff conference delegates	18
1.3.3 Students' Union Conference.....	19
1.3.4 Change Programme II: HEA/Paul Hamlyn Foundation funded WWSRS change programme: phase 2 (2012-2015)	21
1.4 My current role/researcher position	23
1.5 Career, transitions and identity	25
1.5.1 Private sector	25
1.5.2 FE Lecturer.....	27
1.6 Summary	28
Chapter 2: Review of Knowledge and information	30
2.1 Introduction.....	30
2.2 The complexities of SE	30
2.3 Partnership working across UK public sector	31
2.4 Drivers for students as partners in HE	33
2.5 Defining partnership in HE	36
2.5.1.Types of partnership.....	37
2.6 Dimensions of SE	40

2.7 A quantitative approach to SE	41
2.8 A qualitative approach to SE	45
2.9 Towards a holistic approach to SE	49
2.10 Conceptualising SE	51
2.10.1 The What Works? Model	51
2.10.2 Conceptual framework of engagement, antecedents and consequences	53
2.10.3 The engagement framework.....	56
2.11 Conceptualising SE at Ulster	57
2.11.1 Belongingness.....	57
2.11.2 An active learning climate.....	58
2.12 Summary	60
Chapter 3 Aim, objectives and outcomes.....	61
3.1 Introduction.....	61
3.2 Research context.....	61
3.2.1 Staff roles	63
3.2.2 Student roles	63
3.3 Focus of this doctoral study	64
3.4 Aim, Objectives and Outputs	66
Chapter 4 Methodology.....	68
4.1 Introduction.....	68
4.2 Research paradigm	68
4.3 Methodological approach.....	71
4.3.1 Bracketing	72
4.3.2 Practitioner researcher diary (online journal).....	73
4.4 Methods of data collection	74
4.4.1 Data collection 1 - Online questionnaire as pilot study	75
4.4.2 Data collection 2 - Semi-structured Interviews	79
4.4.3 Focus Groups for evaluation purposes.....	82

4.5 Transcribing interviews	86
4.6 Methods of data analysis	87
4.6.1 Data reduction	88
4.6.2 Data display.....	89
4.6.3 Drawing and verifying conclusions	90
4.7 Ethics, insider issues	91
Chapter 5 Results	93
5.1 Introduction.....	93
5.2 Data collection context.....	93
5.3 Data analysis and identification of themes.....	94
5.3.1 Theme 1: Personal development.....	96
5.3.2 Theme 2: Enhancement of the learning climate	97
5.4 Findings: Theme 1	98
5.4.1 Sub-theme 1: New ways of thinking	98
5.4.2 Sub-theme 2: New Skills	99
5.5 Findings: Theme 2	100
5.5.1 Sub-theme 1: Builds relationships	100
5.5.2 Sub-theme 2: Creates a ripple effect.....	102
5.5.3 Sub-theme 3: Encourages active learning approaches	104
5.6 Findings: Challenges of Staff-student Partnerships.....	106
5.6.1 Time	106
5.6.2 Resistance.....	107
5.6.3 Capacity	107
5.7 Summary	108
Chapter 6 Focus group results and outcomes for developing Guide	110
6.1 Introduction.....	110
6.2 Focus group outcomes	110
6.2.1 Focus group 1 (FG1) with Students' Union.....	110

6.2.2 Focus Group 2 (FG2) with students.....	112
6.2.3 Focus Group 3 (FG3) with the WWSRS Change Programme Core Team.....	115
6.2.4 Focus Group 4 (FG4) Professional Development Managers (PDMs) (Staff Development)	117
6.2.5 Focus Group 5 (FG5) with the University SE sub-committee	118
6.3 Synthesis of focus group outcomes	122
6.3.1 Refining the Guide.....	123
6.3.2 Exploring opportunities for dissemination	124
6.3.3 Further Implementation	124
6.4 Summary	125
Chapter 7 Discussion.....	126
7.1 Introduction.....	126
7.2 Relevance and significance of the study.....	126
7.3 Results in relation to recent literature and the Ulster context.....	128
7.3.1 Theme 1 Personal Development	129
7.3.2 Theme 2 Enhancement of the Learning Climate	133
7.4 Challenges.....	138
7.4.1 Implications of challenges	141
7.5 Valuable learning points and new understandings.....	142
7.6 Organisational change.....	144
Chapter 8 Conclusions.....	146
8.1 Introduction.....	146
8.2 Implementation, dissemination and progress to date.....	148
8.2.1 Dissemination to Ulster staff.....	148
8.2.2 Dissemination to Ulster students and SU	154
8.2.3 Dissemination external to Ulster	155
8.3 Recommendations.....	157
8.4 Next steps.....	158

8.5 New research question	160
Chapter 9 Reflection	161
9.1 Starting out	161
9.2 Self-doubt and threshold concepts	162
9.3 Implementing the research study.....	162
9.4 Feedback.....	163
9.5 Transformation.....	164
9.6 Going forward	165
Appendix 1: Staff and Student Guide to Engagement through Partnership (Version 1)	167
Appendix 2: Staff and Student Guide to Engagement through Partnership (Updated Version April 2016).....	169
Appendix 3: Interview Transcript.....	176
Appendix 4: Other Interview Transcripts (showing coding)	182
Appendix 5: Initial list of codes derived from coding of individual transcripts	183
Appendix 6: Initial theming of codes	184
Appendix 7: Codes themed with quotes.....	185
Appendix 8: Phase 1 and 2 using Braun and Clarke (2006) guide to qualitative data analysis.....	199
Appendix 9: Phase 3 and 4 Identification of themes	200
Appendix 10 Phase 5 Thematic map, showing two main themes	218
Glossary of Terms.....	219
References.....	220

Tables

Table 1	Questions used in pilot online questionnaire
Table 2	Semi-structured interview trigger questions
Table 3	WWSRS Staff and student discipline teams
Table 4	Suggestions and actions following Focus group 1
Table 5	Suggestions and actions following Focus group 2
Table 6	Suggestions and actions following Focus group 3
Table 7	Suggestions and actions following Focus group 4
Table 8	Suggestions and actions following Focus group 5

Figures

Figure 1	Framework for Student Engagement through Partnership (HEA, 2015)
Figure 2	What Works? model of student retention and success (Thomas, 2012)
Figure 3	Conceptual framework of engagement, antecedents and consequences (Kahu, 2013)
Figure 4	The engagement framework (Pittaway, 2012)
Figure 5	Thematic map, showing two main themes
Figure 6	Student Learning Experience Principle 1: Ulster Learning Model (Front of Card)
Figure 7	Student Learning Experience Principle 1: Ulster Learning Model (Reverse of Card)

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors, Dr Pauline Armsby and Dr Steven Cranfield, University of Westminster, for their encouragement, insightful feedback and support during these past five years. I am particularly grateful for the time spent on commenting on draft chapters and for helpful guidance on how to bring this thesis to completion.

I gratefully acknowledge the funding received towards my DProf from Professor Denise McAlister, Ulster University. I also wish to acknowledge the students and staff involved in the What Works? Change Programme at Ulster over the period 2013-2016, in particular those that directly participated in this research project.

I am especially grateful to my family for their unwavering support and belief in me. The moral support was most appreciated. To my grown-up children, Claire, Lorna and Dylan, thank you for your words of encouragement and not seeming to mind that I may have been pre-occupied. To my husband Liam, I am indebted to you for picking up my slack at home over the last few years and for your strong commitment to see this through with me. Much love to you all.

I dedicate this thesis to my late parents, I am deeply grateful for the opportunities afforded to me. To my mother, MaryRose Colhoun (1934-2015) and my father, John Colhoun (1924-1989), I miss you both.

Author's Declaration

I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work.

Chapter 1 Introduction, background and context

1.1 Introduction

This research project set out to explore the lived experiences of staff and students at Ulster University working together in partnership in a national What Works? Student Retention & Success Change Programme (2012-2015) (WWSRS) of which I was Project Lead (HEA, 2013a). In this chapter I provide a description of the higher education (HE) context and how this relates to the focus of my work: *student engagement* (SE). I then discuss how Ulster University responded to the changes in the HE landscape and how involvement in two Higher Education Academy (HEA) funded change programmes provided the impetus and context for this Doctorate in Professional Studies (DProf) research project. I also outline my current role and key career milestones and the transitions made, on the way, in relation to knowing, becoming, and professional identity (Rogers, 1961; Trede, Macklin and Bridges, 2012). These form the foundation for why I have chosen to engage in this work-based project.

1.2 Higher education context

The massification of HE has seen student numbers worldwide increase by 51.7 million between 2000 and 2008 (UNESCO, 2009). In the UK, for the period 2004-5 to 2012-13, the number of students studying in HE increased by 2.8%, from 2.2 million to 2.3 million (Universities UK, 2015). A further consideration is the change in the student body. A report on patterns and trends in UK higher education (Universities UK, 2015) highlights these changes. It shows that at the time of data collection 74% of students were studying full-time (up from 62% in 2004-5). In addition students increasingly fall in the younger age group; under-25s now make up three quarters of undergraduate students. There is also a decline in numbers of mature, part-time learners. Also of note is where students come from; 13% of students come from outside the European Union (EU), up by 4% since 2004. The number of students from disadvantaged backgrounds studying full-time for a first degree has also risen by 42% in this 8-year period. Alongside changes in the student body, the HE sector is undergoing a period of immense change with regard to how HE is funded. Following the Browne review (2010), we saw the introduction of a new undergraduate funding system in 2012-13.

This has resulted in different funding systems in the four UK countries and the percentage of funding coming from tuition fees has risen from 24% to 44% (Universities UK, 2015). Since 2012-13, English universities can charge up to £9,000 in tuition fees per annum, whilst in Northern Ireland, this was capped at £3,465 per annum (for home students) in 2012-13 but increased annually in line with inflation thereafter resulting in a fee of £3,925 for students entering in 2016-17.

These changes have implications for SE and are challenging institutions to rethink traditional approaches to learning and teaching that may have served students well in the past. In particular, the changing student body in terms of demographics as a result of widening participation means that practitioners must adapt their teaching approaches to engage a less homogenous student body (Crosling, Thomas and Heaney, 2008; Morgan, 2012).

In much of recent literature on SE, three main categories of student role may be discerned, namely: students as consumers, student empowerment, and students as partners. The Higher Education White Paper (BIS, 2011) advocates we place students at the 'heart of the system' and commits to increasing competition in the sector. The onus on higher education institutions (HEIs) is to provide better information to prospective students to allow them to make comparative and informed choices when applying to HE providers. The marketisation of HE can, however, create tensions when strategies and practices are applied which may be common place in the private commercial sector but which may be at odds with public sector governance and professional norms, resulting in blurred and sometimes conflicting expectations of the student role (Scullion, Molesworth and Nixon, 2011). Lea (2016) points out the irony of 'putting students at the heart of the system', which rather than promoting an ethos of staff and students working together to advance scholarship, in his view effectively reinforces the notion of students as consumers who could call their institution to account without taking responsibility for their own learning. The recent White Paper, (BIS, 2016) may further reinforce the discourse of students as consumers with the establishment of a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), as may also a new governance model in the form of the Office for Students (OfS). As

Neary (2016) warns, 'the OfS is designed to regulate a marketised system that is inherently unstable' (p3) and he suggests that the sector may be moving towards a reframing of the concept of SE to one of consumer protection. There are also concerns in the sector how the forthcoming TEF will operate. The proposed metrics, student satisfaction, retention, graduate employment and learning gain, have been criticised as the chosen measurements of teaching quality (Flint, 2016; Holmwood et al., 2016; Lea, 2016; Morrish, 2016) on the grounds that they create a disconnect between sound pedagogic practice and what is actually measured. Further, according to Ingham (2016), the TEF will effectively ignore the legacy value of having a degree and gives no voice to graduates at different intervals after they finish their studies. Ingham also concludes that 'SE and its development through active teaching and learning approaches' (2016, p17) is undervalued and unaccounted for in the current TEF to the detriment of the sector and students.

SE as interpreted by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) is focused on involving and empowering students in the process of shaping the student learning experience. It encompasses two main domains: motivating students to engage in learning, and to participate in quality assurance and quality enhancement processes to improve the student experience. It is about making sure that all students have the chance to make their voice heard and to inform the way that universities and colleges provide learning opportunities. This is an integral underlying principle behind the development and operationalization of the UK Quality Code in 2012 (QAA, 2014), which sets out the expectations that all HE providers are required to meet. Alongside this and in recognition of the importance of SE to the design and delivery of UK higher education, the QAA funded the National Union of Students (NUS) to undertake three collaborative projects on SE and the student experience. In their joint report (NUS, 2012a), The QAA and NUS outline five themes, which, it is posited, if not tackled effectively may become a barrier to SE. The themes identified are:

- Theme 1 - A partnership approach
- Theme 2 - Communicating with students
- Theme 3 - Understanding and developing the role of student representatives

- Theme 4 - Delivering SE at different levels within institutions
- Theme 5 - Raising issues, but who finds the solutions?

Theme 1 relates to a partnership approach and it is acknowledged that for partnership to become meaningful, it must be recognized and widely understood throughout institutions and be supported by SE policies.

In November 2012, the NUS launched a 'Manifesto for Partnership' (NUS, 2012b) in response to confusion in the HE sector around the term 'partnership'. The NUS believed that the time had come to add their voice to the long standing debate on an alternative to a consumerist approach to HE and to promote an ethos of 'students as partners', with the potential this has to bring about social and educational transformation. In particular they clearly state that:

Partnership means shared responsibility - for identifying the problem or opportunity for improvement, for devising a solution, and - importantly - for co-delivery of that solution (NUS, 2012b, p8).

However, what is equally important to recognize, in terms of the wider debate and the present study, is the holistic and contextualized nature of the approach which, it has been suggested, institutions need to take in adopting and developing a partnership model if this is to embody the aims and the spirit outlined above. The NUS (2012b) caution against a one-size-fits-all template (p12) and taking an instrumentalist, reductive approach: 'Let us be clear from the outset, the sum total of an institution's student engagement mechanisms does not equal partnership' (p3).

Nevertheless, recent research notes that whilst students' unions may wish to pursue 'partnership-working' as an alternative to consumerism, the reality in many cases is the necessity of consumerist activities (such as operating bars, catering outlets etc.) so that the unions can maintain a degree of independence and reduce their over-reliance on the block grant from their HEIs (Brooks, Byford and Sela, 2016). This can result in students' unions having an ambivalent relationship with consumerism and it is argued that:

in a context in which the student is understood as a consumer by politicians, policy-makers and other social actors, it is hard for students' unions to resist this dominant political discourse, even if they want to (Brooks, Byford and Sela, 2016, p1225).

One of the main aims of this DProf study is to contribute to our understanding of shared responsibility and its multiple implications for practice, including in relation to those efforts designed to provide a framework for Ulster University to inform its partnership working initiatives and further develop its capacity for current and anticipated SE.

In Northern Ireland, the then Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), now subsumed in to the Department for the Economy (DfE) in 2016, launched its first HE strategy for Northern Ireland (DEL, 2012). The Strategy's four guiding principles are: responsiveness, quality, accessibility, and flexibility. The Department's stated commitment is to maintaining a high quality learning experience in higher education by:

- ensuring high quality teaching for all students undertaking a higher education course;
- maintaining a supportive learning environment through the recruitment, retention and progression for all students;
- enhancing the employability prospects of students and;
- encouraging the sector to explore new opportunities associated with international activity.

These drivers came at a time when Ulster University was rethinking its approaches to SE and refocusing its energies on improving student retention and success. Overall the University's non-continuation figure for 2013/14 entrants was 9.9% against a HESA benchmark of 8.1% (Ulster Senate paper, 2016, unpublished). Unfortunately with the exception of the year 2010/11, the University's non-continuation figure has been above its HESA benchmark since the period 2007/8. With the changes to student demographics and students' role in HE as outlined above, these factors are very relevant to this research project – if the University is to achieve the objectives set out in the Northern Ireland HE strategy and respond to a changing HE sector then it is

vital that we expand our evidence base to understand better, and develop capacity for, staff and students working together to enhance SE, retention and success.

1.3 Ulster University and Change

Ulster University is a regional, widening participation university with aspirations to further position itself internationally, and currently has over 26,000 students enrolled across four campuses in Northern Ireland. The student population is mainly made up of UK domiciled students (89%) and the University's stated mission is 'Professional Education for Professional Life'. One of its key strengths is employability with over 50% of courses having a significant element of work-based learning and the University is seeking to increase this so that all courses provide students with the opportunity to acquire real-life work-based experience before graduation (Ulster, 2013). In addition, the University is developing the campuses' learning spaces through an ambitious capital development project and as stated in its Learning & Teaching Strategy (2013/14 - 2017/18), strategic objective two seeks:

to provide transformative, high quality, learning experiences through the promotion of meaningful staff student partnerships that engender a shared responsibility'
(Ulster University, 2013, p.4).

Prior to the development of the Learning & Teaching Strategy, the University was involved in two HEA change programmes that would shape not only the content of the strategy but its implementation and monitoring. These are important because they involved both staff and students working together in partnership thereby providing evidence on which to base strategic objective two above. I will highlight in each how they are important precursors to my project.

1.3.1 Change Programme I: HEA Students as Partners Change Programme (2012-13)

In 2012-13, the University was successful in being accepted on the HEA funded 'Students as Partners' (SaP) one-year change programme (HEA, 2014). The aims of the programme were to:

- develop the capacity of students to play a substantive role in transformative change;
- enable HE providers to develop methods of involving students in institutional change more rigorously;
- build institutional capacity for SE and help institutions become more student-centred in their culture and approach to learning and teaching.

A distinctive feature of the programme is that participating teams comprised at least 50% students, with appropriate representation from academic staff and/or senior managers. I co-led the team along with Ulster's Students' Union (UUSU) SE Manager. I hadn't worked directly with students before, however for me, it turned out to be inspiring and felt like 'the right people were in the room' contributing to the discussion about SE.

An evaluation, by an external researcher, of this Change Programme took place in late Spring 2013, which involved one-to-one interviews of all team members (n=6). One element of the evaluation, focused on 'how the staff and student partners felt about working together'. The resulting data highlighted that cognisance needs to be taken of:

- the use of language particularly acronyms and/or academic terms which may not be familiar to students;
- understanding by the whole team of the aims and objectives;
- feelings around belongingness to the team;
- general team dynamics.

Whilst the findings here are from a very small qualitative study in one institution and can not be generalised, they were for me as Project Lead very revealing and initially I felt that I had failed the team by not ensuring that we were all speaking a common language or that we had agreement of the best way forward. It has been a valuable lesson that one should *never assume anything* and even though the team output was very helpful, the learning I

took from this experience is that 'students as partners' is not just about having an equal numbers of staff and students in a meeting or a project. It requires consideration to be given to many factors including: roles of partners, power imbalances, openness and trust, operationalisation of the partnership project, communication and so on. I am grateful for further opportunities to lead staff and students in the subsequent HEA change programme discussed in section 1.3.4 so that I could use the learning gained to enhance partnership practice going forward.

1.3.2 Consultation with staff conference delegates

Building on the work of the SaP programme, two opportunities occurred later that academic year (2012-13) which allowed consultation with the wider staff and student body on the notion of 'students as partners'. The first was at the annual learning and teaching conference, run by Ulster's Centre for Higher Education Research and Practice (CHERP). This conference entitled: 'Student Engagement; a catalyst for transformational change', took place on 24 January 2013 and was attended by 200 delegates. As Chair of the conference organising committee, I led programme planning and subsequent consultation with staff and student delegates. The delegates included: Ulster academic and learning support staff, students, and academic staff from partner FE Colleges. The opening address was given by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Learning, Teaching and Student Experience, Professor Denise McAlister (Sponsor of this DProf project) and centred on the current consultation phase of the, then new, Learning and Teaching Strategy.

Two keynote presentations followed, delivered by leading academics and their students from other HEIs, namely: Birmingham City University and Newcastle University. This provided us with some interesting perspectives on SE approaches at other universities. Ulster staff and students were invited to discuss and assess some of the ways in which collaboration could be beneficial in institutional development and student personal and professional development. Of particular note was hearing the different perspectives, both the academic and student voice, and how 'working together' implied that working *with* students to enhance the student

experience was better and more productive than pre-determining an enhancement and delivering it to students.

Staff were encouraged to participate in the consultation and to help shape the formation of the SE element. Following this, I along with two of the students involved in the SaP Change Programme presented our proposed model of SE (Cannell, 2012), which centred on the notion of 'students as partners'. It was made clear to staff and students present that this was a proposal and their views in relation to this were welcome. To this end, a consultation form, which posed three questions, was provided in the conference booklet and delegates were encouraged to complete these over the course of the day and return to me. Quite pleasingly over 70 responses were received and an analysis of answers yielded some interesting information from both staff and students, although it is important to bear in mind that the delegates had self-nominated to attend the conference in the first place presumably because of their interest in the conference theme. In summary:

- More than three quarters of respondents were in favour of 'students as partners' as an ethos;
- Approximately one-third said they would require support from senior management and further guidance on how to implement it at course level;
- About a fifth of respondents stated that they are already involved in a students as partners activity;
- Just less than a half stated that resistance to change would be a barrier or a challenge to this approach;
- Just more than a fifth stated that time would be a further constraint.

1.3.3 Students' Union Conference

UUSU took a similar approach with students on this issue. A student conference, 'Are students at Ulster Partners in their Learning?' – March 2013', was held and forty student delegates attended from across the four campuses.

The Quality and Student Engagement Consultant from the Student Engagement Team within the NUS was invited to deliver a workshop, and to also participate in a panel debate with Ulster's Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning, Teaching and Student Experience). The NUS Consultant provided an outline of the background and drivers of moving from SE to the concept of partnership. Delegates were provided with the NUS document "A Manifesto for Partnership" and discussions centred on: the definition of partnerships within HE; institutional change; the importance of Students' Unions; accounting for heterogeneity and the rejection of consumerism.

Students were asked to identify possible drivers and threats at Ulster to partnership working, and these were recorded to inform the UUSU response to the Learning and Teaching Strategy consultation.

At the end of the event students were given similar questionnaires (I co-designed with UUSU) to those distributed at the CHERP Conference to staff, requesting feedback on the themes of the day. Students were asked for their initial reaction to 'students as partners'; 23 out of 24 respondents replied either positively, or that they felt their course already contained elements of partnership. Several barriers were identified such as a lack of staff and student engagement with this approach, and also a lack of trust between staff and students.

The findings from the SaP evaluation and subsequent consultations with staff and students were encouraging in that it could be seen that there was an appetite from staff who participated and students to explore further the notion of 'students as partners' albeit, for some, with caution. Subsequently, the aforementioned PVC formed a strategic short-term working group to develop an application for submission to the HEA to be part of the What Works? Change programme, phase 2. The analysis of the results outlined above provided baseline data on which to take this forward. As a key member of this group, I was excited at the prospect of not just being involved in the What Works? (WWSRS) Project and the research that would allow the University to improve student retention and success; I was also at the planning stage of this DProf project and recognised that the WWSRS project would provide an

opportunity to explore the lived experiences of staff and students at Ulster University working together in partnership.

1.3.4 Change Programme II: HEA/Paul Hamlyn Foundation funded WWSRS change programme: phase 2 (2012-2015)

In early 2013, the University was accepted as one of thirteen institutions onto the What Works? Student Retention and Success Change Programme: phase 2 (WWSRS). As stated by the HEA (2013a) the student retention and success change programme builds on the learning from the 'What Works? Student retention and success programme, phase 1, (Thomas, 2012)', funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

The change programme aimed to help institutional teams achieve the following objectives (HEA, 2013a, p.1):

- Use the learning from the What Works? programme, institutional data and institutional review to identify strengths and challenges and priorities for change at the strategic and course/programme level;
- Improve the strategic approach to improving the engagement, belonging, retention and success of students;
- Implement or enhance specific interventions in the areas of induction, active learning, co-curricular activities in three selected discipline areas;
- Evaluate the impact of the changes in both formative and summative ways, drawing on naturally occurring institutional data, bespoke student surveys and qualitative methods such as telephone or face-to-face interviews with staff and students.

Although this change programme focused on implementation and enhancement of specific interventions in the areas of induction, active learning, co-curricular activities in *three* selected discipline areas, Ulster wished to leverage this to greater effect greater by extending the change programme to encompass the remaining three faculties (thereby achieving representation of all its six faculties). The institution committed to providing

additional resources to support this and the project had the full support and endorsement of the Senior Management Team.

My role and involvement in this change programme was that of Project Lead. I along with the other five members of the core team, including a Senior Manager, Data Expert, a Student Union officer, a student and an academic, were tasked with ensuring that the above four objectives were achieved. At the outset, we engaged in the development of an institutional vision statement for this change programme. Following consultation with the core team and the PVC for Learning, Teaching & Student Experience, the following was agreed:

Our vision is for meaningful staff student partnerships that engender a shared responsibility and which are underpinned by a positive student experience within a supportive learning environment.

(HEA, 2013b ,p1)

One of the key principles of this change programme, as stipulated by the HEA, is that students must be actively involved in the process of change, effectively advocating a partnership approach (discussed further in Chapter 2, section 2.10.1). To this end, students were part of the core team and the seven discipline teams. The roles of the student partners were varied and evolved as each discipline area identified their challenges and the interventions necessary to improve retention and success. This is discussed further in Chapter 3. However the ethos of 'students as partners' underpinned the activities identified, implemented and evaluated as part of this change programme. This provided me with the opportunity to carry out parallel research, in the form of this DProf project, on the lived experiences of staff and students working together in partnership. This is important for several reasons:

- To understand better, and learn from, staff and student partnerships that aim to help us enhance the student experience;
- To address challenges identified in previous evaluations on staff student partnership (see 1.3.1), which showed that this type of

partnership can be problematic and there can be misunderstandings on the part of both staff and students;

- To build an evidence base to help us address resistance - almost half of staff consulted on staff student partnership stated that resistance to change would be a barrier to this type of working (see 1.3.2);
- To identify how (staff and student) practices may need to be enhanced in order to address students' perception that there is a lack of trusting relationships between staff and students (see 1.3.3).

In summary, this DProf project was timely for Ulster just as a new institutional Learning and Teaching Strategy (2013/14 – 2017/18) was being rolled out and as the HEA/Paul Hamlyn Foundation funded WWSRS was entering its implementation phase. As the DProf project progressed, the research conducted and emerging data are, among other things, helping to critically inform the 'how to' of strategic aim 2 of the Learning and Teaching Strategy: 'to provide transformative, high quality, learning experiences through the promotion of meaningful staff student partnerships that engender a shared responsibility' (Ulster, 2013, p4).

1.4 My current role/researcher position

I am a Professional Development Manager based in the Staff Development Unit at Ulster University. The University is a multi-campus, widening participation university with over 26,000 students and approximately 2,800 staff of which just under 1,000 are academic. I joined the University in January 2004, and prior to this I taught in an FE college in Northern Ireland for 7 years and before that in the private commercial sector in London for 9 years.

My current position can be loosely categorised into three areas of responsibility: teaching on the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Practice (PgCHEP); Project Lead for the WWSRS change programme (the context for this research project); and joint lead in a professional development and recognition scheme which supports staff who wish to achieve the status of one of the categories of fellowship of the HEA. For me, this division of responsibilities helps me to both distinguish between, and

identify crossovers, as I strive to influence others and promote effective practice through the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) aligned to the Learning & Teaching Strategy of the institution (Ulster 2013), and the UK Professional Standards Framework (HEA, 2011). Over the last twelve years spent in HE my personal views on my own professional identity have changed— particularly on my role supporting academic staff. The majority of the latter are experienced researchers and teachers with PhDs in their own disciplines, and this has at times caused me to question my credibility. The experience I have gained and transitions made, further discussed in Chapter 9, during this DProf project have undoubtedly increased my confidence in my own abilities. My developing confidence as a professional educator and change agent took a further step when I was awarded Principal Fellow of the HEA (PFHEA), in March 2014, through a direct application to the HEA. Planning for, reflecting and preparing the application, along with receiving advocate statements from colleagues was a very useful reflective exercise and I agree with the suggestion that ‘...reflection is an ongoing process which links together thinking and action; it is a never-ending cycle that helps in becoming an actor of innovation, rather than a passive recipient of change’ (Di Napoli cited in Fry & Ketteridge 2009, p477). I can also relate to Handel’s statement that ‘faculty developers as a group lack a unifying professional identity’ (2008, p55). He argues that the metaphor of the ‘critical friend’ is a potential professional identity for academic developers and this notion is familiar to me and resonates with many of the functions that I perform. With the movement to more strategic working groups, some of which I lead, I also see myself more as a ‘change agent’ (Ashford et al., 2004) as I can directly relate what I do to the change agent characteristics identified by Smyth (2003) in an HE context. These include development of: strong relationships, a supportive atmosphere, an awareness of own influence on others, reflective practice, knowledge and empathy for the emotional consequences of change, the ability to support teachers and students through the process of change, a sustained approach rather than one-off activities, active listening, and ethical behaviour. This identity was corroborated by one of my senior colleague’s advocate statements where she stated:

In short, Roisin demonstrates many of the inter-personal and professional competences associated with effective leadership, including, inter alia, coaching and developing

talent, building and leading diverse teams, exercising influence and having impact without formal authority, negotiating and managing conflict, and envisioning and implementing change.

(PFHEA Advocate Statement, 2014, unpublished)

Since 2010, I have established a close working relationship, through various projects, with the UUSU, in particular the SE Manager. This has resulted in quite a change of practice and focus for the way that Staff Development and UUSU operate. In the first six years of working as an academic developer, my practice was very much based around teaching, helping, supporting academic staff (individuals and teams) as they grappled with the challenges of developing curricula, teaching and engaging students and setting assessments and giving feedback. Over the last six years, engagement with UUSU has paved the way for further engagement with students and a move towards practice that embraces the notion of 'students as partners'. All of this was happening against a backdrop of a changing HE landscape as discussed in section 1.2.

1.5 Career, transitions and identity

Although the focus of this doctoral project is relevant to my current role, it is important to acknowledge briefly my professional practice before moving into higher education. My professional values partly stem from my work in the private commercial sector.

1.5.1 Private sector

I worked in the financial services sector in London between 1988 and 1997. I was very fortunate to work for two internationally renowned companies in the City. Both of these companies provided real-time financial data to banks, stock brokers, dealers and others in the money markets in order that they could make instantaneous decisions regarding financial transactions. My identity could be perceived as that of consultant, adviser and trainer; I frequently trained end users (dealers, stock brokers) on the complex financial computer systems that they subscribed to, in order that their needs be met in relation to decision-making based on key financial data. This was carried out at their desks in a 'real-time' environment where split-second decisions

resulted in huge sums of money changing hands; hence, I operated within a corporate environment, focused on financial performance and productivity, and where there was an expectation that employees acted in a professional manner, befitting the context.

I learned that to be successful included being competent, confident, knowledgeable and comfortable in dealing with 'experts' in the world of finance. This learning took many forms: some of it was formal learning and included short professional courses, some of it was experiential learning, and perhaps some of it was past experiences or memories stored in the unconscious mind subsequently being used to form beliefs and habits. I also learned from making mistakes and from formal reviews with my line manager. One of the things that helped me most was the opportunity to shadow more experienced colleagues, I was able to observe how they approached business meetings, engage in professional conversations, negotiate tricky business issues and close a deal. From observing quite a number of more experienced colleagues, I was able to reflect on these observations and draw a comparison between the success or otherwise of particular approaches used by colleagues and how these were received by clients. I was then able to select the traits or characteristics that I felt I would most like to emulate. Being well-prepared, open, friendly, flexible, confident and willing to meet clients' needs were all behaviours that I wanted to enhance to shape the professional I was becoming. In relation to how I work currently, with academic colleagues, these are also traits and behaviours that serve well in relation to collaborative working across disciplines, working groups and with other individuals and teams. Although the time lag in closing a deal in the private commercial sector and in HE may be very different, perhaps the process of collaborative working, or working in partnership, is not so very different.

On reflection, the most rewarding part of my job was the face-to-face interaction with clients, taking a lead on the development and delivery of bespoke training to meet client requirements and the mentoring support to new colleagues. I decided that this was the focus for my career going forward. I think that, by developing capacity to understand the client

perspective in terms of their business needs, and to meet these in a client-customer context in a professional manner, was what enabled me to be successful and progress in this environment. I can relate this to my current context in working with academic staff and more latterly students.

1.5.2 FE Lecturer

When I returned to Northern Ireland in 1997, I began teaching in an FE College. My role as Business and ICT Lecturer for a range of programmes involved quite a significant teaching load on modules at level 4 and 5 (QAA, 2008). I was involved in designing and planning learning activities, teaching, assessing and giving feedback to learners, developing appropriate learning environments and effective approaches to support and guidance for a diverse student group. I developed a very good rapport with my students and, using my experience in the industry, I was able to link theory to practice (Popovic and Green 2012), design authentic assessment (Gulikers et al., 2004) and support students' development of employability skills and preparedness for study in higher education. Initially, I found the transition from private sector to the education sector quite daunting. My identity as a professional in the private sector had become unhinged, however I maintained my business work ethic albeit in an educational context. I was now the newbie – what did I know? I also was surprised at the lack of: a culture of mentoring or the existence of any buddy support. It was very much 'sink or swim'. What helped me greatly was enrolling on a postgraduate programme at Ulster University, firstly a Postgraduate Certificate in Further and Higher Education (1999) and subsequently a Postgraduate Diploma in Further and Higher Education (2000). This enabled me to learn more about the theories and models of learning and teaching espoused in HE literature. Part of this programme required me to engage in micro-teaching, and I found this to be very useful; I received positive feedback which helped my confidence grow and underpin my credibility as a teacher. A further boost to my confidence happened when I was asked to develop and deliver a new Foundation degree and in tandem with this I was recognised as a Queen's University accredited Tutor. In 2002, supported by my institution, I completed an MSc in Educational Technology. I thoroughly enjoyed being an HE student again; I relished the challenge of learning, constructing new knowledge, and

growing as a person. The opportunity to experience HE from a student perspective was also very useful to me as a teacher in HE, particularly in relation to how I designed and delivered the curriculum and in my assessment and feedback practice. My teaching and learning philosophy which emerged from this dual role was very much focused on a student-centred approach (Kember, 1997).

Subsequently, I was appointed as the ICT champion in the College and my role was to mentor and guide colleagues in adopting and implementing an online aspect to their programmes. Again, my identity came into question, now a teacher of other teachers – how was this going to play out? At first it felt awkward; I was raising my head above the parapet. However, drawing on my private sector experiences, and adopting a student-centred approach to my practice, I became comfortable with this new identity. I was able to demonstrate impact by the number of successful students (colleagues) and by the subsequent application of their new learning within their own practice. There was a demonstrable culture shift within the College in relation to technology. At the time, I felt particularly proud of my achievement; this confirmed for me that I was capable of teaching other teachers and that my approach made a difference. Subsequently (2004), I applied for, and was successful in securing my current role in the Staff Development Unit at Ulster University.

1.6 Summary

The focus of this chapter has been to introduce the background and context for this DProf project which has included the changing nature of HE across the sector and Ulster's response to change. Two HEA funded change programmes have been outlined which have formed the bedrock for this research. As a researcher of a work-based project, I have reflected on my changing identity during the development of my career: from working in the private sector, to becoming a lecturer, and an academic developer in HE. I have discussed these transitions and what has helped me to overcome hurdles or barriers to making the move from the private sector to the education sector and from teacher to academic developer and now researcher. Drawing on, and learning from, my experiences I now see my

professional identity as that of a change agent and this informs my current practice. What remains with me is my experiences of being a part-time student whilst being employed as a teacher and how at times this was a rewarding and challenging experience and at other times a frustrating and lonely experience. As stated earlier, my learning and teaching philosophy is one that is student-centred. In addition to my own experiences, I am the parent of children who have been or are currently at university (one recently graduated and one in second-year). This gives an additional perspective on HE and I can see second as well as first-hand that practices which are not student-centred can have a huge impact on the student experience.

When I started working in HE, in my context, the focus was on teaching and learning, in that order. More recently, the shift has been to view HE from a learning and teaching perspective. I, through this DProf project want to push that a little further and focus on the 'learners' and the 'teachers' and what that means when they work in partnership. In Chapter 2, I review the literature that has informed this research inquiry before outlining the aims and objectives and discussing the methodology in Chapters 3 and 4.

Chapter 2: Review of Knowledge and information

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I review the literature on SE in higher education and the emerging role of staff student partnerships as part of the process of SE. Firstly, I consider the complexities of SE and how important it is to be clear about which aspects of SE to which one is referring. Secondly, I draw on the key learning points from partnership working in the UK public sector and then discuss drivers for 'students as partners' in HE. Thirdly, I define partnerships in HE and I utilise a recent framework for engagement through partnership to identify different types of partnership working that have emerged across the HE sector. Fourthly, I identify the three dimensions of SE: behavioural, emotional, and cognitive and review different approaches to SE in terms of how it is measured or researched. These include: a quantitative approach, a qualitative approach, and an holistic approach. Fifthly, I critique three conceptual models of SE which set out to provide a conceptual understanding and wider lens in which to consider SE. Sixthly, I relate these models to how SE is being discussed and shaped at Ulster, particularly attributes of SE: belongingness and active learning, which have emerged from the WWSRS change programme. Lastly, I conclude that the holistic approach to SE provides an opportunity to recognise the role that staff student partnerships has to play in the process of SE and that which provides the conceptual underpinning for this research.

2.2 The complexities of SE

According to Gibbs (2016; 2014) SE is a slippery construct and a current buzzword used by HEIs, students' unions, teaching development units and government alike. The difficulty that this presents is that the 'term SE has come to be used to refer to so many different things that it is difficult to keep track of what people are actually talking about' (Gibbs, 2016, p1). Many authors agree and there exist differing ways and different angles in which to view SE and these vary according to an individual's (staff or student) role, discipline, own beliefs, context, research perspective and even country (Harrington, Sinfield and Burns, 2016; Bryson, 2014a; Kahu, 2013). According to Bryson (2014a), SE is a complex idea that is not reducible or

possible to map in a way that would satisfy all researchers, theorists and practitioners. Instead, he advises that each researcher or evaluator should choose aspects or concepts of SE to explore but at the same time be mindful of the broader issues and arguments made by the key theorists. In following his advice, my focus for this research was on an aspect of SE – staff and student relationships - defined as psychosocial influences on SE by Kahu (2013, p766). Cognisant of my role as an academic developer and of the UK and Ulster context as outlined in Chapter 1, I am interested in understanding better the impact on the individual (staff and student) of relational-based partnerships between staff and students in learning and teaching. I am also interested in this approach in relation to how this might facilitate capacity building of students to engage and staff to be engaging. Before exploring the literature on ‘students as partners’, which has come to the fore in recent years, it is important to note that partnership research in HE is several years behind equivalent research in other parts of the public sector. HE-related research is still at the early stages and therefore there are current limitations of knowledge within which this project and its methodology are situated. However, in this project, students as partners is situated within the broad term SE and is viewed as a process or a concept in which to frame collaborative working between staff and students for the mutual benefit of enhancing learning and teaching. This will be discussed later in this chapter after a brief overview of partnership working in the UK public sector.

2.3 Partnership working across UK public sector

Partnership working, a key theme in strategic management in the private sector in the 1980’s, has gained prominence in the public sector since the 1990’s. Partnerships (also known as collaborative, joint or interagency ways of working) are increasingly evident between public agencies, third sector organisations (community and voluntary) and the private sector: the sense in which they are relevant here is in relation to partnerships with users of services and their carers. While there is agreement between researchers that the goals and benefits of partnership working in the public sector are widely accepted there is a pervasive conceptual confusion about the meaning of ‘partnership’ and comparatively little evaluation of partnerships (Cook, 2015; Rees, Mullins and Bovaird 2012). There appears, however, to be a level of

consensus that partnerships with service users and carers should be characterised by mutual respect, sharing power, sharing learning, joint decision-making and recognition of respective roles and responsibilities (Jackson and Morris, 1994). Whilst many types of partnership have been developed across a range of disciplines, contexts and stakeholder groups, the three areas most researched to date are: health and social care, public health, and local area planning. In a review of empirical research evaluating UK public service partnership working between 2000 and 2015, Cook (2015, p1) summarises the findings thus:

- Partnership working in UK public services is a complex process shaped by structural, cultural and social factors. Developing and sustaining effective partnership working is challenging in this context;
- There is very little evidence linking partnership working in the UK public services to improved outcomes. This is, in part, because of the methodological challenges associated with conducting robust evaluation work within such complex systems;
- The research evidence highlights a range of features of effective partnership working. How these features contribute to partnership effectiveness are shaped by a number of factors, including the motivation for any partnership and the agencies and sectors involved;
- By considering the relevant literature in terms of inputs, activities and different levels of outcomes, the features that need to be in place at different points in the partnership journey for effective partnership working are identified;
- There are no 'one size fits all' solutions to improve partnership working. Organisations and individuals need to engage with the complex context in which they work to address structural, cultural and social factors influencing effectiveness.

Whilst these findings provide learning points to inform partnerships within HE, perhaps the last point in relation to 'no one size fits all' is particularly key. Putting partnership in practice requires attention to many features, as emphasised above, however one vital feature is frequently highlighted as critical and that is 'the players' or the individuals involved. The literature shows that mandated partnerships don't work as well as those developed by

the partners themselves at the ground level. Attention therefore needs to be paid to supporting the individuals involved, through developing their understanding of partnership working and their ability to reflect critically on its function and purpose. Rees, Mullins and Bovaird (2012, p57) believe that the 'private sector may be better at doing partnership working as they have a single bottom line, but public services deliver multiple bottom lines and trust, user engagement and co-production and relationship approaches are needed to deliver social value'. Cook (2015, p11) agrees and points out that 'partnership is a collaborative process, requiring ongoing dialogue, trust and ownership to operate effectively'.

2.4 Drivers for students as partners in HE

As outlined in chapter 1, the marketisation of HE has encouraged students to adopt a passive role in their learning where HE is viewed as a commodity and a 'student as consumer' attitude prevails. Many scholars (for example: Bryson, 2014a; Bryson, 2014b; Levy, Little and Whelan, 2011; Matthews, 2016; McCulloch, 2009) now feel that the time has come to challenge this paradigm and to move away from hierarchical university structures that encourage a 'them and us' attitude, to more collaborative approaches where staff and students work together for the mutual benefit of both, in pursuit of deep learning. However, Macfarlane (2017) cautions that students' rights shouldn't be undermined in our rush to improve the student experience. He believes that students should have the right to choose and have the freedom to learn rather than having things imposed on them that they do not want.

Kreber (2009) suggests that governments' call on universities to compete in the global market and to provide 'knowledge workers', global citizens and lifelong learners might cause some academics to question their roles. Rather than reduce the purpose of a degree to preparing students for specific jobs, a more desirable perspective according to Knight and Yorke (2003) is to think of employability in relation to student capacity building to think and act critically, ethically and morally in different contexts. Northedge and McArthur (2009) argue that the art of teaching is expanding and the 'learner-teacher relationship of some kind always lies at the heart of effective higher education' (p107). They also believe that 'higher learning remains at the root

of not only a cognitive process but also a socio-cultural one, dependent on meetings of minds and on relationship...’ (p107). Baxter Magolda (2009) believes that students need to move away from authority dependence towards self authorship and that this is a challenge for twenty-first century higher education. Her Learning Partnership Model offers a vision for engaging students through three principles: ‘validating learners’ ability to know, situating learning in learners’ experience, and defining learning as mutually constructing meaning’ (Baxter Magolda, 2009, p150) and she believes that achieving this requires ‘educators to re-conceptualise the educator-learner relationship’ (p155).

Working collaboratively is of course, not new, and we are reminded that the idea of a university with a community of learners (staff and students) working together to advance scholarship was the vision put forward by Wilhelm von Humboldt in 1810 when he founded the University of Berlin (Lea, 2016; Levy, Little and Whelan, 2011). At Ulster, there are approaches that have involved students as partners for many years, such as problem-based learning (Hack, McKillop, Sweetman, & McCormack, 2015) and peer-assisted study sessions (Keenan, 2014) but these have mainly been instigated and led at a local subject or programme level. Opportunities to replicate this across the institution have not been explored. More recently, research is emerging which extols the virtues of the ‘students as partners’ paradigm. The benefits for staff and students can be summarised as:

- Focuses on the development of the learner leading to improved citizens (McCulloch, 2009);
- Enhances motivation and learning (Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 2014; Little et al., 2011; Nygaard et al., 2013);
- Develops metacognitive awareness and sense of identity (Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 2014; Dickerson, Jarvis and Stockwell, 2016; Nygaard et al., 2013);
- improves teaching and the classroom experience – prompting a learning community (Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 2014, Nygaard et al., 2013);

- Improved learning in relation to employability skills and graduate attributes (Dickerson, Jarvis and Stockwell, 2016; Pauli, Raymond-Barker and Worrell, 2016);

However, whilst this research highlights the outcomes of partnership working in a positive light, it is important to acknowledge the challenges that this type of working presents. It is clear that genuine partnerships do not happen automatically and questions still remain – particularly if we wish to scale up partnership working across an institution. To date, scholars have identified some of the challenges and further questions which include:

- How can we reconcile power relations between staff and students when we are working in a dominant ‘students as consumer’ ideology? (Delpish et al., 2009; Hutchings, Bartholomew and Reilly, 2013; Levy, Little and Whelan, 2011);
- Transience (both staff and students) can be a barrier as partners move on (Little et al., 2011; Levy, Little and Whelan, 2011);
- Finding a common language (Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 2014; Levy, Little and Whelan, 2011);
- ‘Students as partners’ can be a threshold concept (Cook-Sather, 2014; Marquis et al. 2016);
- The complexity of students as partners in different contexts means there is no ‘one size fits all’ (Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 2014).

Interestingly, where challenges have been identified, these have been accompanied with advice and guidance on how they might be addressed. In relation to power dynamics, it is suggested that staff student partnerships do not require false equivalency nor should we reverse the balance of power in the students’ favour, rather we should seek to ensure that different perspectives and contributions are made by all partners and that each is valued and respected (Barnes et al., 2011; Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 2014). Jarvis et al. agree and advocate that ‘dealing with power differentials so that all can take initiative and responsibility is vital’ (2016, p9). This study will seek to explore some of the practicalities of these broad aspirations (further discussed in Chapter 3).

Despite and in recognition of the challenges, there is a growing movement across the HE sector to capitalise on the benefits of staff and student partnership in order to fully realise what some claim is the potential transformative nature of a culture change to challenge the customer-provider model of HE. As Levy, Little and Whelan (2011) point out, rather than idealise the concept of partnership, we should accept that HE is a contested arena and 'by working together in ways that allow staff and students to share authority in learning, teaching, research and enhancement, new knowledge and practices will emerge through contestation as well as collaboration' (p12).

2.5 Defining partnership in HE

McCulloch (2009) criticised the students as consumer model, finding at least eight deficiencies with it that reduced the role of the student to that of a passive recipient. He proposed that considering students as co-producers places the student in a more active role and encourages a 'students as partners' attitude. More recently, Healey, Flint and Harrington state that:

Partnership is understood as fundamentally about a relationship in which all involved – students, academics, professional services staff, senior managers, students' unions, and so on – are actively engaged in and stand to gain from the process of learning and working together. Partnership is essentially a process of engagement, not a product. It is a way of doing things, rather than an outcome in itself.

(2014, p12)

Bryson concurs with this approach and believes that:

partnership and all that it entails offers the most fruitful way forward for student engagement as so many of the good practices for engaging students... resonate with the principles and practices of partnerships.

(2014b, p239)

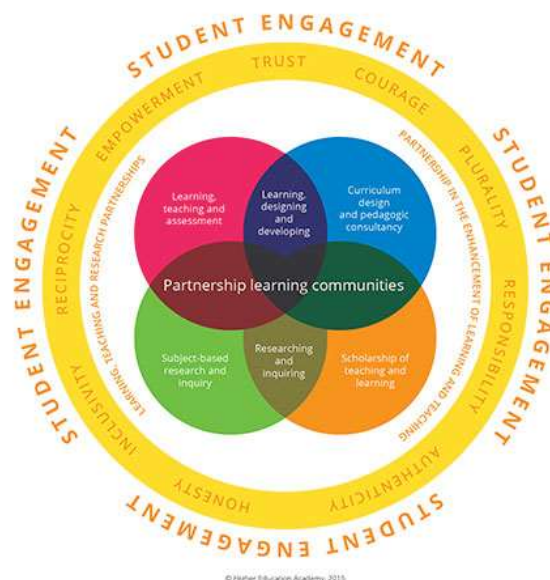
The recent move towards promoting a partnership ethos between students and staff across the sector has resulted in many institutions forging ahead with initiatives spanning various aspects of university life. As a consequence, different types of partnership have emerged and the diversity these embody

would appear to support findings alike of studies in the public sector (Cook, 2015) and in the HE sector (Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 2014), that there is no ‘one size fits all’ when it comes to partnership working.

2.5.1.Types of partnership

Building on research evidence and widespread consultation with the HE sector in the UK, in 2015 the HEA published a framework for SE through partnership (HEA, 2015) (figure 1). While it emanates from a national body for higher educational professionals in the UK this framework has been developed as part of a conceptual tool-kit for use by multiple stakeholders and potential partners in HE (staff, students, institutions and students’ unions) to reflect on, inspire and enhance practice and policy relating to partnerships in learning and teaching. The framework illustrates four overlapping areas of focus where partnerships may be fostered and emphasises the importance of learning communities.

Figure 1: Framework for Student Engagement through Partnership (HEA, 2015)



In recent years some institutions have adopted partnership working which may be categorised in one of the four areas indicated and these examples provide an indication of different types of partnerships in practice. Inevitably the institutional examples don’t just fit neatly into any

one particular area and there is evidence of crossover within the four areas:

- Learning, teaching and assessment;
 - Bryn Mawr College, USA: students as co-creators of teaching approaches (see for example: Bovill, Cook-Sather and Felten, 2011)
 - Northumbria University, UK: assessment partnership model (see for example: Sambell and Graham, 2011)
 - University of Leicester, UK: working together to reduce plagiarism (see for example: Badge et al. 2011)
- Subject-based research and inquiry;
 - University of Lincoln, UK: student as producer (see for example: Neary and Winn, 2009)
 - The University of Warwick and Oxford Brookes University (The Reinvention Centre): staff-student collaboration on the creation of an undergraduate research journal (see for example: Metcalfe, Gibson and Lambert, 2011)
- Curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy;
 - University of Exeter, UK: students as change agents (see for example: Dunne and Zandstra, 2011)
 - Elon University, USA: students as co-creators of course design (see for example: Bovill, Cook-Sather and Felten, 2011)
 - University College Dublin, Ireland: students as co-creators of curricula (see for example: Bovill, Cook-Sather and Felten, 2011)
- Scholarship of teaching and learning.
 - Birmingham City University, UK: student academic partners scheme (see for example: Nygaard et al., 2013)
 - Northumbria University, UK: collaboration between staff and students in SoTL (see for example: Allin, 2014)

The HEA (2015) suggest that 'embedding partnership as an ethos requires a holistic approach, with attention to all four areas of focus' (p2). They also suggest that it can be most effective if adopted at an institutional level, as well as embedded within programmes' (p1). Individual practitioners may find

the framework useful in that for new entrants to the arena of ‘partnerships’, this framework offers a starting point and perhaps a way for them to dip their toe in the water – by trying out a partnership approach in the learning, teaching and assessment area. Some examples of how this might be done – e.g. flipping the classroom or work-related learning are provided in the framework. What might emerge is a realisation that for many practitioners they are already doing partnership work – they just may not have been labelling it as such. As suggested by Matthews (2016), language is important and the recent language of students as partners emphasises the more relational form of SE.

However, there can still be reluctance or a capacity deficit on the part of both staff and students on adopting a partnership approach. Healey, Flint and Harrington highlight:

...that the understandings of the impact of partnership work – for students, staff, institutions, society more broadly – remain relatively poor, and there is a need for a greater evidence base around the benefits of partnership.

(2014, p60)

Bryson (2014b) also points out that there are many problems and challenges to practising partnership including ethical dilemmas and issues to resolve. Whilst the HEA framework (HEA, 2015) provides areas of focus, one of the challenges facing staff and students is in relation to where the partnership takes place – is it inside the classroom or is it extra-curricular? The former might suggest that all students would be involved and the latter might suggest that only a small number of students would take part – perhaps those students who would put themselves forward anyway, for roles such as student representative.

If institutions wish to scale-up partnership working so that they can challenge traditional forms of SE which position the student in a passive role, and move towards more relational forms of SE, which embrace collaboration and shared goals between staff and students (Flint, 2016; Matthews, 2016), then we need to consider our current institutional SE base line and how we got to where we are. In the remaining sections I have undertaken a brief review of SE over the last number of decades in different contexts so that I can clarify the aspects of SE in which my research is situated.

2.6 Dimensions of SE

Three dimensions of SE have been identified in the literature: behavioural engagement, emotional engagement and cognitive engagement (Solomonides, 2013; Kahu, 2013; Trowler, 2010; Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris, 2004). These are defined as:

- Behavioural engagement - students who are behaviourally engaged would typically comply with behavioural norms, such as attendance and involvement;
- Emotional engagement - students who engage emotionally would experience affective reactions such as interest, enjoyment, or a sense of belonging.
- Cognitive engagement - cognitively engaged students would be invested in their learning, would seek to go beyond the requirements, and would relish challenge.

Recent research suggests that it is the interplay between the three dimensions at the level of the individual student (Solomonides, 2013) that is important and that which would allow us, as teachers and institutions, to examine what is within our control and what is not so that we might clearly focus on what we can enhance. However, Kahu cautions that 'positioning engagement so clearly with the individual, there is a danger of downplaying the importance of the situation. Engagement is fundamentally situational – it arises from the interplay of context and individual' (2013, p763). Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris suggest that:

To date, research has not capitalized on the potential of engagement as a multidimensional construct that encompasses behaviour, emotion, and cognition. The richness of encompassing the three components leads to the challenge of defining and studying each and their combination in conceptually nuanced ways. Many of the studies of engagement include one or two types (e.g., behaviour and emotion) but do not consider all three.

(2004, p83)

2.7 A quantitative approach to SE

A large number of studies focus on one or two dimensions of engagement. In countries such as US, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa, the development and discussion of SE is heavily influenced by those practices and types of research which focus on the behavioural and cognitive dimensions of SE. The impetus in the US came from concerns arising from an increasingly dominant debate about quality in US higher education. This debate included firstly, questions about the elevated status of reputation, resources and research over learning and teaching, and secondly, the lack of agreement on how to assess quality in HE (McCormick and Kinzie, 2014). Quality in institutions was determined by the accreditation system carried out by peers (a system faulted for its emphasis on infrastructure and resources over learning and teaching) and the introduction of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) developed by George Kuh in 1998 was intended to shift the attention from quality to teaching and learning – SE in this context focuses on the amount of time and effort students put into their studies and other educationally purposeful activities, as well as the institution's effort to support student success (Kuh, 2001). The development of the NSSE is drawn from Pace's (1982) concept of quality of student effort and the work of Astin (1984) on student 'involvement' which suggests that more involvement equals better learning. It also draws on: theories put forward by Pascarella and Terenzini (1991; 2005) which suggested that the extent to which students engage determines their success; and on Chickering and Gamson's (1987) 'Seven Principles of Good Practice in Undergraduate Education'. These principles brought together the notion that HEIs need to be cognisant of the whole student experience both in and outside of the classroom. The principles promote active and collaborative learning that respects the heterogeneity of student cohorts whilst encouraging a challenging learning climate predicated on trust relationships. These principles, have been used and adapted over the last three decades across the HE sector and at different levels and the first two principles in particular, which encourage contact between students and faculty and develop reciprocity and cooperation among students anticipate key elements of most 'students as partners' paradigms, such as those referred to earlier.

The primary activity associated with NSSE is annually surveying college students to assess the extent to which they engage in educational practices associated with high levels of learning and development. It does this using five benchmarks namely:

1. Level of Academic Challenge
2. Active and Collaborative Learning.
3. Student Interactions with Faculty Members
4. Enriching Educational Experiences
5. Supportive Campus Environment

Kuh emphasised that in benchmarking engagement it is what students *do* that matters:

Student engagement is defined as students' involvement in activities and conditions that are linked with high-quality learning. A key assumption is that learning outcomes are influenced by how an individual participates in educationally purposeful activities. While students are seen to be responsible for constructing their own knowledge, learning is also seen to depend on institutions and staff generating conditions that stimulate student involvement.

(2001, p12)

NSSE annually collects information at over 1500 colleges and universities in the US and Canada about first-year and senior students' participation in programs and activities that institutions provide for their learning and personal development (NSSE, Indiana University, 2015). The results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending college. Having been in operation for over 15 years and reviewed in 2013, the *quantitative* evidence base gathered has been influential in shaping strategy and policy. A key output from NSSE is the 'high-impact practices' identified by Kuh (2008) that educational research suggests increase rates of student retention and SE. These are:

1. First-Year Seminars and Experiences;
2. Common Intellectual Experiences;
3. Learning Communities;
4. Writing-Intensive Courses;
5. Collaborative Assignments and Projects;

6. Undergraduate Research;
7. Diversity/Global Learning;
8. Service Learning, Community-Based Learning;
9. Internships;
10. Capstone Courses and Projects.

Whilst NSSE has been critiqued as a methodological tool by some over the validity of the scales and the focus on staff and student behaviours (Weller, 2016; Bryson, 2014a; Kahu, 2013) it has ‘demonstrated that its most powerful contribution may be as a conversation starter, or a catalyst for more intensive, varied and nuanced efforts to examine educational effectiveness’ (McCormick and Kinzie, 2014, p25).

The NSSE has been modified for use in Australia and New Zealand (as AUSSE), South Africa in 2009 (as SASSE), China in 2009 (as NSSE-China) and Ireland in 2013 (as ISSE). It was used for the first time in Australia and New Zealand in 2007 with one additional dimension – work integrated learning. Some of the key SE literature from Australia focuses on a social concept of engagement. Williams (1982) developed an index of ‘Institutional Belongingness, Social Involvement and ‘alienation’. Subsequently, the focus of SE in Australia was on the first-year experience. A wide-scale survey was administered every five years since 1994 and the survey was reviewed in 2004 to include more items. The work of McInnis (2001) using the data gathered, posited that connectedness was an important factor in determining student retention and success. Debates about SE gathered momentum, in Australia, leading to further, perhaps contested, definitions of SE which emerged from a largely positivist discourse. Two examples are:

The time, energy and resources students devote to the activities designed to enhance learning at university.

(Krause et al., 2005, p31)

The concept of student engagement is based on the constructivist assumption that learning is influenced by how an individual participates in educationally purposeful activities. Learning is seen as a ‘joint proposition,’ however which also depends on institutions and staff providing

students with the conditions, opportunities and expectations to become involved. However, individual learners are ultimately the agents in discussions of engagement.

(Coates, 2006, p26)

Krause and Coates (2008), whilst bringing together the data from the first-year experience survey and the AUSSE to produce seven scales of SE, acknowledged that qualitative and on-going measures were required in addition to surveys in order to understand engagement. These scales include both attitudinal and behavioural dimensions: transition engagement; academic engagement; peer engagement; student-staff engagement; intellectual engagement, online engagement, and beyond-class engagement.

Since 2012, the Australian government has introduced a mandatory student survey, the University Experience Survey (UES). The survey's introduction calls into question the future of the AUSSE. The UES has gained responses from over 100,000 students in each of the years 2012, 2013 and 2014. The results from these surveys were used to help both HE providers and government improve teaching and learning in Australia (UES, 2014). In 2015, the UES was renamed the Student Experience Survey (SES) to include students from non-university higher education institutions. The questionnaire remains relatively unchanged to the 2014 UES. Approximately 145,000 students participated in the 2015 SES.

According to Bryson (2014a) relying on surveys alone raises problems in conceptualising SE and cautions that such surveys lose the context-specific nature of the student experience. Trowler (2010) has also highlighted that what works in one discipline, or context or for one specific cohort of students does not necessarily work in another. Indeed, we could also go as far as stating that individual students experience SE differently. Scholars have argued that the discipline-specific nature of engagement in particular is overlooked in evaluation instruments and that disciplinary factors can determine how students engage (differently) even within institutions (Brint, Cantwell and Hanneman, 2008; Weller, 2016). Bryson (2014a) and Trowler (2010) suggest that a positivist approach to measuring SE through surveys using the aforementioned instruments does not uncover the richness and

diversity of the student experience and does not give a voice to the student at all. The affect or emotional dimension is neither sought nor captured, something that more recent SE models and conceptual frameworks seek to address (see e.g. Kahu, 2013, Pittaway, 2012; Solomonides, 2013; Thomas, 2012). These will be discussed below, after a review of the UK approach, which in contrast to the above has mainly taken a qualitative approach to researching SE.

2.8 A qualitative approach to SE

Much of the more UK based literature and research on SE is based on a qualitative methodology and involves smaller number of students. This fact by itself may not be an issue but in determining the breadth of literature on SE, it is problematic. As explained by Trowler and Trowler, in their literature review evidence summary for the HEA:

In the UK, studies are much more often qualitative in character, based on case studies. Often these fail the test of robustness [as defined by the authors under four criteria]. This is not however to detract from their value. Studies of this nature can be extremely illuminative in terms of conceptualising the issues, developing theory in a way, which the more positivist Australian and North American studies tend not to do... There is a body of work produced in the UK which could be said to address student engagement but traces its roots back to other traditions, such as student feedback, student representation and student approaches to learning, and is less likely to be tagged as 'student engagement' in the authors' keywords. Because of this, the literature flagged as 'student engagement' is heavily skewed towards the North American/Australasian tradition.

(2010, p3)

The ensuing subsequent *international* literature review conducted by Trowler (2010) confined its attention to those works flagged as concerning SE by their authors rather than any publication which substantively addressed issues under their definition. It effectively rejected all of the UK based studies, a decision that was considered by some (e.g. Bryson, 2014a) as flawed.

A later study carried out by Wimpenny and Savin-Baden (2013) conducted a systematic qualitative research synthesis of the literature. In addition to

synthesising the literature, they examined and presented the concepts and themes that recurred across the SE literature in terms of students' conceptions of engagement. They argue that:

...synthesising qualitative studies can offer a valuable means of examining student engagement due to the more personalised perspectives and illuminative experiences that qualitative studies provide, which are often difficult to locate through analysis of national student survey data, typically reported upon within quantitative studies.

(Wimpenny and Savin-Baden, 2013, p2)

The decision to base their study on students' conceptions of engagement was based on the belief that students' understanding of their learning has implications for staff and institutions that support learning (Wimpenny and Savin-Baden, 2013). Having established a clear research question and set of inclusion and exclusion criteria necessary for undertaking the synthesis – they selected nine key papers on SE that employ a qualitative methodology and identified four themes:

1. Inter-relational engagement – whereby SE was characterised and experienced through connection to a wide set of relationships including student to tutor, student to student, student to family, and student to career;
2. Engagement as autonomy – this related to how students shifted from unfamiliarity and self-consciousness to self-sufficiency in learning;
3. Emotional engagement – this was illustrated by intra-personal capacity, in terms of student resilience and persistence;
4. Engagement as connection and disjunction – there was a variety of student experience from those who made associations to those with a strong sense of disjunction.

These themes potentially offer a set of broad categories for exploring in more depth the complex nature of SE. Wimpenny and Savin-Baden (2013) suggest that particular issues in relation to SE have to date been largely overlooked by HE policy-makers and that there are clear areas which could be improved to enhance and improve learning. These include feelings of

alienation experienced by students in relation to staff responses and in relation to disaffection amongst peers and career choice. Another area which is suggested for further consideration is student emotions and how these can impact on, or contribute to, learning. Curriculum design is also highlighted as being a key factor in improved learning and the authors suggest that different models of structuring curricula should be considered which move away from an outcomes-based model. A key message is that when students are engaged in meaningful learning that they value, the potential for learning something new increases.

Wimpenny and Savin-Baden's (2013, p.324) summarised their findings from the literature on SE and these imply that:

- 1 An academic's style and approach can adversely affect SE. Tutors need to be clear about their role and level of interaction with students at the outset to manage a range of expectations;
- 2 The impact of learning contexts on engagement reflects a range of approaches used by students (and tutors) ranging from falsehood to veracity;
- 3 Agency is expressed along a continuum of behaviours reflecting attitude and compliance with expectations and norms to behaviour that challenges, confronts or rejects and can be obstructive and delaying;
- 4 Students may achieve institutional learning outcomes despite experiencing disjunction. More needs to be understood about intrapersonal capacity and the ways in which students persist in meeting their own learning goals;
- 5 Further understanding is required about the personal and psychological responses towards engagement and students' *will* to learn in HE.

Through qualitative based work spanning over a decade and involving longitudinal studies with students throughout their degree journey and involving different disciplines, Bryson (2014a) noted that the social aspect of

students' lives is as important as academic engagement in the classroom.

He identified 9 key influences on SE as identified by students:

1. Their aspirations: why they choose to come to university and their goals;
2. Student expectations and perceptions about university, being a student and about their subject and degree: as they arrived and as these change during their degree;
3. Balances between challenge and appropriate workload;
4. Degrees of choice, autonomy, risk, and opportunities for growth and enjoyment;
5. Trust relationships between the student and staff, and student and peers;
6. Communication and discourse between student and others;
7. A sense of belonging and community;
8. The existence of supportive social networks;
9. Opportunities for, and participation in, activities and roles which empowered the student and gave them a sense of ownership, self-assurance and self-efficacy.

Bryson (2014a) also noted in these studies that staff and students have a different perspective on SE in that staff associate SE with virtuous behaviours but ignored the emotional aspect and students highlighted that *feeling* engaged was most important. This accords with Solomonides and Martin (2008) who also reported that while tutors see engagement as cognitive, students see it as predominantly affective. This is an important distinction and one that perhaps requires us to think of SE in a multi-dimensional way.

More recently, Gilmore and Anderson (2016) using a psychoanalytically informed approach which explores ideas of engagement and resistance to engagement in pedagogic relationships in HE, reassert the link between emotion and learning and suggest that student anxiety can be used productively for effective learning but the role of the tutor is key to containing anxiety and even hostility. Of note here also, is the acknowledgement of tutors' emotions as well as students' emotions and it is suggested that

institutions may need to consider the learning environment and the capacity of tutors, particularly in a changing HE context of increasing student diversity and widening participation, to 'deal' with emotion within a staff student relational partnership approach so that students and staff can work through their emotions to achieve deeper learning.

2.9 Towards a holistic approach to SE

Kahu (2013) believes that some authors are striving to draw together diverse strands of theory and research on SE. She has examined the SE literature from four research perspectives: the behavioural perspective (focusing on the behavioural dimension); the psychological perspective (includes behavioural and cognitive dimensions but is particularly focused on the emotional dimension); the socio-cultural perspective (focuses on the impact of the broader social context on student experience); and the holistic perspective (a key feature of this approach is its recognition of the significant role of emotion in SE). In attempting to integrate the research through empirical studies and a review of the literature, Leach and Zepke (2012) developed a conceptual organiser with six domains for SE. They state that these do not necessarily need to be seen as fully distinct domains and there may be overlap:

1. Motivation and agency: engaged students are intrinsically motivated and want to exercise their agency;
2. Transactional engagement: students and teachers engage with each other;
3. Transactional engagement: students engaging with peers;
4. Institutional support: institutions provide an environment conducive to learning;
5. Active citizenship: students and institutions work together to enable challenges to social beliefs and practices;
6. Non-institutional support: students are supported by family and friends to engage in learning.

In the UK, more holistic definitions of SE have emerged which focus on being and becoming a student- 'a concept which encompasses the perceptions, expectations and experiences of being a student and the construction of

being a student in higher education' (Hardy and Bryson, 2009). Solomonides (2013, p43) has put forward 'a relational and multidimensional model of SE' which places a sense of being and a sense of transformation at the heart of SE. These are very much in line with the constructivist approach to learning and the definitions and model suggest a wider focus that incorporates the notion of 'becoming', and that SE should be thought of in terms of the individual student going beyond just 'making the grade'. According to Weller (2016), 'SE is viewed as a social practice that takes account of the identity of teachers and their students situated in the context of the classroom, institution and wider society' (p77). This holistic and multidimensional view of SE recognises that staff and students are responsible for engagement within an institutional and wider societal context.

Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005, p173) concluded from their study that staff have a role to play in SE.

Our findings suggest that faculty do matter. The educational context created by staff behaviours and attitudes has a dramatic effect on student learning and engagement. Institutions where faculty create an environment that emphasizes effective educational practices have students who are active participants in their learning and perceive greater gains from their undergraduate experience.

While individual students also have responsibilities for engagement, there are important ways in which staff can contribute to the facilitation of engagement. Chickering and Gamson (1987) state in explaining the first of their seven principles: 'faculty concern helps students get through rough times and keep on working. Knowing a few staff members well enhances students' intellectual commitment and encourages them to think about their own values and future plans', (p3). Krause and Coates (2008) also promote student-staff engagement as one of their 7 scales of SE. They say:

One of the reasons students find transition to university so tumultuous is that it often challenges existing views of self and one's place in the world. Transition is a time of re-shaping and coming to terms with whether expectations about university life have been met, or need to be revised, or, in fact, if the mismatch between expectation and reality is too great to warrant persistence. The well-established

argument for the importance of academic staff involvement in the lives of undergraduate learners early and often, both within and beyond the classroom cannot be underestimated.

(2008, p8)

As the current research study aims to understand better the 'lived experience' of staff and students working in partnership and how each impact on SE, it will be vital to tease out staff and students' perceptions of their role and the changing nature of it.

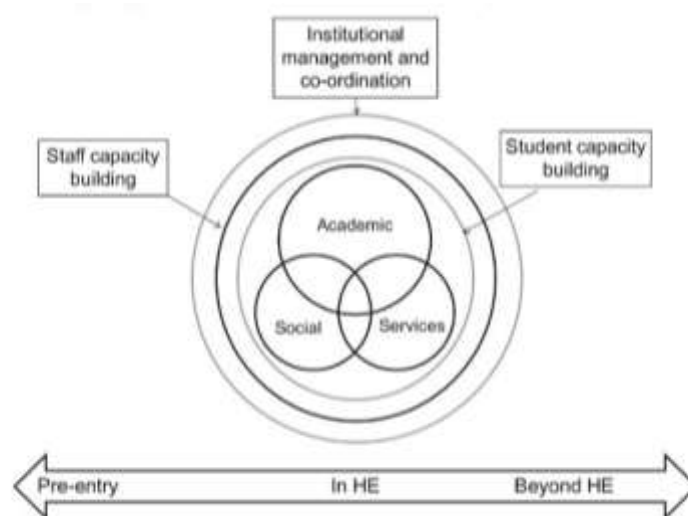
2.10 Conceptualising SE

As discussed, SE is a multidimensional construct and it is argued that confusion can arise unless we are specific about which element of SE we are talking about. I wish to draw on several recent models of SE, which attempt to be more holistic, and in which I can be more specific about my research focus.

2.10.1 The What Works? Model

The What Works? Model (Figure 2) puts SE and belonging at the heart of improving student retention and success.

Figure 2: What Works? Model of student retention and success (Thomas, 2012, p16)



As stated by Thomas (2012, p17) the model as summarised in Figure 1 encapsulates the following:

- **Early engagement:** engagement to promote belonging must begin early and continue across the student life cycle. (This is represented by the arrow underneath the diagram.)
- **Engagement in the academic sphere:** engagement and belonging can be nurtured throughout the institution (academic, social and professional services), but the academic sphere is of primary importance to ensure all students benefit. (This is represented by the overlapping circles: academic, social, and services - the academic sphere being the largest.)
- **Developing the capacity of staff and students to engage:** the capacity of students to engage and staff to offer an engaging experience must be developed, thus a partnership approach in which everyone is responsible for improving student belonging, retention and success is required. (The capacity of students and staff are represented by the two inner rings, labelled respectively.)
- **Institutional management and co-ordination:** at the senior level the institution must take responsibility for nurturing a culture of belonging and creating the necessary infrastructure to promote SE, retention and success. This includes the use of data to underpin student retention and success. (This is represented by the largest outer ring, labelled institutional management and co-ordination.)

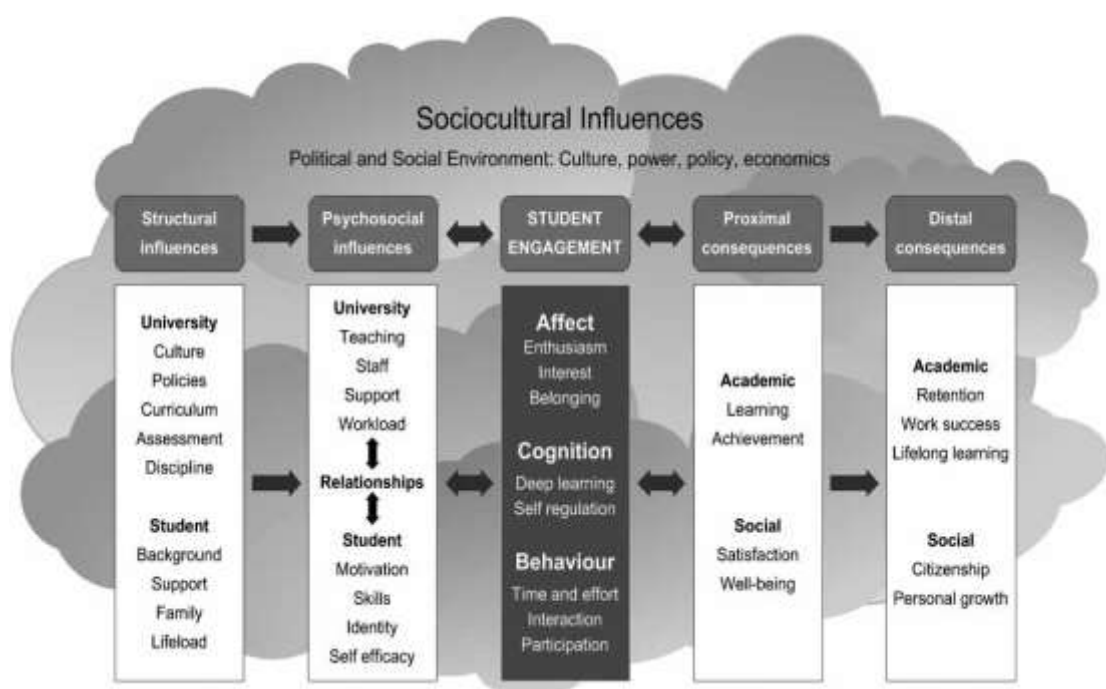
As articulated in chapter 1 (section 1.3.4), one of the key principles of the WWSRS, the context for this research study, is that students and staff work together as partners in not just the identification of areas for enhancement but also the identification, implementation and evaluation of solutions. The capacity building referred to in this model is particularly important to us at Ulster, as we drive forward to achieve the objectives of the Learning and Teaching strategy (Ulster, 2013) and the objectives of the HEA WWSRS (HEA, 2013a). However, whilst this model is a useful planning tool, it does not provide a guide on how best to build capacity to engage through partnership. Whilst, some strategies to engage students within modules are

put forward and a suggestion that institutions ‘must consider how policies and procedures can ensure staff responsibility, through recognition, support and development and reward, to enable all staff to engage and be engaging’ (Thomas, 2012, p19), partnership working is neither explained nor conceptualised. Indeed, Thomas (2012) goes on to state, ‘developing student capacity to engage and staff capacity to be engaging...are two key areas where further research and evidence is needed about what works’ (p19).

2.10.2 Conceptual framework of engagement, antecedents and consequences

Drawing on the multiple perspectives and traditions of research in this area, Kahu (2013) has proposed a multi-factorial framework (Figure 3) which is intended to act as a ‘conceptual framework for understanding and researching SE that integrates these diverse perspectives [behavioural, psychological, socio-cultural and holistic] and, in particular, more clearly separates the antecedents and consequences of engagement from the psychosocial state of being engaged’ (p765).

Figure 3: Conceptual framework of engagement, antecedents and consequences (Kahu, 2013, p766)



Kahu (2013) asserts that 'while all agree it [SE] is important, there is debate over the exact nature of the construct; a key problem is a lack of distinction between the state of engagement, its antecedents and its consequences' (p758). In her proposed framework, she places the student at the centre, as depicted by the centre column, and includes the three dimensions of SE: affect, cognition and behaviour – representing the psychological perspective, as discussed in section 2.6. But, in order to highlight the impact of sociocultural factors, the two columns to the left of the framework represent the influencing factors, or antecedents, of the university and of the student.

Of particular note, within the context of this research study, the psychosocial influences which include university and student attributes and the relationships between them, are depicted as having a clear impact on SE, and being influenced by SE. The double-sided arrows between these two columns draw attention to this. In other words, the building of relationships between staff and students can influence SE and SE can further build relationships. The consequences of SE are depicted by the two columns on the right of the framework and are divided into what happens in the academic and social spheres (also identified by Tinto, 1987 and Thomas, 2012). Again, the double-sided arrow between the central column and the proximal consequences indicate that student success or deep learning and the feeling of well-being may well further influence SE which in turn may result in more distal consequences such as retention and a disposition for lifelong learning and active citizenship.

According to Bryson (2014a), Kahu has provided perhaps the most useful single synthesis of research into SE. Bryson believes that its usefulness 'stems from the breadth of coverage of concepts and its relatively recent nature; it can draw on such a wide body of work from different traditions and paradigms' (p20). Ramsden and Callender (2014) agree and believe that this framework should be taken into consideration when putting forward alternatives to the NSS in the UK and state that:

Kahu proposes a framework that separates influences, types of engagement and the consequences of engagement

[Figure 3]. She attempts to disentangle the four dominant research perspectives on student engagement: the behavioural perspective, which foregrounds student behaviour and institutional practice; the psychological perspective, which clearly defines engagement as an individual and internal psycho-social process; the socio-cultural perspective, which highlights the critical role of the socio-political context such as institutional culture, disciplinary power, academic culture and an excessive focus on performativity; and, finally, the holistic perspective, which takes a broader view of engagement.

(Ramsden and Callender, 2014, p30)

Bryson (2014a) however, is critical of what he believes is an underplay of the importance of a central concept of becoming and transforming. He also cautions that the framework is too linear and doesn't allow it to describe the holistic nature of the individual student. Kahu (2013) is critical of the notion that SE is both a process and an outcome, that which is contended for by Bryson, Cooper and Hardy (2010). She disagrees that there should be a distinction between 'engaging students' (what institutions do) and 'students engaging' (what students do). Instead, Kahu believes that:

a clearer distinction would be to recognise that what is considered to be the process is not engagement, instead it is a cluster of factors that influence student engagement (usually the more immediate institutional factors), whereas the outcome is student engagement – an individual psychological state with the three dimensions discussed [see figure 3] of affect, cognition and behaviour.

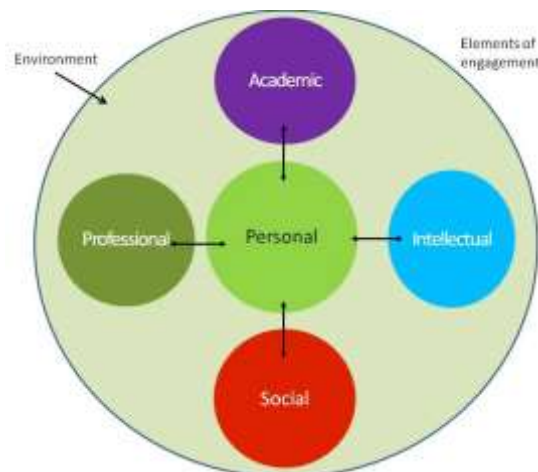
(2013, p8)

However, Bryson (2014a) defends the distinction between 'engaging students' and 'students engaging' and he proposes 'an agenda that puts engaging students at the centre of what we do and aligning all that we do with that' (p18). This agenda is based on the work of scholars including (e.g. Chickering and Gamson, 1987; Krause, 2005; Zepke and Leach, 2010) and includes ten principles covering ideas such as: embracing diversity, collaborative working, building of trust relationships, assessment for learning to develop student autonomy, and enabling students to become active citizens. Bryson believes that 'the principles are not just antecedents or influences on engagement; they are about creating a virtuous circle in which opportunities are offered and enabled' (p19).

2.10.3 The engagement framework

According to Pittaway (2012), 'the importance of engagement and the behaviours associated with it are clearly established; the challenge is coming to a practical understanding of student (and staff) engagement that actively involves staff and students making deliberate decisions to engage in learning and teaching' (p39). Pittaway has developed the Engagement Framework, see Figure 4, undertaken for the purposes of enhancing support for students across all courses, year groups and modes of delivery and is underpinned by understandings derived from the AUSSE and the wider engagement literature.

Figure 4: The engagement framework (Pittaway, 2012)



She includes five distinctive yet intersecting, non-hierarchical elements of engagement: personal, academic, intellectual, social and professional. She also suggests four key principles emerging from the engagement literature and the literature on teaching and learning in higher education, to underpin the Engagement Framework. These four principles are:

1. To engage students, staff must also be engaged
2. The development of respectful and supportive relationships is paramount for learning
3. Students are given – and take – responsibility for their learning
4. Students develop knowledge, understandings, skills and capacities when their learning is scaffolded, high standards are set, and expectations are clearly communicated.

Similar to Kahu's model (Figure 3), Pittaway places the student at the centre of the engagement framework. The Personal element refers to the individual student's aspirations, personal beliefs and identity as a student. But what this framework highlights in addition to other models and frameworks is the third component of the mind (along with affective and cognitive) – the conative part, described as the will to learn (Pittaway and Moss, 2013). The framework also emphasises the notion of engaging the 'whole student' and the important crossovers between the five elements of engagement. Pittaway and Moss (2013) believe that staff engagement is a pre-requisite for SE and that trusting supportive relationships are necessary for effective learning. In addition, they contend that the engagement framework has much to offer as a foundation for planning successful transition to HE and throughout the student journey.

2.11 Conceptualising SE at Ulster

Of the models and frameworks presented above three in particular - The What Works? model (figure 2), the conceptual framework of engagement, antecedents and consequences (figure 3), and the engagement framework (figure 4) - have been useful in framing our conversations about SE at Ulster and the role that staff student partnerships play in developing student capacity to engage and staff capacity to be engaging. Through Ulster's engagement in the WWSRS change programme and the implementation and evaluation of interventions across seven discipline areas, several key learning points are emerging which are proving to be critical to the enhancement of practice going forward, and to the sustainability and legacy of the WWSWS programme. These include *inter alia* belongingness and an active learning climate based on trust relationships.

2.11.1 Belongingness

Each of the models above places the student at the centre of the concept of SE and recognises the importance of the student's feeling of being engaged which is the result of the feeling of belongingness which in turn is fostered through respectful and trustful staff-student relationships. Other researchers

agree. Tinto (1987) in his model of student departure described SE as feeling part of something. Several of the most influential researchers in SE (Kuh, 2001; McInnis, 2001; Wenger, 1999) also argue that learning communities are crucial and that the trust relationships established are conducive to successful learning. In the approaches to SE discussed earlier in this chapter (Bryson, 2014a; Chickering and Gamson, 1987; Leach and Zepke, 2012; Krause and Coates, 2008), social integration, engagement with peers and tutors and belonging were all central themes. In the final report of the What Works? Student Retention and Success (phase 1), Thomas (2012, p.10) states that “The findings of this programme present a compelling case that in higher education, belonging is critical to student retention and success”. She goes on to state that building engagement and belonging should be a priority for all our programmes, faculties and institutions. At the time of writing (Autumn, 2016), the message of ‘belonging’ (particularly at the programme and module level) and its role in promoting engagement and its association with retention and success is beginning to get through to stakeholders at Ulster and it is beginning to shape policies and practices. Examples of this are discussed in Chapter 8.

2.11.2 An active learning climate

Much of the pedagogic literature concludes that in order to promote deep learning for all students, it is desirable to move from a content-focussed, teacher-led climate to learning situations which focus on what the student does and engages students in active learning (Biggs and Tang, 2011; Chickering and Gamson, 1987; Entwistle, 2009; Thomas, 2002). This focus on the learning situation acknowledges that learning is a joint activity, most usefully starts from the learner’s experience and has the potential to change the learner’s perspective on knowledge (Mezirow, 1991; Prosser and Trigwell, 1999). Learning therefore is less about the absorption or transfer of knowledge and more about how we set the right conditions for conceptual change to take place. Conceptual change in this context is meant from the learner perspective and the desired change relates to the ontological changes that education can bring about. According to Biggs and Tang (2011) conditions for such a change include *inter alia* student motivation and students working collaboratively with others, both peers and teachers.

This is further illustrated by Illeris (2014) who seeks to provide a new, broader definition of the concept of transformative learning which shows that all learning includes two processes; interaction and acquisition, which must both be active if learning is to take place. Interaction as defined is between the individual and the social environment and as argued by Lave and Wenger (1991) learning can be seen as a process of increasing participation in what they call 'communities of practice', which might start with a given group of people who share a profession coming together to learn collectively and increase gradually in levels of complexity as individuals' engagement moves from 'periphery' to 'centre'. Knowledge acquisition takes place in the individual and connects the new impulses with prior learning to create new learning. Of interest here as noted by Illeris (2014) is that the acquisition process has two elements: the content – what is learned - and the learning incentive – the mental energy or the motivation demanded for the learning process.

Research also demonstrates that teachers and institutions create a certain learning climate through interactions with students which in turn has a strong effect on students' learning (Gardner, 1993; McGregor, 1960; Pintrich and Schunk, 2002). The learning climate that promotes independent lifelong learners is one that is based on high trust and the extent to which we lean more towards this trusting climate translates, it is argued, into action at all levels of student-teacher interaction (Biggs and Tang, 2011).

There is some appreciation at Ulster that fostering belonging and promoting an active learning climate is based on trust relationships, which embraces the notion of staff student partnership. Whilst this recognition may not be widespread or across the institution at this stage the evidence base generated from the WWSRS will be useful in going forward. The framework for SE through partnership (HEA, 2015), see figure 1 in section 2.5.1, is also useful strategically, to think about where partnership might be fostered, particularly as guidance associated with the framework advocates starting small and is based on an awareness that relational partnerships can take many different forms according to context.

2.12 Summary

What is evident from the literature about SE is that there isn't an agreed definition of what it is or what it excludes, and that existing paradigms can be shaped by a complex range and interplay of historical, socio-economic and disciplinary interests. However there seems to be some consensus that SE is best understood as existing on a continuum in a number of domains which encompass the cognitive, the emotional and the behavioural. Much recent research emphasises the multifactorial nature of SE and its increasing relevance to the achievement of institutional and societal as well as individual developmental goals. Central to the concept, as reflected in much recent qualitative research, is the notion of the individual student (with unique characteristics and attributes) being an active, rather than a passive participant in the learning process and that this disposition is facilitated and sustained through meaningful relationships with other students and staff.

Considering the different dimensions of SE and the different approaches to SE discussed, such as: quantitative, qualitative, and holistic, I believe that the holistic approach provides the opportunity for a deeper level of consideration to the different aspects and perspectives of SE at both an institutional level and at the level of module and programme. The models discussed in section 2.10: The What Works? model (figure 2), the conceptual framework of engagement, antecedents and consequences (figure 3), and the engagement framework (figure 4) provide evidence-based ideas and incentives for framing our conversations about SE at Ulster and the role that staff student partnerships play in developing student capacity to engage and staff capacity to be engaging.

In response to the paucity of research indicated by Healey, Flint and Harrington (2014) on the impact of partnership work, this research study set out to contribute to the evidence base by exploring the lived experiences of staff and students at Ulster in order to understand the impact of partnership work on the individuals involved and on SE. In chapter 3, I articulate my aim, objectives and outcomes for this study

Chapter 3 Aim, objectives and outcomes

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I outline in more detail the context of partnership working for staff and students involved in the WWSRS change programme at Ulster. I refer specifically to staff and student roles shaped by the discipline-specific interventions implemented and evaluated, which were designed to improve first-year retention and success. I then outline the aim, objectives and outputs of this work-based study.

3.2 Research context

As outlined in Chapter 1, the WWSRS change programme (HEA, 2013a) aims to help institutional teams achieve the following objectives:

- Use the learning from the What Works? programme, institutional data and institutional review to identify strengths and challenges and priorities for change at the strategic and course/programme level;
- Improve the strategic approach to improving the engagement, belonging, retention and success of students;
- Implement or enhance specific interventions in the areas of induction, active learning, and co-curricular activities in selected discipline areas;
- Evaluate the impact of the changes in both formative and summative ways, drawing on naturally occurring institutional data, bespoke student surveys and qualitative methods such as telephone or face-to-face interviews with staff and students.

My role as Project Lead at Ulster, and operating as part of a core team, involves providing leadership to the seven discipline teams located across the four campuses of the University. The discipline teams are: Law, Built Environment, Creative Technologies, Computing, Nursing (Mental Health), Accounting, and Textile Art, Design and Fashion. These seven teams comprised: the course staff team, and a number of students from first, second and final year of the undergraduate programmes. In order to achieve the objectives above, the core and discipline teams were engaged in the following activities between 2013 and 2016:

- Implementation of specific interventions in the areas of induction, active learning and co-curricular activities;

- Qualitative evaluation of the interventions involving an Appreciative Inquiry approach in 2014-15 which included focus groups with a representative sample of first-years in the seven discipline areas. In total: 17 focus groups were held (9 in semester one and 8 in semester two);
- The administration of 'belonging surveys' with students involved in the programme. In total seven surveys containing 16 questions rated on a Likert scale have been administered to all first years in the seven discipline areas, one in November 2013 (n= 274), the second in April 2014 (n=230) to students who started their course in 2013, the third to the same cohort in second year (April 2015, n=239) and in third year (April 2016, n=146). A belonging survey was also administered to first-year students who started in September 2014 (n=356) and the same cohort of students in April 2015 (n=327) and in second year of their course (April 2016, n=243). Analysis of the surveys was carried out by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and has enabled us to monitor quantitatively trends in relation to students' confidence, engagement, and belongingness compared with the WWSRS total figures for all institutions (approximately 2760 students);
- Using institutional data such as attrition rates for each of the areas to monitor impact as a result of the interventions;
- Focus groups with the staff course teams. In total 9 focus groups were held between June and October 2015 to explore the barriers and enablers to implementing change at the discipline level.

The interventions referred to above which involved students and staff within each discipline team included inter alia:

- Common themed projects involving different year groups;
- Induction with a social focus involving year 2 and year 3 students;
- Academic Mentor System;
- Pre-entry activities;
- Peer mentoring activities;
- 'Drop-in, Don't drop out' campaign;
- Digital chats between lecturers and students (informal);
- Student representatives involvement;

- Informal industry-led projects off-campus;
- Industry-linked projects;
- Student field trips – informal interaction;
- Changes to lecture style – interactive lectures, trusting students to research, independent learning, group work etc.

3.2.1 Staff roles

Staff involvement was in the main focused on implementing and evaluating the interventions above, which aimed to improve the belongingness, self-confidence and engagement of students to positively impact on student retention and success. Staff were also involved in regular dialogue with colleagues within their respective course teams as to the impact of the interventions and as such were developing their own capacity to lead and influence on learning and teaching initiatives. There was also regular sharing practice events organized by the core team and which involved all seven teams including staff and students.

3.2.2 Student roles

Students were involved in different ways in the various discipline and campus contexts. Examples include inter alia:

- Core team – a student from one discipline team was a member of the core team (6 members in total) and they were an active participant in the decision-making and monitoring function of this team in the implementation and completion of the Change Programme. In addition, he was co-opted onto the University's SE sub-committee along with the rest of the core team members;
- Law – the student partners were involved in data collection (led focus groups with students) on the week 0 induction activities. Some student partners were also PASS (peer-assisted study sessions) leaders and were used to support the new students at induction and in orientation. Student partners also acted as ambassadors for the Law programmes at Open Days for prospective students and Insight events for applicants.
- Creative Technologies – the student partners were involved in data collection (led focus groups with staff and students) on the

identification of first-year issues and subsequently put forward ideas to staff of interventions to address these. These interventions were co-developed by the student and staff partners.

- Accounting – the student partners were involved as members of the Accounting, Finance and Economics Student Society committee and took leadership of the scheduling and organisation of social events with the aim of promoting belongingness for students within their cohort and the Accounting professional networks and employers.
- Computing - the student partners were final-year students who were selected as ‘coaches’ for the first years and supported them in a first-year programming module. The partners also worked with staff in re-designing the delivery of the curriculum by bringing back industry intelligence from their recently completed industry placement.
- Nursing (Mental-Health) – the student partners were primarily the student representatives across the three years of the programme. The partners instigated the ideas for the induction of new students and led these induction activities with support from academic partners.
- Textile Art, Design and Fashion – the student partners were involved in a variety of roles; as ambassadors for the course/university at Open Days for prospective students; leading workshops with prospective students at interview days and at pre-induction summer schools.

3.3 Focus of this doctoral study

My research within this DProf project adds another important layer, and focuses on the process by which we have operationalised this Change Programme since 2012. I am interested in the ‘lived experience’ of student and staff team members and how working together in partnership has impacted on them as individuals in relation to SE. Through understanding and appreciating this impact, I wish to draw out and disseminate the benefits and limitations of this to the institution. In doing so, I address what Healey, Flint and Harrington (2014, p60) highlight:

that the understandings of the impact of partnership work – for students, staff, institutions, society more broadly – remain relatively poor, and there is a need for a greater evidence base around the benefits of partnership.

Ulster University, in common with many other universities, is seeking to extend the evidence-base to underpin student and staff partnership in relation to its role in enhancing SE. This qualitative data will supplement, and broaden, our understanding and appreciation of the different aspects of SE and will complement SE metrics such as the belonging survey referred to in section 3.2, our annual NSS results and institutional attrition rates. This improved data should help inform decision making about priorities and courses of action designed to achieve (Department of Employment and Learning (DEL) objectives and Ulster's Learning and Teaching Strategy, as discussed in Chapter 1. Therefore, it is important for us to:

- understand better, and learn from, staff and student partnerships that help us enhance the student experience;
- address the challenges identified in previous evaluations of staff-student partnership (see Chapter 1, section 1.3.1), which showed that this type of partnership can be problematic and there can be misunderstandings on the part of both staff and students;
- build an evidence base to help us address resistance - almost half of staff consulted on staff student partnership stated that resistance to change would be a barrier to this type of working (see Chapter 1, section 1.3.2);
- identify how (staff and student) practices may need to be enhanced in order to address students' perception that there is a lack of trust in relationships between staff and students and a lack of this type of engagement (see Chapter 1, section 1.3.3).

It is the impact of staff-student partnerships on the individual, within a defined Change Programme, at Ulster University which this project aims to uncover through an appreciation and interpretation of the lived experiences of staff and students. Power dynamics within these relationships are accordingly an important factor that will be considered in the research. It is intended that the outcomes from the research study proposed will include a framework for student-staff partnerships to guide and inform the efforts of students, staff and other stakeholders at Ulster. It is envisaged that this research will lead to an enhanced critical appreciation of the role of staff-student partnerships,

which will enable further debates about their role in enhancing SE for all students.

The study also aims to inform and shape the wider debate on SE within HE and research into the role of relational partnerships between staff and students. Within a national context, an Ulster case study of staff-student partnership will form part of the What Works? Student Retention and Success, phase 2 research outputs due to be published in 2017.

Additionally, my involvement in national and international networks and a special interest group on 'students as partners' will afford me opportunities to co-author with other scholars on this aspect of SE.

3.4 Aim, Objectives and Outputs

The aim of this project is to develop a framework for effective staff student partnerships in a higher education institution that can inform staff and student relationships and engender a shared responsibility in HE.

The **objectives** of this project are to:

1. Identify the enablers and barriers to developing effective partnership working between students and staff in pursuit of enhanced learning and teaching practice;
2. Identify critical success factors and guiding principles for staff and students to support the establishment and sustainability of student-staff partnership;
3. Disseminate the beneficial outcomes for students, staff and the institution in terms of student-staff partnerships as a catalyst for transformational change.

Outcomes/Outputs

- A framework comprising guiding principles and critical success factors of staff student partnerships which will be of interest to the University and the wider HE sector;
- Case examples of effective practice in student-staff partnerships, which articulate the beneficial outcomes for students, staff and the institution, will be collated and disseminated within and outwith the University;

- Publications and involvement in other appropriate networks in relation to student-staff partnership in order to consolidate our understanding of partnerships in relation to national/international contexts and policies.

Chapter 4 Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to provide an explanation and justification of the conduct of my research. It outlines the development of my methodology including: the selection of my: research paradigm, methodological approach, data collection methods, and how the data was transcribed and analysed. It also considers ethical issues and outlines the ethical approval process used in order to gain full approval from my place of work (Ulster University) and place of study (University of Westminster). The data results are discussed in Chapter 5, which focuses on the one-to-one interviews and Chapter 6 focuses on the focus group evaluation.

4.2 Research paradigm

As expressed in my aim and objectives in Chapter 3, I wish to develop a framework for student and staff partnerships, which articulates: the benefits, challenges, and recommendations for such partnerships in higher education. It is envisaged that this framework will be of interest to: those leading on L&T initiatives that embrace a students as partners approach, and the staff and students involved in such partnerships. In order to understand this phenomenon, I considered it was necessary for me to explore the lived experiences of participants (staff and students) already working together in partnership in the discipline teams of the WWSRS Change Programme.

In deciding on the best approach for this work-based project, I consulted with the literature, particularly educational research literature to determine my methodological process. I found the paradigms of social research discussed by Cohen, Mannion and Morrison (2011): positivism, interpretivism, mixed methods, post-positivism, post modernism and post-structuralism, and complexity theory useful to grasp the differences and subtleties of each. Focussing on my aim, I considered each paradigm carefully to select the best fit for my research question and context. I discounted positivism and post-positivism for several reasons supported by definitions and clarifications generally agreed on by researchers. In a positivist view of the world, science is seen as the way to get at truth, to understand the world well enough so that we might predict and control it. Post-positivism critiques and amends

positivism and post-positivists accept that theories, background, knowledge and values of the researcher can influence what is observed, however they still pursue objectivity whilst recognising that it can be known only imperfectly. Willis, Inman and Valenti (2010) suggest that these paradigms don't sit well in a professional doctorate and that contemporary alternatives should be considered. Additionally, Silverman (2013) states that 'although positivism is the most common model used in quantitative research, it sits uneasily within most qualitative research designs' (p105). He goes on to say that 'for qualitative researchers, detail is found in the precise particulars of such matters as people's understandings and interactions in particular contexts' (p105). This detail sought after, of the experiences of staff and students working in partnership informed my choice that the data to be collected would be mostly qualitative.

A clear definition of mixed methods research offered by Punch (2009) sees it as 'empirical research that brings together quantitative data (and methods) and qualitative data (and methods); there are many models for doing this' (p358). Postmodernism and poststructuralism developed in the late twentieth century and 'mirror the changes in economy, science, art and architecture by portraying reality as shifting and uncertain rather than set...' (Grbich, 2013, p8). According to Grbich:

most forms of qualitative research now have an established postmodern position: for example, ethnography, grounded theory, action, evaluation research, phenomenology and feminist research. Postmodernism favours descriptive and individual interpreted mini-narratives, which provide explanations for small-scale situations located within particular contexts where no pretensions of abstract theory, universality, or generalisability are involved. Within structuralism and poststructuralism two data analytic approaches have become popular and are available for use by qualitative researchers. The first is discourse analysis... and the second is deconstruction...

(2013, p8-9).

Whilst discourse analysis may have been useful to frame my research, I instead chose interpretivism because it has many postmodernist traits; it assumes there is no objective knowledge, rather there are multiple realities and different forms of meaning making, and I wished to make sense of the richness and complexity of the lived experiences of the staff and student

partners within the context of this research study. Interpretivism is described as an approach which 'concentrates on the meanings people bring to situations and behaviour, and which they use to understand their world' (O'Donoghue, 2007, p16-17). Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013, p26) see interpretivism as 'a select group of philosophies that include pragmatism, phenomenology and hermeneutics, and post-critical/post-structuralism'.

From an ontological perspective, interpretivists believe: there is no single external reality, and no direct access to the real world. From an epistemological perspective, interpretivists believe: that research focuses on the specific and concrete, knowledge is perceived, and we seek to understand specific context (Berger and Luckman, 1967; Black, 2006; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Contrary to a positivist approach, interpretivists avoid rigid structural frameworks and adopt more personal and flexible research structures, which are receptive to capturing meanings in human interaction (Black, 2006). Denicolo and Becker (2012, p67) state that 'in interpretive research there is the fundamental assumption that individual participants will hold different world views while their very engagement in the research might well impact on those views'. Thus they highlight that authenticity, accuracy and/or triangulation are sought and that utility to the participants is also important to factor in. It is also suggested that 'the design is often an emerging one with successive explorations following one from another, in an iterative pattern, while the data frequently take the form of categories identified during the research process' (Denicolo and Becker, 2012, p67). In considering this, I built on aspects of previous research to which I had previously contributed as a participant. This research was undertaken in March-April 2013 as part of an HEA funded, Students as Partners (SaP) Change Programme (See Chapter 1, section 1.3.1) to inform the direction and research design for this work-based study. This previous research explored the experiences of 6 team members (3 staff and 3 students) who worked together as partners over the course of the academic year, 2012-13 on a proposed SE model. The overall intention and subsequent output, an Ulster SaP case study contained in a compendium (HEA, 2014), influenced and underpinned the emerging learning and teaching strategy that was being developed at this time. As I was the lead

staff member of this team, an external researcher carried out the research. The findings from this research highlighted to me the potential tensions that can arise in a staff student partnership (albeit, in this instance the partnership was very small-scale) and of the importance in spending considerable time in: setting the scene, avoiding academic jargon, and establishing mutually agreed aims and objectives. This helped in establishing the seven teams involved in the WWSRS change programme and I spent considerable time at the beginning of the programme meeting both staff and students, separately and together in order to outline and explain the aims and objectives of the programme. This served two purposes, firstly and most importantly, as project lead, I wanted to get the staff and student teams up and running as quickly as possible in order to implement and evaluate the project work with their first-year students. Secondly, I wanted to avoid the same issues as identified in the 2012-13 SaP change programme discussed above. The implication of this for my methodology for this study meant that this research could focus on uncovering the personal experiences as they were lived, by the individual staff and student partners, rather than being distracted by logistical issues that were avoidable.

4.3 Methodological approach

I chose to use a phenomenological approach in this work-based project, as I believe that it is the most appropriate for the research aim (see Chapter 3):

The aim of this project is to develop a framework for effective staff student partnerships in a higher education institution that can inform staff and student relationships and engender a shared responsibility in HE

The phenomenological approach can be traced back to its founder – Edmund Husserl, a German philosopher, who describes it as the study of the lifeworld – the world as we immediately experience it pre-reflectively rather than as we conceptualize, categorise, or reflect on it (Husserl, 1999). Smith (2003, p3) refers to the approach as: ‘the researcher is interested in the subjective experiences of the participant’. Key features of the approach were also considered as articulated by Fox, Martin and Green (2008, p16):

- The process of research is largely inductive i.e. to generate meaning from the data set collected

- The focus is on how people make sense of their experiences
- There is recognition that other people may make similar sense of their experiences but that each account is unique
- The research starts with a personal phenomenon which the practitioner researcher wants to understand more about
- Rich qualitative data are collected
- Data are collected from a limited number of people
- The researcher recognises that she co-constructs the research
- Data are made sense of by the researcher through reflexivity
- Findings are constructions that are not more or less 'true' but more informed and sophisticated than previous constructions.

Van Manen (1990) believes that a human sciences research approach should be phenomenological and language oriented because pedagogy requires a phenomenological sensitivity to lived experience. Finlay (2009) also asserts that a phenomenological approach involves a rich description of the lifeworld or the lived experience and requires the researcher to set aside their own beliefs about the phenomenon being researched. However, it is important to note that my prior and current experiences of working in partnerships with students were and are not in the context of the tutor-student relationship.

4.3.1 Bracketing

This setting apart or bracketing requires putting aside the natural, taken-for-granted everyday world and any interpretations in order for the phenomenon to show itself. The onus was on me to hold any pre-conceived thoughts and any ontological assumptions so that I could approach data collection, data analysis and reporting from a neutral standpoint (Creswell, 2007; Finlay, 2014; Husserl, 1982). I, in effect needed to hold my personal experiences of staff student partnerships in abeyance during these stages. This comes with challenges and it is acknowledged that there are some eminent phenomenologists such as Heidegger who reject bracketing and believe that it is not possible to be totally objective as that is not humanly possible (Ahern, 1999) and as stated 'paradoxically, preconceptions actually enable identification of issues and situations because they enable researchers to be

alert to themes in common with the broader human experience', Heidegger (1962) cited by Ahern (1999, p408).

However, following Husserl's phenomenological method, I outline my approach to bracketing. Firstly, I acknowledge my role as Project Lead of the WWSRS change programme in which the participants of this study are involved. I also acknowledge my own values and my teaching philosophy in relation to higher education, as discussed in Chapter 1 and how they might influence my planning of this research, data collection, analysis and reporting. It could be assumed that I am so intent on promoting staff student partnership that I am blinkered to what the realities of the data might reveal. However, to mitigate against my own assumptions and pre-conceptions, I have engaged in reflexive practice in order to heighten my awareness of any potential influence on the research. This has involved engaging in the strategies outlined below as suggested by qualitative researchers (Ahern, 1999; Chan, Fung and Chien, 2013; Fischer, 2009):

- keeping a reflective journal (see section 4.3.2 below);
- keeping abreast of 'students as partners' emerging literature but knowing when to pause this in order to carry out the research and justify the research methods (see Chapter 2);
- consulting with colleagues in other institutions engaged in similar research and co-writing up research findings (see Chapter 8);
- maintaining curiosity throughout the study particularly during the data collection and analysis stages;
- re-examining the data as discussed in section 4.6.3.

4.3.2 Practitioner researcher diary (online journal)

I recorded my involvement in the research to enable me to 'maintain a research diary which provided me with a record of both the research process and my own development as a practitioner researcher' (Fox, Martin and Green, 2008, p148-149). I noted details as they happened and used it as an opportunity to monitor progress, monitor self-development and for deep reflection and reflexion. As noted earlier, this helped me to maintain as much objectivity as I could, given the closeness of my involvement in the research. Some of my recordings were made privately using an iPad app and these

included notes on books and journal articles that I had read, other recordings were made using the online journal tool in Blackboard Learn and these were shared with my supervisor and consultant. Another useful activity that helped me to view the research from different perspectives was to do some of the writing up during the research project as opposed to waiting until the end. I presented the emerging data findings at two conferences: one international conference namely ICED (International Consortium for Educational Developers) in Stockholm, June 2014 and a national conference namely RAISE (Researching, Advancing and Inspiring Student Engagement) in Manchester, September 2014. In addition, I co-wrote an article for a special edition of the *International Journal for Academic Development*, which was published in late 2015 (this is discussed in Chapter 8). Writing up on-going research with a colleague from another institution was challenging but rewarding. It helped me to think about how to present data findings and I was also able to consider how my themes were applied and triangulated in another context. It also helped me to explore the reliability of my findings through the collaboration, engagement with the emerging relevant literature and the peer-review process. It also gave me the confidence in what I am exploring and reporting.

4.4 Methods of data collection

If Phenomenology is concerned with the study of experience from the perspective of the individual (Costley, Elliott and Gibbs, 2010; Fox, Martin and Green, 2007; Husserl, 1999) and from an epistemological perspective, as discussed above, this approach is based in a paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity, then my methods of data collection need to be able to emphasise the importance of personal perspective and interpretation. In short, my methods need to be good at allowing voices to be heard and uncovering deep issues. Kvale (2007) states 'if you want to know how people understand their world and their lives, why not talk with them?' (p1). There is general agreement amongst phenomenologists that interviews, which are usually informal and contain open-ended comments and questions, are a central method of data collection to the phenomenological approach

(Black, 2006; Finlay, 2009; Moustakas, 1994; Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2013).

In order to get the interviews 'right' I decided to use an online questionnaire to precede the semi-structured interviews to allow me to test out questions to see if they would elicit the account of lived experience that was sought. The decision to use semi-structured interviews is discussed in section 4.4.2. Following the pilot and the actual interviews, discussed in turn below, I carried out focus groups (discussed further in section 4.4.3) with institutional stakeholders, which assisted in the process of interpretation by engaging in dialogue with staff and student stakeholders on the emerging findings (Costley, Elliott and Gibbs, 2010).

4.4.1 Data collection 1 - Online questionnaire as pilot study

I decided to use an online questionnaire as a pilot study for several reasons. I wanted to estimate variability in outcomes to help determine sample size and to assess the proposed data analysis techniques to uncover potential problems (van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001). My concern with sample size at this stage was in relation to the breadth of discipline areas (seven in total) and the fact that the four campuses of Ulster were involved in the Change Programme. I also, as suggested by Woods (2006) wanted to establish if the questions posed, particularly questions 3, 4, 5 & 6 (see Table 1 below) which were aimed at eliciting descriptive data on the staff and students' personal experiences, drew the responses which would answer my research objectives. One of the things that helped with the development of the questions for the questionnaire was discussing this with a member of staff and a student, in essence pre-pilot testing. The student in particular, really offered an insight into how his involvement in the staff-student partnership was impacting on him in two main ways: it was changing his mind-set, which in turn changed his behaviour. This was a real 'light-bulb' moment and I wanted to ensure that if this conversation (in relation to developing questions for the pilot questionnaire) was uncovering this 'description of experience' for this student, then I needed to consider carefully the questions posed in order to invoke descriptions of an equivalent level of insight from the participants. I

was also mindful of advice offered by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) 'In phrasing particular questions, it is important to choose formulations which are open (rather than closed), and which do not make too many assumptions about the participant's experiences or concerns, or lead them towards particular answers (p.60)'. Additionally, to be true to the phenomenological approach (Husserl, 1999; van Manen, 1990), I wanted to use more 'how' questions rather than 'why' questions to ensure that the questions prompted rich descriptions of experience rather than overly reflective or intellectualised responses (Kvale, 2007). I believe that the pilot enabled me to hone the questions, remove ambiguity and to reduce the number of questions yet still enable me to elicit data to serve my aim and objectives.

The online questionnaire was administered to the staff and student partners involved in the WWSRS in December 2013. This was sent to all 145 staff and students involved in the seven discipline teams at this point in time. A reminder was also sent several weeks later. In all, 33 participants started the survey with 48.5% finishing it representing (n=16, 13 staff and 3 students). Questions asked are in table 1:

Table 1 Questions used in pilot online questionnaire

1. Are you a student or a member of staff? Please select one of the options below.
2. For students - have you ever been/or are you currently, any of the following? Please tick all that apply
 - A class rep
 - A Students' Union Officer
 - A student member of a revalidation panel
 - A PASS leader
 - A student buddy or mentor
 - None of these
 - Other (please specify)
3. How do you feel about staff student partnerships?

4. Has the development of the staff student partnership in which you are involved presented any opportunities and/or challenges? If so, could you describe them?
5. Have you seen any differences in the way you interact with staff/students since the partnership was introduced? If so, could you describe them?
6. Has the staff student partnership changed your approach to your studies/teaching practice? If so, how?
7. Did you attend the project's first 'sharing practice event' in Jordanstown on 15th November 2013?
8. Would you be open to the idea of using social media to aid communication within the What Works? Student Retention & Success Project
9. Would you be willing to participate in a one-to-one interview? If so, please provide your name and email address. If not, please type 'No' in the box below

The response rate to the online survey was small, with 23% of the total starting it and 11% completing it, however the responses did allow me to consider some aspects of data collection and analysis before I commenced the interviews. The main considerations were:

- Some of the responses were very much in the passive tone and I got a sense that I was being told what the participants perceived I wanted to hear e.g. in the response to the question – How do you feel about staff student partnership? Respondents stated:

Education should be a partnership arrangement to be fulfilling for both parties.

‘A genuine partnership is valuable to the learning experience...’.

Whilst this gave an indication that they were supporters of partnership generally, it didn't go far enough to uncover what partnership meant to them in practice in the context of this study.

- The responses represented staff from four discipline areas and students from only two discipline areas. This may suggest that these respondents were the active engaged partners of the teams who had

established their activities and roles at this early stage of the change programme.

- Carrying out initial data analysis on the responses was useful to get a sense of the participants' experiences and to identify some broad themes. It did suggest at this early stage that for those actively engaging in partnership working, it was perhaps starting to change mind-sets and prompting some changes in practice however the majority of participants in response to the question – Have you seen any differences in the way you interact with staff/students and if so, could you describe them? indicated that it was 'too soon to tell' or they were still 'on the fence'.

Implications of the pilot included those outlined below and facilitated me to decide how to proceed:

- Whilst the questions in the main were appropriate, the survey instrument did not facilitate any probing for more in-depth insights into actual lived experience. Final selection of the interview questions is discussed in section 4.4.2 below;
- The survey did not capture responses from all discipline areas. This helped me to decide on final sample size and is discussed in section 4.4.2.1 below;
- The survey response rate and the number starting and not finishing indicated that it may have been too soon for some staff and students which resulted in them either not participating in the survey or only answering questions passively or superficially. This is reflected on in section 4.4.2 below in relation to the timings of the interviews.
- The data analysis activity allowed me to hone my processes and decide on the most appropriate method. This is discussed in section 4.6 below.

According to van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001) pilot studies may also have a number of limitations. These include the possibility of making inaccurate predictions or assumptions on the basis of pilot data such as problems arising from contamination. I recognized that completing a pilot study successfully is not a guarantee of the success of the full study but in this

case, the findings did provide an indication of the variability in responses across the disciplines and which disciplines didn't participate. It also helped me to assess my proposed data analysis methods in advance of carrying out the interviews. Although contamination may be less of an issue in qualitative research (ibid, 2001), for the considerations and implications outlined above, I decided not to include data from the pilot study in the main results and not to carry out interviews (thereby collecting new data) with respondents to the online questionnaire.

4.4.2 Data collection 2 - Semi-structured Interviews

Reflecting on the pilot, it became evident that my interviews were best carried out after a period of time had elapsed into the project as the staff and students in the WWSRS needed to experience working in partnership and as according to Roulston (2010) to use phenomenological interviews effectively, it is essential to interview participants who have both experienced, and are able to talk about the particular lived experience under examination. The primary types of interview for consideration were structured, semi-structured, unstructured and/or informal. In weighing up the advantages and disadvantages of each of these, I opted to use semi-structured interviews, as I believe that this was the best fit for this phenomenological research. These were discussions-as-interviews and as stated by Kvale (2007, p7-8) 'a semi-structured life-world interview is defined as an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena'. The benefit of this approach includes the opportunity to follow some pre-set questions but also to probe discussion for more in-depth insights into the student and staff lived experience of partnerships. I was careful in the design of questions, as discussed above, in that I wanted to allow the interviewee to describe his/her own perspective and I needed questions that would be both applicable and meaningful to staff and students. I recognised that semi-structured interviews are quite commonly used in qualitative research and that it is a demanding task that requires critical planning and attention. I also wanted the interview to provide access to the context of people's behaviour, which would provide a way for me to understand the meaning of that behaviour (Seidman, 1998).

In conducting the interviews, I took account of Kvale's (2007) process of producing knowledge through an interview and preparations for an interview. Some of the key things to consider were 'setting the interview stage' and 'scripting the interview' (p51). In addressing this, at the beginning of each interview, I provided an oral briefing, which outlined to the interviewee the nature, purpose and objectives of the research and provided a 'subject information sheet' for further detail. I decided to record each interview and again explained this to each subject and finally sought consent to this before proceeding. After questioning, I followed up with a debriefing (explanation of what I was going to do with the data collected) and ended with asking the interviewee if they had any questions. In preparing for the interview, I considered some pre-set or trigger questions to start the conversation but wanted to be flexible to allow the interviewee to describe their experience as it was for them. I was also mindful that the questions did not necessarily have to follow a set order, that I could move from the general to the more specific and that I could use the limited time during the interview to keep the interaction focused (Bryman, 2012; Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2013). In keeping with the phenomenological approach, 'in the interview situation, the main questions should be in a descriptive form: What happened and how did it happen? How did you feel then? What did you experience?' And the like' (Kvale, 2007, p58). Additionally, I did not want to use too many 'why' questions as it can lead to overly reflected answers and at this data collection stage, I wanted to elicit the participant responses which described their experience rather than 'co-construct' the knowledge. I, as interviewer was the active listener or in pedagogical terms (van Manen, 1990) the learner who wanted to find out everything about the participant's experience in order to understand it. The interpretation of the data in this phenomenological context happened after data collection stage rather than during it (Roulston 2010; Waters, 2000) and 'figuring out the reasons and explanations why something happened is primarily the task of the investigator' (Kvale, 2007, p58). In analysing the data gathered from the online questionnaire and considering the characteristics of effective pre-set questions suitable for a semi-structured individual interview discussed above: I used four main questions from the online survey as my trigger questions for the interviews.

The rationale for using these questions was that it allowed participants to describe their thoughts and feelings along with a description of the situation in which the experience occurred (Waters, 2000). The interviews were also carried out at a time when participants had experienced being a partner.

Table 2 Semi-structured interview trigger questions

1. How do you feel about staff student partnerships?
2. Has the development of the staff student partnership in which you are involved presented any opportunities and/or challenges? If so, could you describe them?
3. Have you seen any differences in the way you interact with staff/students since the partnership was introduced? If so, could you describe them?
4. Has the staff student partnership changed your approach to your studies/teaching practice? If so, how?
5. Any further comments

4.4.2.1 Sampling

In the WWSRS change programme, the context for this research, there are seven discipline teams made up of students and staff (see Chapter 3, section 3.2 for detail of staff and student roles within the context of this change programme). The discipline teams range in number: from 4 to 11 staff members, and from 3 to 30 student numbers per team, the exact breakdown is provided in table 3. The students involved in the teams are either first, second or final year students currently enrolled in mainly full-time undergraduate courses. There is one discipline team that incorporates a full-time and part-time cohort so I also included a part-time student in the sample. The staff involved included course directors, first-year tutors and first-year module coordinators. I used purposive sampling and interviewed one student and one staff member per discipline team (n=14, 7 staff and 7 students). This ensured that all discipline teams and all campuses were represented at the interview stage.

Table 3 WWSRS Staff and student discipline teams

Discipline	Textile Art, Design & Fashion	Built Environment	Accounting (full- and part-time)	Law	Computing	Nursing (Mental Health)	Creative Tech'	Total
Campus	Belfast	Jordanstown			Coleraine	Magee		
Faculty	Art, Design and the Built Environment		Ulster Business School	Social Sciences	Computing And Engineering	Life And Health Sciences	Arts	
Staff	5	10	11	8	4	7	6	51
Students	11	16	8	30	16	3	10	94
Total	16	26	19	38	20	10	16	145

Participants were invited to take part in the interviews via an email invitation. All discipline leads were invited in the first instance as it was recognised that they were actively participating in the WWSWS change programme and were actively working with their students in partnership in pursuit of the change programme goals. Where discipline leads weren't able to participate, members of the staff team were emailed, inviting them to participate. In total, four discipline leads and three other staff members were interviewed. All student partners were also invited by email to participate, and where practically necessary, this was followed up by the discipline lead helping to recruit a student participant in their team. All interviews were carried out face-to-face at the campus on which the participant was based with the exception of one part-time student. As he worked all day and attended class in the evening, this interview was conducted on the telephone in the evening. The interviews took place between March and October 2014. All interviews were recorded using a digital recorder with the subsequent audio file uploaded onto my computer, which is password-protected, and subject to nightly back-up as per Ulster University's security protocols. Whilst 14 interviews may seem small in some spheres of research, within the context of this qualitative study the stratified purposeful sample is representative of the subgroups and facilitates comparison across the disciplines and campuses.

4.4.3 Focus Groups for evaluation purposes

Following data analysis, discussed in Chapter 5 (data analysis methods are discussed in section 4.5 below), I wanted to evaluate and engage in a further stage of interpretation of the data. These focus groups represent institutional stakeholder groups at Ulster in relation to SE and (in the main) hold a degree of influence in relation to institutional policies and practices. This evaluation allowed me to assess the value of the results (presented in Chapter 5) for the purposes of developing, more specifically, a Guide for staff and students

(research output), aligned to the objectives and outcomes for this study (see Chapter 3). It was imperative for me to consult with these groups at this time so as to inform the output and dissemination of the research, which is intended to provide an institutional evidence-base for the adoption of a staff-student partnership ethos at Ulster. The focus groups have helped to identify what is worth including (as output) and what its meaning is in the context of this research study at Ulster (Costley, Elliott and Gibbs, 2010).

Five focus groups were carried out, representing a total of 25 participants (a combination of staff and students). Each group was presented with a draft Guide on which the discussion was focussed and as pointed out by Morgan (1988, p12) 'the hallmark of focus groups is the explicit use of the group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group'. The first version of the Guide (Appendix 1) is a sketch of proposed content and was developed following data analysis carried out on the interviews with staff and students. This version was used in the first focus group to frame the discussion and as further focus groups were held, the development of the Guide became an iterative process whereby suggestions were put forward, critically appraised and actioned, as appropriate, to enhance the content and layout for its intended audiences. In this context, the focus groups were used for the purpose of 'generating and evaluating data from different sub-groups of a population' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p436). The focus group participants represent a cross section of the University's disciplines, campuses, students and different staff roles. Strategically, it represents key stakeholders whose reactions, suggestions and counsel were important at this stage of the research study. The aim of the focus groups was, as stated by Kvale (2007, p72) '...not to reach a consensus about, or solutions to, the issues discussed, but to bring forth different viewpoints on an issue'. I felt that these focus groups were particularly useful in helping me to shape the dissemination of my research as according to Punch (2009, p147) 'the group situation can also stimulate people in making explicit their views, perceptions, motives and reasons. Importantly, the focus groups allowed me the opportunity to display or write-up the individual 'lived experiences' in a way that is meaningful to the stakeholders of this research study. The role of the focus group participants

was to advise collectively on how the 'lived experience' data could be disseminated and used by staff and students across the institution to enhance SE. Practically, I was also aware of the need to be careful that there was a balanced discussion and that staff don't overpower students and vice versa in mixed groups. My skills as moderator came into play here, particularly skills of facilitation, moderation and monitoring.

The following outlines the constituents of the focus groups. It was essential to get the views of these colleagues because of their roles and functions within the University in order to find out how the Guide might inform: their own functions, and ultimately better inform the practice of staff and students across the institution involved in enhancing SE.

The focus group interviews took place in October and November 2015:

1. Focus group 1 (FG1) with Students' Union (1 permanent member of staff and 1 sabbatical officer). The SU SE Manager and one of the four current Vice Presidents represented the wider SU. They are responsible for a wide range of roles traditionally associated with SUs such as: organising social activities, providing support on a range of academic and welfare issues, representing students both individually and collectively, and campaigning on local and national issues. However, as noted by Brooks (2014) the relationship between students' union officers and senior institutional managers had changed over time, and that there is now a new willingness on both sides to engage in constructive ways. Increasingly, the SU at Ulster over the last 5 years has become more involved in matters directly relating to the student *learning* experience and are now active collaborators in policy amendments and creation, evaluation of the learning experience, and new strategic strategies;
2. Focus group 2 (FG2) with students involved in the WWSRS change programme (1 graduate, 3 second years, 1 final year) representing three discipline areas. These students were or currently are active student partners in the discipline teams and have carried out a range of roles including acting as collaborators, mentors, ambassadors and researchers;

3. Focus group 3 (FG3) with the WWSRS Change Programme? Core Team (4 members of staff and 1 student). The core team have been in operation since the beginning of the WWSRS change programme in 2013 and represent a senior manager who is Dean of one faculty, senior lecturer/faculty L&T coordinator of another faculty, a data expert located in the quality management and audit unit, SU representative, and a student 2nd year Law undergraduate). This team have provided oversight and leadership to the discipline teams involved in the WWSRS;
4. Focus group 4 (FG4) with Staff Development (2 Professional Development Managers). Within Staff Development, there are three PDMs, of which I am one, who support staff in relation to learning and teaching across all disciplines of the university. There are currently approximately 900 academic staff employed at Ulster. All three PDMs have responsibilities, which include:
 - teaching on the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Practice (PgCHEP)
 - leading on the institution's HEA accredited professional development and recognition scheme, which enables staff to become recognised as HEA fellows in all four categories
 - designing and delivering bespoke CPD programmes to meet the needs of staff, schools, departments and the institution in relation to the enhancement of learning and teaching practice.
5. Focus group 5 (FG5) with the University SE sub-committee (13 members present - PVC Learning, Teaching and Student Experience, Head of School, Head of Student Support, Head of International Student Experience, Digital Learning Development Manager, Faculty Learning & Teaching Coordinator x 3, Quality Assurance Officer, Senior Lecturer, SU SE Manager, SU sabbatical officers x2).
 - The SE sub-committee's main function is to keep under review, advise and make recommendations to the University's Academic Development and Enhancement Committee on issues relating to SE, with particular regard to:
 - The Student and Associated Charters;
 - Student retention and progression;

- Enhancement of the student experience.

As stated above, subjects were presented with draft versions of the Guide and probing initial questions were:

- How useful would this be to staff/institution?
- How useful would this be to students?
- Is the format appropriate?
- Should the Guide be for both staff and students or should there be separate documents?
- How do you think that information could be used? When would it help a student or when would it help staff?
- Any other comments? Omissions etc.?

4.5 Transcribing interviews

I recorded and transcribed all 14 semi-structured interviews and five focus groups (see sample transcript Appendix 3 and Appendix 4). I did bear in mind the two big issues with doing this as stated by Gibbs (2007, p10) 'they take a lot of time and effort to do and transcription is an interpretive process'. I found that in terms of time, a one-hour interview took approximately 3-4 hours to transcribe. I also experienced what Kvale (2007, p93) describes 'to transcribe means to transform, to change from one form to another'. My method of recording the interviews involved the use of a digital recorder, securely stored between and after use; this produced a high acoustic quality recording and was easily transferred to computer in the form of an MP3 file. The digital recorder had the capacity of storing over 600 hours of recording so space wasn't an issue. I also carried spare batteries and an iPhone with a recording facility as backup. I transferred all of the MP3 files to computer immediately after each interview but also held them on the digital recorder as backup until after data transcription took place. For the data transcription, I used a piece of free software called 'ExpressScribe'. I found this very easy to use; I imported the MP3 files into the software one at a time and started play. I typed each transcription into a Microsoft Word document and was able to use the function keys on the computer keyboard to pause, rewind, fast forward and most importantly and very useful, the software allowed me to slow down the speed of the interviewee's speech to about 60%. This

enabled me to type as they spoke without the constant need to pause and rewind. For naming convention, I used their first name in capitals at the beginning of each speech and used INT to indicate where I had asked an initial or secondary question). As suggested by Gibbs (2007, p13) I found it easier 'to do the analysis using an unanonymised version as familiarity with the real names and places can make it easier'. Also, as an insider researcher, I knew the participants in the focus groups and was able to discern who was talking. In keeping metadata, I kept a separate electronic file, which acts a summary file and recorded information, which includes: date of interview, details of each interviewee, linked documents, length of recording and pseudonym of each interviewee. As stated above, all interviewee transcripts, audio files and analysed data are stored securely on my computer which is password-protected and backed-up nightly.

4.6 Methods of data analysis

According to Finlay (2014), when carrying out data analysis, we must engage a phenomenological attitude which embraces four aspects to this process: seeing afresh, dwelling, explicating, and the transformative power of writing. This requires immersion in the data after bracketing out personal assumptions and opinion to understand what is being 'said' by the participants. It also requires further analysis to look for meaning and ways to weave meaning together into a rich description to describe the whole. In considering how to get from data to conclusions, I have referred to Punch (2009) where he suggests a four-staged effective way to proceed, this is a set of questions and advice for helping to decide on a framework for data analysis. In assessing how my research questions have been framed and developed, I selected an approach consistent with my interpretivist methodology and phenomenological approach. I used the Miles and Huberman approach, cited in Punch (2009, p174), which is labelled as 'transcendental realism' and has three main components:

- Data reduction
- Data display
- Drawing and verifying conclusions

In order to outline how I approached each of these components, I wish to explain my processes under each heading.

4.6.1 Data reduction

This proved to be a 'messy' stage and required constant 'editing, segmenting and summarising of the data' (Punch, 2009, p178). I appreciated that coding has a central role in qualitative analysis and to proceed it was crucial for me to really understand that role and its purpose in driving forward the overall project. I was helped by the various texts on qualitative analysis and their definitions and suggested processes. As outlined by Punch (2009, p178), 'coding involves the process of putting labels on chunks of data which attach meaning to that data, this will index the data for storage and enable further analysis by pulling together themes'. Memoing is the second basic operation and happens alongside the coding. It allows ideas that occur to be recorded. More specifically, in carrying out this stage, I followed the suggested process by Gibbs (2007) for thematic coding and categorizing. He defines coding as defining what the data are about and suggests that 'it involves identifying and recording one or more passages of text or other data items that ..., in some sense, exemplify the same theoretical or descriptive idea' (p38). I found that this method of coding worked for me as I was able to do two forms of analysis. Firstly, I retrieved all the codes with the same label that were examples of the same phenomenon. Secondly, I used the list of codes, such as relationships between the codes and case-by-case comparisons (Gibbs, 2007, p39). I then developed these codes into a hierarchy in a codebook.

I started coding using the typed transcripts. At this stage, I made some notes about each code as I used it: these were memos and attempted to explain the nature of the code and the thinking behind it. These were kept separate from the transcript files. This helped with enabling me to apply the code in a consistent way. As suggested by Gibbs (2007, p41), this process required me to undertake 'intensive reading' of the transcripts and use basic questions such as: what is going on? What are people doing? What is the person saying? and so on.

I realised that some of the codes used were simply descriptive and I needed to 'move away from descriptions, especially using respondents' terms, to a more categorical, analytic and theoretical level of coding' (Gibbs, 2007, p42). At this stage, I wanted to construct the codes in the codebook using a data-driven coding approach or open coding approach and I did this with an open mind and without preconception – in effect bracketing out any preconceptions or own opinions in order to be true to the data. I made a hierarchy of the codes (see Appendix 5 and 6). Around the same time as I was carrying out this task, new literature on SE and students as partners was emerging and there was some backwards and forwards between this approach and a concept-driven coding approach. As Gibbs (2007, p46) postulates 'a complete *tabula rasa* approach is unrealistic...the point is that, as far as possible, one should try and pull out from the data what is happening and not impose an interpretation based on pre-existing theory'.

4.6.2 Data display

In terms of data display, I found the use of tables to be very helpful in enabling me to understand in a structured way what the data was telling me and as Miles and Huberman repeatedly utter 'you know what you display' (1994, p11). Displays have been helpful at all stages and required constant review and enhancement. I wished to move the analysis forward by choosing a display method that organises, compresses and assembles information and as Miles and Huberman (1994) state, "they have no doubt that better displays are a major avenue to valid qualitative analysis". Repeated and iterative displays were used until conclusions could be reached. One of my next tasks was to start comparisons and as Gibbs (2007, p78) states '...coding hierarchy is just the starting point'. I did this by using tables to carry out cross comparisons across different subgroups of the dataset and between staff and students. I looked for patterns in the data. As Gibbs (2007, p86) states 'the use of tables... suggests that any models produced will have arisen out of a close reading of the data and thus will be closely supported by the data (see Appendix 7). They are, in that sense, data-driven'.

4.6.3 Drawing and verifying conclusions

The three components of data analysis discussed in this section more or less happened concurrently. I found Miles and Huberman's (1994) 13-point tactics for generating meaning and 13-point tactics for testing or confirming findings very useful at this stage. The tactics for generating meaning such as: noting patterns, clustering, making contrasts and comparisons have been discussed above and the tactics for testing or confirming findings such as: triangulating, checking meaning of outliers, following up surprises etc. were also used. Their final point of getting feedback from informants was carried out through the focus groups with student and staff groups (see above). The aim at this stage was to integrate what had been done into a meaningful and coherent picture of the data to provide answers to the research objectives of the overall project. In order to check the veracity of my emerging themes and mindful that there is no *one* correct way to do phenomenology (Wertz, 2011), I also used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-stage approach to data analysis in order to check that I had carried out the data analysis robustly and that I had captured something meaningful that expressed the lived experiences. This double-checking was also prompted by my engagement in reflexivity; this 'second engagement' (Fischer, 2009, p3) meant that I could bracket my earlier understanding of the data and re-examine it against emerging insights. In essence, I wanted to go back to the data and check I hadn't missed anything or misinterpreted it. Braun and Clarke's six stages involve: familiarising yourself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Carrying out the initial data analysis and then going back to the data again using the six-stage approach above gave me confidence and allowed me to proceed to the development of the initial staff and student Guide for partnerships (see Appendix 8, 9 and 10). At all times, I subscribed to the phenomenological approach to data analysis which was to push beyond what I already knew from experience or knowledge and to break away from my own 'natural attitude' to find a way to remain open to new understandings (Finlay, 2014; Merleau-Ponty, 1945).

4.7 Ethics, insider issues

Punch (2009, p49) states that “the literature on ethical issues in education research is of two types. First there are the codes of ethical and professional conduct for research... and second there is literature which includes various commentaries on ethical issues”. These provide a general framework for considering ethical issues. He goes on to summarise the main ethical issues in social research as harm, consent, deception, privacy and confidentiality of data.

In addition, as a practitioner researcher, and following Costley, Elliott and Gibbs' (2010, p26) advice, I needed to consider ethical implications of my project from the point of view of the professional area in which I work, (Staff Development and CHERP), my institution's code of practice on research ethics and my own perspective given that my colleagues and students will be the research subjects.

My position as project lead of the WWSRS change programme gave me easy access to participants which included staff and students. However, as Drake and Heath (2011) point out, ‘...difficulties may arise through potential exploitation of close personal and professional relationships, and authority over junior staff and/or students’. They go on to outline other considerations such as hidden agendas, anonymity, confidentiality and so on. In addressing these ethical issues, I was very clear, unambiguous and transparent with regard to the aims and objectives of the project throughout the process of recruitment of subjects (students and staff). Consent was sought and participation was on a voluntary basis where both staff and students could withdraw at any time. In addition, confidentiality and anonymity of subjects is respected and this has been clearly articulated in the subject information sheets and consent forms. These were given to all subjects and I have kept copies of the consent forms. In relation to power dynamics, I don't work directly with any of the staff members – either as part of their team or in a line management capacity. I work in a different department and my role is to lead on the project and to ensure it delivers on time but I don't have any authority over staff involved. Similarly with regards to the students, I am not their teacher nor do I mark any of their work or have any role in relation to their

student learning experience but I acknowledge that they may have wished to please me. However, the nature of the questions designed to elicit personal experiences, makes it more difficult not to give honest accounts.

In terms of timing, during Spring 2013, I carried out briefings and workshops with staff and students on the WWSRS programme and I established rapport with the discipline teams. Once the teams were up and running and understood the goals and objectives of their involvement in the overall programme, I introduced my research aim and objectives with a view to recruiting subjects (semester 1, 2013-14). One ethical dilemma for consideration is in relation to conducting interviews with students. I was aware of the possibility that students may disclose to me problems either of an academic or personal nature. In order to prepare and respond to this, I familiarised myself with the Code of Practice for Advisers of Study. This provides guidance to staff on dealing with academic and pastoral issues.

In considering the institutions' perspective, I consulted with Ulster University's Research Ethics and Governance policy and made an application to one of the University's ethics filter committees and received full approval to proceed. The policy states that "all research on human subjects being conducted by staff or students of the University must be subjected to appropriate scrutiny prior to proceeding" (Ulster University, 2010). My project was approved as Category A research, which is defined as 'research being conducted by staff or students involving human volunteers (but not including clinical trials of medicinal products or other therapeutic interventions, studies using new methodologies, studies involving certain vulnerable populations or other significant risk to anyone involved in the research)'. Subsequently this research study was also approved by the University of Westminster.

Chapter 5 presents the results of the interviews and Chapter 6 provides details of the focus group outcomes. These are both discussed in Chapter 7.

Chapter 5 Results

5.1 Introduction

This chapter briefly recaps on the Ulster context for the study and the makeup of the research subjects. The results are presented using extracts of lived experience from the data under two main themes with sub-themes. A concise summary of main findings is also discussed.

5.2 Data collection context

This research was carried out to fulfil a professional need at Ulster University to better understand the lived experience of academic staff and students working in partnership in the WWSRS change programme (HEA, 2013a) aimed at improving student retention and success. The staff in question were tutors from seven discipline teams (located in four campuses) selected to be part of the Change Programme and the students were volunteers from these discipline areas who put themselves forward for this partnership work. My stratified purposeful sample (n=14, 7 staff, 7 students) was representative of the subgroups of the disciplines and the university campuses. Further details of the discipline areas and the nature of the staff student partnerships is described in Chapter 3, section 3.2.

All of the participants were willing to tell their experiences, and portrayed their involvement in staff student partnerships as enlightening and positive. Therefore, this does not include participants' responses based on staff-student partnerships that may have been less productive or those that apparently experienced conflict. The nature of the purposive sample limits generalisation of the findings. The sample was homogenous and did not allow for differences that might occur in universities in large metropolitan areas, and of diverse ethnic, economic, and cultural backgrounds. All research is subject to bias or error either from investigator subjectivity, design or research process. In this phenomenological study, my role as insider researcher presented a threat to the credibility or validity of the research findings. Effort was made during the entire project process, for accurate and truthful representation of the experiences of staff and students.

5.3 Data analysis and identification of themes

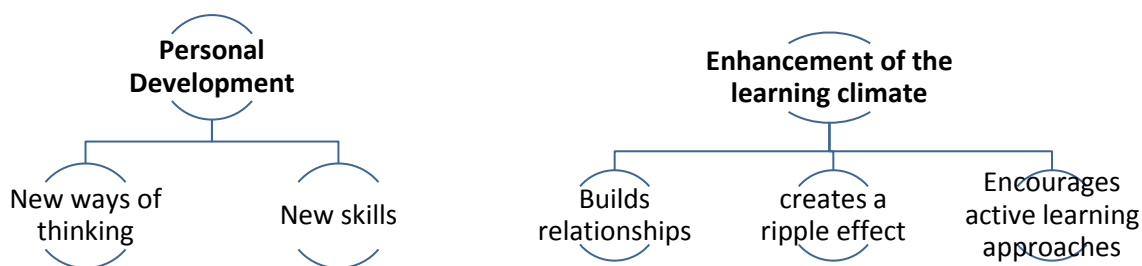
As detailed in Chapter 4, my approach to data analysis was based on a phenomenological approach and involved adopting the phenomenological attitude, which includes: seeing afresh, dwelling, explicating and the transformative power of writing (Finlay, 2014). This was a time-consuming and 'messy' phase and I followed guidance and frameworks as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), Gibbs (2007) and Punch (2009), which proved to be valuable in guiding me through the process. A first attempt resulted in the initial identification of two main themes namely: changes in mind-sets, and changes in behaviour (see Appendix 6) but I was mindful of advice by Finlay (2014) that researchers need to make the participants experience come to life rather than 'kill' off the phenomenon by bland descriptions and that there is no one correct way to do the analysis. In addition, I had submitted a paper for a journal publication and received feedback to aid revisions. I felt that I needed to revisit my data analysis with more of a focus of how I could 'tell the story' of participants' lived experiences, through rich descriptions, in relation to the broad challenge of *SE* as opposed to just focusing on the process of staff-student partnership. Otherwise, I realised that I was going to have difficulty with dissemination if I didn't have an overriding argument. As Gibbs (2007) points out, 'most researchers move backwards and forwards between sources of inspiration during their analysis...the trick here is not to become too tied to the initial codes you construct' (p.46). I was also encouraged by Finlay (2014) who asserts that researchers are never going to get the analysis perfect but need to capture some meaning that expresses the lived experience, and that they should try to indicate some of the complexity or ambiguity, the more the better, but there is always more that could be said.

Subsequently, I engaged in a six-stage approach to thematic analysis as detailed by Braun and Clarke (2006) and discussed in Chapter 4.

Undertaking each phase allowed me to re-examine the data set (transcribed interviews) with fresh eyes and I took the time to dwell on the descriptions and asked myself, *What stands out for me?* At stage 1, I read and re-read all the transcripts and noted down initial ideas. During the coding process of stage 2, 97 individual codes were identified (see Appendix 8), these

represented interesting features of the data across the data set and I collated data relevant to each code. Further exploration of these initial codes enabled me to identify repetition and grouping of codes. In stage 3, I began to collate codes into potential themes, gathering all the data relevant to each theme. The original 97 codes were reduced through combining those that were similar, and categorised under themes, which represented the remaining codes (see Appendix 9). One thing that did surprise me was that there was a similar pattern to what students and staff were describing, during the one-to-one interviews, in relation to how their thinking was changing in relation to new skills they were developing and how this was resulting in a change in practice. Additionally there was an acknowledgment of the challenges presented in 'doing' staff student partnership. In moving to stage 4, I checked if the themes worked in relation to the coded extracts (original 97 codes) and the entire data set. The on-going analysis in stage 5 allowed me to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story that the analysis tells. At this point, I defined and further refined the themes, two dominant themes were identified: personal development and enhancement of the learning climate. This resulted in generating clear definitions and names for each theme, outlined in sections 5.3.1 and 5.3.2. Within each theme, sub-themes were identified: for personal development the sub-themes were 'new skills' and 'new ways of thinking'; for enhancement of the learning climate the sub-themes were 'builds relationships', 'creates a ripple effect' (originally called 'transference of engagement') and 'encourages active learning approaches' (see Appendix 10). These two main themes and 5 sub-themes (see Figure 5) accounted for nearly all of the sub-themes identified in stage 3 and provide the basis for organising the findings (below) and discussion (in chapter 7).

Figure 5 Thematic map, showing two main themes



The thematic map (Figure 5) shows two main themes, which demonstrate how participants described being part of a staff student partnership was impacting on them individually and on their practice. In addition, the participants identified some of the challenges of staff-student partnership and it is the intention that through the analysis and interpretation, I will be able to communicate their shared knowledge and experience in an explicit way to enhance SE. In sections, 5.4 and 5.5, I provide extracts from the data under each sub-theme heading of the two main themes and that which demonstrates the impact of staff student partnership in this context as verbalised by the participants. Section 5.6, provides extracts in relation to the challenges identified by participants and that which may act as barriers to a partnership approach. In reporting qualitative comments from staff and students, the following convention is used:

- T for tutor, interview number, M/F for gender, number of years' experience
- S for student, interview number, M/F for gender, year of study

5.3.1 Theme 1: Personal development

Theme one of two relates to personal development of the individual and I have drawn on Aubrey (2010) in order to provide a clear definition for the theme in the context of this study:

Personal development covers activities that improve awareness and identity, develop talents and potential, build human capital and facilitate employability, enhance quality of life and contribute to the realization of dreams and aspirations.

Aubrey (2010, p9)

Aubrey (2010) goes on to identify that personal development may include the following *inter alia*:

- Improving self-awareness;
- Improving self-knowledge;
- Improving skills or learning new ones;
- Building or renewing identity/self-esteem;
- Developing strengths or talents;
- Identifying or improving potential;
- Building employability or (alternatively) human capital;
- Enhancing lifestyle or the quality of life.

5.3.2 Theme 2: Enhancement of the learning climate

The second theme relates to the context in which student learning occurs and the enhancement thereof. Here, I have drawn on Ambrose et al. (2010) to provide a definition, they refer to the learning climate as:

the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical environments in which our students learn. Climate is determined by a constellation of interacting factors that include faculty - student interaction, the tone instructors set, instances of stereotyping or tokenism, the course demographics (for example, relative size of racial and other social groups enrolled in the course), student - student interaction, and the range of perspectives represented in the course content and materials. All of these factors can operate outside as well as inside the classroom.

Ambrose et al. (2010, p170)

Ambrose et al. (2010) go on to further explain the factors that influence classroom climate and these include *inter alia*:

- The tone of a class environment is influenced strongly by the instructor. Tone can be set by instructors through their interactions with students and through other modes of communication including syllabus.
- Student-student interactions during and outside of class affect the overall climate. However, the ways in which instructors and those in authority deal with negative interactions has more of an impact on student learning.

- Staff-student interactions also play a role. Students who felt that their instructor was approachable, had concern for minority student issues and treated students as individuals and with respect reported a better course climate (Astin, 1993).
- Content includes the course materials, examples and metaphors, case studies and project assignments used to illustrate the ideas being taught. Content that includes a variety of perspectives or is representative of multiple views is more conducive to a positive climate.

5.4 Findings: Theme 1

The interviews provided an opportunity for participants to reflect on the impact of staff student partnership on them as individuals. It became apparent that they recognised the value of this work in providing an opportunity for staff and students to develop new skills and new ways of thinking. It became clear that for some staff and students this came as a surprise and not something they had thought would happen because of their involvement.

5.4.1 Sub-theme 1: New ways of thinking

Staff and students also commented on how the partnership encouraged dialogue and mutual feeling of respect. It gave each person an insight into the others' worlds and that enabled them to become more open in terms of their own practice and to consider other, newer ways of thinking. One staff member reflected:

'I had a sense of letting go – somebody has labelled me as an expert...but the students are the experts in their experience. I've gained in confidence but a challenge is being able to let go and trust my students, I've had to let go the notion that I know best, that I know what the students are experiencing' (T3,M, 12)

Another staff member who has taught for several years reflected on the notion that students' opinions do count and they can act as a mirror for staff to reflect on whether their practice is effective:

'We can't work in isolation without the students. The students have quite an influence and they should be partners. They give us a sounding board, they are here for 4 years, and we are here longer.' (T4,M,29)

A student who has a paid role as a mentor to lower-level students and works in collaboration with staff reflected on how this was impacting on her personally:

‘I have developed confidence as a result of this – and I feel I am a member of staff as I have got to know them [staff] well. This year, I have developed my knowledge through student questions... the students see me as more approachable and that I can help them. (S7,F,4)

Another student commented on how his views of staff on their availability and approachability had changed and how this helps when there are issues to discuss:

‘I feel more comfortable speaking with staff if there are issues. In the past, I would have shirked away from that. I find that staff are a lot more open to ask about what students think and feel.’ (S6,M,1)

One staff member also highlighted how his thinking had changed in relation to viewing the students as individuals as opposed to seeing them as a collective whole. This change of lens had prompted him to think differently about how he worked with students in class:

‘I am more open to students, I’m probably not as judgmental; I’m more open to hearing what they have to say and taking on their suggestions and doing something if we can... having the students lead themselves, them actually doing what they want to do. They will all have different journeys, rather than looking at people as a cohort, I see them as individuals who have their own hopes and aspirations. How I work with the students probably has changed’. (T3,M,12)

5.4.2 Sub-theme 2: New Skills

In terms of new skills, a student demonstrated how involvement in partnership provides an insight into the complex world of HE and provides opportunities for a wider experience:

‘University does care – I came in with the opinion that it’s about money - that has drastically changed – the majority of staff are trying to make the experience better. This has been a more holistic experience. I have gained research skills, IT skills and presentation skills. I would have thought that HE was just about stuffing students with knowledge but it’s much broader than that’. (S6,M,1)

One member of staff highlighted his shifting role:

'The students were full of ideas, it didn't really reflect what I wanted to do but I stood back and let them run with it and my role became – a facilitator'. (T3,M,12)

Another member of staff commented on the benefits from the student perspective and how it gives them an insight into professional practice:

'The staff-student partnership has allowed the students to present jointly with staff at conferences. It has developed their confidence. It is particularly good for those who are interested in becoming teachers'. (T6,F,29)

One of the students reflected that he had learned a new skill, one that he wouldn't have considered in school, but now it was benefiting him more broadly:

"My confidence has improved. I am a bit better at note taking. As a class rep, I'm better at keeping a diary, I never did it at school but now I do and I'm better at being reflective. I wouldn't have entertained the notion of being reflective but now I see the benefit of it. We had to write something for the Edge and I did the reflective essay, it was really good to read the diary and it was useful to see how far I'd come." (S6,M,1)

5.5 Findings: Theme 2

The interviews also indicated the value of this work in developing staff and student capacity to engage. There were numerous references to the interactions that take place inside and outside of the classroom. Staff and students described how their practice and their approaches to learning and teaching had changed. The data suggests that working together was a catalyst for the enhancement of the learning climate and I have categorised factors of this into three sub-themes of; builds relationships, creates a ripple effect, and encourages active learning approaches.

5.5.1 Sub-theme 1: Builds relationships

For both staff and students there seems to be a realisation that behind the roles that each have – there is a person and getting to know the person helps both to carry out their role more satisfactorily and effectively. It also questions previously-held ideas on the teacher-student relationship and the hierarchy that exists or did exist in previous educational settings. Issues such as time for relationship-building and the awkwardness of developing new relationships are also a factor for consideration.

One part-time student articulated the usefulness of seeing the individual rather than the role:

'I possibly took it for granted they are the teacher; you are the student and it's a very well defined relationship. Outside of this it's interesting, the guys are just like me and like my colleagues [works in a bank] and it's useful to see them more as people and not just as lecturers'. (S5,M,2)

Another student commented on how the growing of relationships can remove fear for students when approaching staff:

'I think it's good; we would get together with the tutors and get feedback. We have class reps and I was one last year, we would go around and ask other students what could be done to be improve the course. It's good for the tutors to be on our kind of level. There's not this feeling of being petrified of going to speak to the tutors'. (S3,F,2)

Another student reflected on his role as a class representative and how that provided him with an opportunity to get to know staff and enable him to feed back issues to be addressed by the course team:

'I'm a student rep and that's how I became involved. I was asked to come to a meeting, it was very friendly and it made me feel like part of a team – not them and us. They kept it all down to earth and not too formal. At the start I didn't know much about it, but I then became aware it's about improving the course for next year. To make it better particularly for revalidation. I can also feedback aspects of the course that aren't working well.' (S4,M,1)

Equally for staff the opportunity to build relationships with students is seen as a positive step to improving engagement for both parties as one staff member commented:

'It makes us seem more like people rather than staff. For us, it gives us feedback on our modules/projects and you develop a personal relationship with the students...I would have their ear a lot and have got to know them and they trust me...They see me more human and approachable. I see them in the same way. I don't see them as a student cohort now, I know them individually and their capabilities and personalities a bit better.' (T2,M,12)

For another staff member, it's not just the one-to-one relationship that is developed but it also enhances the team approach:

'You get to know your students better, what they are doing and what they are thinking. We are lucky in a shared office with 4 of

us and the students relate to us as a team of staff rather than as individuals. They get a team approach.’ (T4,M,29)

The same staff member indicates that this doesn’t just enhance the role of engaging the student in the classroom, it also facilitates a more caring pastoral role:

‘We are more conscious of ‘looking after’ students we know our first years and look after them very well. We have even counselled three off the course, they would not have succeeded and success for them was not continuing doing our programme, success for them was going somewhere else. We do this more now than in the past – because we know them better and know how to engage them better.’ (T4,M,29)

For both staff and students, a new type of relationship can be challenging, but rewarding:

‘I wouldn’t typically suffer inferiority complex but at the residential, I was with Dr this and Professor that. Sometimes that can make you feel that you don’t want to say something stupid...If I’m being honest, I found one of the lecturers difficult, I didn’t expect I would enjoy his company outside of Uni, but I did, and if I was to be lectured by him again, I probably would be more receptive to him and his style’. (S5,M,2).

The building up of a feeling of trust relationships and the creation of a community of practice is also evident:

‘This is about trusting the student to define what they want to do [project briefs]. It’s like a parent letting their children learn how to fly. It’s about determining a time line – it’s learning to be an independent learner. It’s about not be too over bearing but providing an answer when they need it. Trust is key’. (T5,F,28)

‘The students you have a better relationship with is linked to the amount of time you have with them’. (S2, M,12)

‘Most of the staff know me by first name. I have a more close relationship with staff’. School teachers tell you that university lecturers don’t care about you, they say “we do too much for you”, I found that that is not true, the lecturers here are very good – much better relationships here with the lecturers than with the teachers in school’. (S4, M,1)

5.5.2 Sub-theme 2: Creates a ripple effect

Creating a ripple effect in this context relates to the influence that staff has on SE in relation to their attitude and approach to practice both inside and

outside of the classroom. It also relates to the influence that students have on other students in relation to their attendance, participation and engagement in class. As one staff member reflected on how events external to the class were influential back in the classroom setting:

'In staff-student partnership, the social integration is important. We included more field trips this year, the social integration was fantastic – students saying things like – are you new here? – have you many friends here? The relationships were then carried back into the workshops. One student had assumed that others knew each other and she felt on the outside, but once she realised they didn't she was immediately drawn in... seeing that before my very eyes has reminded me of the importance of the need for social integration'. (T6, F,28)

The same staff member goes on to say how powerful it is for staff and students to work together and learn together and the impact that that has on SE:

'We are very good at what we do educationally – it's all there but if the students are lonely coming in and they have nowhere to sit or no one to talk to then this will impede learning. Social opportunities are the big thing. The social thing is not just between students – its students and staff as well. Our big colour day was fantastic – there was a lot of banter going on. There was a sense of a teaching cohesive team and everyone was learning together. If you can transfer that into your subject then that would be exciting – drawing students into that disciplinary community. For students to witness that would be fantastic – you couldn't give a lecture on that.' (T6, F,28)

One of the most transformative outcomes of staff student partnership can be realised through the increase in student motivation and the knock-on effect on their peers, as one student commented:

'There is an idolisation of professors as experts especially for a first year student. With our programme in particular the large number of course representatives involved in staff-student partnerships has meant that it has translated into a lot more questions being asked in the classroom. It rubs off on the other students – when they hear questions being asked, it gives them confidence to speak up? In the past there would only be 30 seconds of questions, now it could be up to 20 minutes and I think it's down to the barriers being broken down. After the first meeting, there seemed to be a whole change in the class'. (S6, M,1)

Another student commented on how his fellow students perceive him as a link to the lecturers. This student was a student representative

and involved in the student committee of the discipline-based student society:

'I'm willing to engage more in class and ask questions, more confident. I'm willing to give out answers. I've grown much more confident since becoming involved in this. I am used as a window to the lecturers by other students I think and I'm now happy to email the lecturers to ask a question if I'm stuck or the class is struggling' (S4,M,1)

5.5.3 Sub-theme 3: Encourages active learning approaches

Both staff and students reflected on how the partnership prompted them to reflect on their approach to their practice or their studies. During the interviews, the majority of participants indicated that they had enhanced their approaches as a result of their involvement. For some staff, this involved a radical change to how they used the time in the classroom with students such as moving from a transmission mode of lecturing to a more facilitative mode.

Staff comments included:

'We use a lot of group work now, we have a first year project, various activities so that the students get to know each other. Students meet socially in the learning environment – linked to the sense of belonging. Our students know each other well now better than before. This makes a difference, we noticed in the past that groups of students who commuted wouldn't have mixed with the others but now they do'. (T4,M,29)

'Yes, there has been a big change in my approach to my teaching. It has made me question a lot of how I deliver the work - the link between the content and the assessment has been strengthened. Even now in the middle of assessment, I feel better about it, both the intended outcomes and the module deliverables'. (T2,M,12)

'The project has been great. We have done quite a few things perhaps otherwise we wouldn't. Being part of a bigger team is useful and talking to others from different disciplines'. (T5,F,28)

'I've spent more time thinking about what I want to achieve, taking that approach of being a facilitator has given me the space to explore further and rather than trying to cover everything, I can focus on one aspect which causes difficulty and we will focus on this. I can direct the students to the independent study better – its made me less worry about transmitting information out and focus on how to use class time better. I've become more open to risk-taking in classroom e.g. ibook innovation, flipped classroom – I have to build trust that they will read before they come to class. There is an aspect of role modeling of what I want the students to do.' (T3,M,12)

For students, it gives them more of an insight into HE and can help motivate them to participate more in class, see connections between their learning and to learn independently. For one student commenting on a co-curricular event, which involved different year groups:

‘There was fun in the dyeing day – it’s not just a one day event – everyone is using the fabrics now in their work. Our studio space has changed a lot from last year when it was just drawing, now its full of fabrics. There have been opportunities – for us partners to be able to experience it, what we produced on that day is now being used in other modules and it helps us make the connections’. (S3,F,2)

The same student comments on how her involvement is helping her prepare for her planned career:

‘I want to teach. The issues that are being brought up by other teams and the proposed solutions are giving me a different perspective. I am used to the creative industries and I now think that collaborative projects would be interesting.’ (S3,F,2)

Similarly, another student talks about the link to her future career

‘As a student mentor, I see variations in ug student learning. When I am teaching, I have to decide on most appropriate model – this is a challenge but it allows me to learn how to differentiate teaching methods’. (S7,F,4)

Another student reflects on her growing confidence and how her involvement in partnerships is motivating her to complete her studies. This is particularly pertinent and raises the question how can we recreate this for *all* students:

‘I think I’ve become more confident...becoming a student partner...I’ve become more confident, more of an advocate, it’s maybe given me more of a role in the class. I feel as if I’m doing a good job like, I think its maybe helped me to settle back into university again, and it’s made me feel like I want to finish the course more and there is a less chance of me dropping out, but that isn’t a typical experience of everybody else because they obviously aren’t a student partner... So maybe that is exactly why we should be doing something like this – because I’ve even noticed a change in myself that I feel as if I’m definitely going to finish this and there are others who aren’t in this kind of role and they are feeling a bit 50/50.’ (S1,F,1)

5.6 Findings: Challenges of Staff-student Partnerships

Staff and students were also asked about challenges they experienced in relation to the operationalization of staff-student partnerships. This is important to consider as going forward, sustainability is the key if we want to capitalise on the benefits for both staff and students and we may need to re-envisage some of the challenges as opportunities for staff and students to think differently about learning and teaching in higher education. During data analysis, I coded the responses to this question as C (challenge) and grouped these together during phase 3 and 4. I then looked for patterns in the responses and it became evident that there were three sub-themes applicable for both staff and students: time, resistance, and capacity (see Appendix 3).

5.6.1 Time

For some, the challenge of fitting in the perceived extra work that working in partnership brings is a challenge, this is particularly troublesome for staff or students that are part-time and a creative look at how and when discussions take place needs to happen. There is also the issue that getting involved might detract from the primary focus of working or studying at university.

One part-time student commented:

‘When I agreed to do this, I didn’t realise there was going to be a residential or set times for meetings. If I realised there would be meetings during day-time hours, I probably would have turned down the opportunity to do this. I was invited to this 12 months ago, if I hadn’t been to the residential, my involvement would have been one meeting and one letter and I wouldn’t have been happy with that.’ (S5, M,2)

Another student when asked about challenges, commented:

‘Time! Meetings are not as regular as they should be. There should be an allocated time for this. Maybe second years could do workshops with the first years and we could feedback to the tutors how this goes. Balancing the time from my own studies to make time for this could be a problem. I don’t mind, other students might.’ (S3,F,2)

Another student also commented:

‘Well... its probably about the time thing... time constraints, physicality problems, where if there is anything that needs discussed, it might be hard to... everybody has busy lives, that might be a barrier. (S1,F,1)

5.6.2 Resistance

For some staff, it would seem that engaging students as partners can be a challenge to the 'status quo' and to the traditional way of doing things in higher education. In this project, the discipline teams to a great extent were willing partners but there are still tensions. In promoting this across the University, consideration will have to be given to staff who may not come as willingly to the process.

As one staff member commented:

'When students started paying fees they became customers – with a sense of entitlement – they expect the answer.' (T1, F,13)

Another staff member highlighted the problem when not all course team members buy into the process:

'There are other staff not engaging in the staff-student partnership. Not sustainable going forward' (T4,M,29)

5.6.3 Capacity

Capacity in this context is about the skills and abilities of individuals to operate and adapt in a changing world. For some students, particularly first-years, there seemed to be an issue with their confidence in their abilities to interact with staff and contribute in a meaningful way. This needs careful consideration and training/development up-front may need to be available if students are being asked to adopt very different roles from that which they have been accustomed to at school.

As one student commented:

'Knowing when to come forward and speak is a challenge. There always is a divide and that will never change. It's hard to know when your input is valuable and whether or not to sit back. Even if I have an idea, I'm never sure whether it's valuable or not. Sometimes as a class representative, I try very hard to represent the views of the entire class but that is not always possible. It's not inhibitive but it's something that I try to do. (S6,M,1)

Similarly another student commented:

'You're not entirely certain which of your points were valid or not valid. As a student you are the person there with the least amount of knowledge, as much as it was good to be in that

environment – possibility more knowledge due to the fact that you are there as the student but I think that overall your opinions are less important than those of the lecturers who are administering the course.’ (S5,M,2)

For another student, her issue around capacity is more about having limits set, particularly where other students might expect too much:

‘It’s almost something negative, I feel that because people are always asking me things... about assignments and stuff like that, it almost puts you under pressure to do well.’ (S1,F,1)

For one staff member, the challenge is in relation to understanding the capacities of both staff and students and trusting in the process to enhance practice:

‘A challenge is being able to let go and trust my students, I’ve had to let go the notion that I know best, that I know what the students are experiencing’. (T3, M,12)

5.7 Summary

My reflections, on supporting academic colleagues and students to engage in staff student partnerships as part of this WWSRS change programme, and drawing on the results presented from the staff and students that participated in this research suggests that if staff and students willingly work together in partnership then that provides a learning opportunity for both staff and students –where each can see things from the others’ perspective and the barriers to learning can be reduced. As stated above, the nature of the sample limits generalisation of the findings. The nature of the staff student partnerships was focused on two types of partnership working as defined by the HEA (2015) and discussed in Chapter 2: learning, teaching and assessment; and curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy. However, through these rich descriptions, it does offer an insight into how partnerships were experienced in this context by staff and students, and has provided new understandings to this recent phenomenon (Finlay, 2014; Merleau-Ponty, 1945). These new understandings have been used to form the development of a Guide for staff and students to further enhance SE at Ulster and a wider audience.

I suggest that students as partners as an ethos has the potential to challenge traditional ‘them and us’ attitudes that exist in HE and as demonstrated in the

context of this research study it can be enabling in terms of promoting belonging and involvement hence motivating students to engage and prompting staff to create learning climates based on trust and shared responsibilities. If so, the challenge going forward is to encourage all staff and students to embrace a partnership ethos so that the learning opportunity is open for all. In order to address this challenge, I engaged in a further stage of evaluation and interpretation in the form of focus groups. Chapter 6 discusses the outcomes from the focus groups and the iterative development of the Guide. Chapter 7 further discusses the results from the interviews and the focus groups in relation to the literature and the Ulster context.

Chapter 6 Focus group results and outcomes for developing Guide

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the outcomes of focus groups used to evaluate the results, consult with key staff and students, and to inform the development of a Guide for staff-student partnerships for use by staff and students at Ulster and beyond. Key suggestions by the participants and subsequent actions are discussed and how this informs implementation and further dissemination of this work-based research study. Next steps are also outlined which build on consultations and dialogue with key institutional stakeholders.

6.2 Focus group outcomes

Subjects were presented with the Guide following a brief scene setting and overview of the data results. Probing questions outlined in Chapter 4 were posed and the results are presented below for each of the five focus groups.

6.2.1 Focus group 1 (FG1) with Students' Union

The SU were presented with version 1 (Appendix 1) and were very much in support of the Guide, which they believe would help both staff and students understand what students as partners mean and how it might play out in practice. Through the dialogue, it became apparent that the SU themselves can struggle to articulate partnership meaning across the disciplines. A lot of their focus, understandably so, is based on the election and training of student representatives and how the processes work throughout the University in having the student voice heard. The SU have also recently been instrumental in leading on faculty-based Student Experience Fora which have equal numbers of staff and students in attendance to discuss in more general terms, the student experience. However, they felt that the proposed Guide presented an opportunity to spell out how partnership might be promoted at a modular level and relate more specifically to the student *learning* experience. The Guide has also caused the SU to think about the existing Student Charter and whether it is time to have discussions with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Learning, Teaching and Student Experience in relation to the development of a Partnership agreement, which would effectively replace the Student Charter. Suggestions were made in order to

develop the Guide and these are included in table 4 below. Also included in this table are my reflections and subsequent actions in relation to the suggested changes:

Table 4: Suggestions and actions following Focus group 1

Suggestions by focus group	Reflections and actions by me
Spell out what the benefits are of engaging in staff-student partnership – expand on the headings/themes presented in the first table. Articulate these in terms of benefits for both staff and students.	I considered this carefully and although I was conscious that this would add significantly to the text, I felt that it was important for me to describe the benefits for both staff and students in a way that would allow the rich descriptions of staff and student experiences to be told.
Keep the challenges table but don't put it on the first page, move it towards the end of the document and if possible suggest ways to overcome these challenges.	I thought that this was a useful suggestion but I wanted to see how the rest of the Guide developed before I addressed the challenges. No change was made to the Guide at this stage.
In the section – How do I get started? – Include Recommendations for both staff and students so that both can see how small steps can be taken in order to move towards a partnership approach.	I reflected that this was important particularly where there might be resistance to partnership either by staff or students. In terms of building capacity, I felt I should spell out some tangible suggestions of how both can easily adopt a partnership ethos by making small changes to either their thinking and/or their practice. I drew on the effective interventions implemented as part of the WWSRS change programme and on some of the key learning from participation in the wider programme to start populating the recommendations section.
The Guide could also form the basis for a Partnership agreement, which would effectively replace the Student Charter.	This is an interesting and opportune suggestion and will be considered and followed up with the SU and the PVC for Learning and Teaching. See also FG3 and FG5.

6.2.2 Focus Group 2 (FG2) with students

The students were presented with version 2 of the Guide, which had been enhanced to reflect the actioned suggestions outlined above that were put forward by the SU. All of the students agreed that they liked the content and the fact that essentially the same information was being provided to both staff and students. As one student stated:

‘It shows the students what exactly the staff are trying to achieve and then the staff can see what students are trying to achieve and what they can do to work together to get it working.’ (Female student, 2nd Year)

The students all agreed with this and added that the advice should be aimed at both staff and students as it's a partnership and there are expectations on both sides. They didn't have any other specific comments on the nature of the content or whether anything needed to be added. They were quite passionate about how the Guide should be disseminated. In relation to the format, all the students were very vocal on how information is currently consumed and had some ideas based on their own preferences and that of their friends and peers. The students suggested that the Guide should be available online as opposed to just available in paper. The suggestion was that 'paper is out the window now' (Male student, 2nd year) and that if it were on a webpage that is colourful then students are more likely to read it. The students also suggested that the Guide could be turned into an 'Infographic' (graphic visual representations of information, data or knowledge intended to present information quickly and clearly) and they referred to one developed by their school for prospective students – targeted at students in upper sixth form at secondary school. The infographic provides clear information that helps these students make an informed choice about whether to pursue the university course on which it is based. It also helps existing students to choose optional modules as it shows the different pathways and possible career choices through the chosen modules. The focus group students went on to state that the infographic is a modern thing too and enables the information to be kept current. Once all of the

information is input to the infographic, it can be housed on a website as an image which makes it relatively easy to print.

The students then went on to suggest that perhaps a better idea would be to make a short video. They felt that this could be shared very easily and could be used for multiple purposes e.g. induction days, Insight evenings etc. All text-based information could then be put on a website to which the video could direct the audience. The students felt very strongly that it would be a shame to put two or three years of work and effort into a text-based format which could prove very difficult to get people to read. Further suggestions were made on how the video should be made and what it should constitute:

- It should be a short video, no more than 3-4 minutes with the first 30 seconds being critical to get engagement;
- Keep it simple, short and sweet;
- It could also involve an animated colour spider diagram;
- It should incorporate staff and students speaking about their experiences relating to the Guide;
 - Perhaps use a year 1, year 2, year 3 student – talking about their experiences. The students could illustrate what is in the text.

The benefits of this were articulated by the students as:

- It would take less time for staff and students to access the information;
- If those that watched it were interested in follow-up information, then a link to a website could be provided. The video becomes the hook in which to get people to read and engage with the materials;
- The video could be used at Insight evenings, Open days etc. and it could be accessed all year round. It could become an Ulster selling point in that course teams could talk about the partnership ethos as well as talking about the course content. It might help some students make an informed choice and to consider Ulster as their first choice, because of this.

In relation to how and when the Guide could be used, the students suggested that it could be emailed to all staff and students. They all felt strongly that it

should be sent to new students before they come in, before induction. As stated by one graduate:

‘Students are pretty keen before induction, they are more likely to be motivated to read this kind of material, it’s a first hit and maybe reinforce the content again at induction and in the first few weeks’. (Recent male graduate)

They also agreed that for staff, it needs to filter down the different levels of school and faculty. There needs to be buy-in from the level above the lecturers as well. Students agreed that the recommendations would help staff to provide active learning opportunities, which engages students. Students were very supportive of removing the ‘them and us’ attitude that can prevail in some areas. The students reflected that a lot of lecturers are very good at partnership and engaging students but for others it is very alien. One student felt that some students might find this alien too, some students are naturally shy and they don’t like being outspoken:

‘Some staff might just like going in and doing the lecture – maybe have a bit of engagement – but they have their plan and stick to it – like some students just like going in and happily listening. For both staff and students it may mean going out of their comfort zone’. (Female student, 2nd year)

A summary of suggestions and subsequent actions are outlined in Table 5 below:

Table 5: Suggestions and actions following focus group 2

Suggestions by focus group	Reflections and actions by me
Turn the written Guide into an Infographic	I felt this was a great idea and recognise that the text-based Guide could become very lengthy and put staff and students off. Unfortunately this isn’t something that I can action immediately as we have limited digital support at present as staff in this area are currently tasked with upgrading the University’s VLE. However, this is something that I will consider in 2016/17.
Turn the Guide into a short video for multiple purposes incorporating the voices of staff and students	I was quite taken with the passion of these students. They themselves had experienced being a student partner and could see the benefits from the perspective of student, staff and institution. I agree that this would make a very useful resource and it is something that I will also consider in 2016/17

Email the Guide to all staff and students	Whilst this would be relatively easy to do, I don't think it would be particularly effective. I think the Guide would be better distributed in a more targeted fashion – aimed at critical instances in the staff and student journey, e.g. perhaps use it with staff preparing for revalidation or new students as they prepare to enter HE. I decided to wait until all the focus groups were completed before acting on this and that this will be considered as part of a wider dissemination strategy.
---	---

6.2.3 Focus Group 3 (FG3) with the WWSRS Change Programme Core Team

Colleagues were presented with version 3 of the Guide. Whilst none of the suggested actions from FG 2 were actioned at this point in time, this version had been developed to include an explanation of the benefits of partnership, drawing on the data analysis carried out and discussed in chapter 5 and further recommendations drawn from the effective interventions implemented as part of the WWSRS.

Feedback was positive and there was a consensus that the benefits of partnership was important to draw out as for some staff, partnership can still be met with resistance or at least trepidation. From their own experience of working in partnership as part of the WWSRS Change Programme core team, they felt strongly that in order to develop a culture of partnership, we needed to focus on developing capacity of staff to be engaging and students to engage. One staff member commented that one of the benefits themed under, 'new ways of thinking' could potentially be a 'eureka' moment for both staff and students as they had witnessed this change in the thinking of some of the course teams over the last three years. The challenge faced is how we can cause a similar culture change beyond the WWSRS in order to sustain the work and impact across the institution. It was felt that the Guide was valuable particularly for course team discussions on curriculum design and delivery.

In relation to the Recommendations section of the Guide, the core team felt that targeting the recommendations at both staff and students could help to break down the 'them and us' mind-set. It was also felt that because the

recommendations drew on the wider body of work and research undertaken as part of the WWSRS Project, the Guide helped to disseminate some of the effective practice that has emerged from the project evaluation. This might prompt staff to seek out further evidence in relation to changes needed for enhancement, perhaps drawing on a pedagogic and scholarly evidence base to underpin approaches that they might wish to implement. It was also suggested that the Guide might provide an opportunity to address issues such as ‘lack of collegiality’ particularly in discipline areas where it is the norm for staff members to work in silos. The challenge remains how we can influence some of these course teams and how we can start the conversations that may lead to partnership working. The SU core team member felt strongly that the Guide was in tandem with strategic thinking within the SU and stated:

‘the guide is exactly along the lines of what we have been thinking, we have been looking at Partnership agreements again, our President is hoping to meeting the PVC Learning, Teaching and Student Experience about this soon’.

A summary of suggestions and subsequent actions are outlined in Table 6 below:

Table 6: Suggestions and actions following focus group 3

Suggestions by focus group	Reflections and actions by me
The Guide should be targeted at course teams preparing for revalidation to inform their discussions on curriculum design and delivery	Revalidation is a very opportune time to influence colleagues who are developing curricula. I have been involved in facilitating revalidation workshops across the disciplines for over 12 years. As partnership is part of our L&T strategy (Ulster, 2013) colleagues have to articulate how their practice aligns. This Guide will be used in further workshops and incorporated as a discussion point to promote changes in both staff and student practice. It will also be added to the curriculum development resources list.
Target the recommendations at both staff and students, which will help to break down the ‘them and us’ mind-set. Recommendations,	This suggestion was similar to FG1 and interestingly both felt it was important for the Guide to be aimed at both staff and students with recommendations for both. This is a departure from the format of existing University guides or codes of practice, which are always aimed at one or the other. I believe that this is an

which draw on, the wider body of work and research undertaken as part of the WWSRS project will help disseminate some of the effective practice that has emerged from the project evaluation.	important aspect of the Guide for its implementation and in itself may break down barriers if both can see the recommendations for practice for each. Drawing on the WWSRS is also beneficial for two reasons: it disseminates the outcomes from the project, and the recommendations of 'what works' have an evidence-base on which staff and students can draw.
Use this research carried out at an operational level, to inform strategic thinking and future direction of SU and the institution in relation to a Partnership Agreements	This is a great opportunity to influence an institutional agreement, which could effectively inform a partnership ethos and culture. The existing Student Charter is based on an ethos of 'student as consumer' and only superficially discusses expectations of both staff and students. See also FG1 and FG5

6.2.4 Focus Group 4 (FG4) Professional Development Managers (PDMs) (Staff Development)

There was a very positive response to the content and general ethos of the Guide and there was agreement that it should be aimed at both staff and students. More specific feedback and suggestions included the following:

Table 7: Suggestions and actions following focus group 4

Suggestions by focus group	Reflections and actions by me
Include a brief introductory paragraph to provide context, which will set the scene for the research and put theme diagram on page 2.	I thought that this was necessary – the Guide needed to explain the importance of considering partnership as a way of engaging. It needs to convey that it isn't partnership in the sense of a big project. This needs to hook in the reader before outlining the benefits and recommendations. This was actioned drawing on the evidence-base from this study.
The benefits articulated are useful but text in vertical columns is difficult to read – consider changing this so that text is displayed in rows.	This was something I hadn't thought about but once it was pointed out, I could see how text presented like this could be challenging for some readers. The display was changed to display text in rows.
Recommendations are well defined but make sure that it is clear to the reader that these are based on evidence.	Again, this is important, as the reader needs to see that the recommendations are underpinned by pedagogic literature. Recommendations are put forward as 'what works?' and an

	acknowledgment of the WWSRS is included along with a list of references for further reading.
Include room for staff and students to incorporate their own suggestions and provide links to case studies so that the reader can follow through for further information.	I don't want the Guide to be too long and as it is for a reference point, I don't think that I need to leave space for users to write in their own ideas but the text has been altered to 'suggested recommendations'. Also in implementation, e.g. with course teams, colleagues will be encouraged to identify their discipline-specific ways of incorporating partnership. Links to case studies have been added to the references.
Include challenges in a brief paragraph and be mindful that any change takes time to embed.	The same suggestion was made by FG1 and as the Guide was now further developed; I could see that after Recommendations, it was appropriate to include challenges. These were identified from the data and suggestions to address these can be added after further implementation.
<p>The PDMs suggested that the following might constitute a target audience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New staff to the institution who will be teaching or supporting learning • Course Directors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New Course Directors' Induction • Course Teams <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A particular time might be at revalidation preparation • Students' Union <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student Representative training • Heads of School • Learning & Teaching Coordinators 	Ultimately, I would hope that all staff and students could be influenced to adopt a culture or ethos of staff-student partnership. However, the groups identified here can be targeted in a relatively short-term time frame. As an academic developer, I have direct access to new staff, new course directors and course teams preparing for revalidation. The Guide has already been incorporated into these workshops and resources lists. The SU are planning to use the Guide with their training for student reps. In planning for 2016/17, I will work with colleagues to identify suitable approaches for targeting Heads of School and Learning and Teaching Coordinators.

This feedback and the suggested target audience provides useful pointers of how to develop the Guide further for different purposes and different target audiences.

6.2.5 Focus Group 5 (FG5) with the University SE sub-committee

The Guide was tabled as part of the agenda at the first meeting of the group in 2015/16. As in previous focus groups, the feedback was very positive and it was useful to hear comments from this representative group, which

comprises of academic staff, academic-related staff, student support staff, quality assurance staff and the Students' Union.

One member of staff commented that:

'this is a very useful guide in terms of defining the whole idea of partnership. This has caused concern in the past in relation to what is the definition of partnership. That whole idea of the engagement brings the whole thing together quite nicely'
(Senior Lecturer, Natural Sciences discipline)

This comment was particularly interesting as this staff member is from a discipline, which in the past has been known to contest the notion of partnership so it is encouraging that perhaps this Guide might go some way to addressing what is meant by partnership and to perhaps offer pragmatic advice as to how it might play out in practice.

A further suggestion was made in relation to the whole idea of how partnership is going to work in different contexts e.g. professional bodies involved in designing curricula etc. and how we could have student input to all these activities.

Another member of staff commented:

'I do like the idea of the whole thing about SE because the learning landscape projects idea is about this too. Creating those small group activities even within large lectures, these are traditionally didactic lectures but there is opportunity within that, for students working with people either side of them'.
(Faculty Learning and Teaching Coordinator)

There was discussion also around how the Guide might feed into other sources of information, in particular for students. This was in relation to another project taking place and which is also being led by the Chair of this SE sub-committee. The other project is called 'Making University Work For You'; the purpose of this initiative is to provide online resources to new incoming students based on Epigeum (providers of online content) materials. Part of the planned online course will have elements called 'context pods' in which information and videos can be put under different headings. As stated by the Chair:

‘What you have in this guide would be very helpful – it relates to a lot of the material that is in the Epigeum – it presents similar information in an alternative way. This Guide can be used to inform the content of the pod and used to raise the learners’ expectations – there’s a lot of practical advice here’.

Additional comments were made on the merits of having a guide that is for staff but equally where they can see what the expectations are of students.

The Head of Student Support commented that it is a really helpful guide and provides positive suggestions. One suggestion was made which relates to a recommendation made to students which advises them to familiarise themselves with Student Support on their campus, it was suggested that the corresponding staff advice should recommend that staff take students on a tour of the campus that includes Student Support.

The SU group member suggested that we work together to see how the Guide might inform future developments of a Partnership Agreement which may replace the existing Student Charter.

Another link was made between the Guide and the on-going development of the new Ulster Student Learning Experience Principles. The Chair of the working group, present in this focus group suggested that the Guide could also inform the development of Principle 1, the Ulster Learning Model and could be another reference point for staff and students using the Principles to inform their practice.

The SU agreed with this and are keen to use the Guide in on-going development for student representatives.

The Digital Learning Development Manager made a final comment:

‘I loved all the ideas in this. One of the strongest is in encouraging active learning – this requires changing mind-sets – changing from role of expert to the role of facilitator. This also links to the learning landscapes agenda as staff will have to think about teaching in different spaces.’

A summary of suggestions and subsequent actions are outlined in Table 8 below:

Table 8: Suggestions and actions following focus group 5

Suggestions by focus group	Reflections and actions by me
<p>Guide might be useful to address concerns in some discipline areas over the definition of partnership in an HE context.</p>	<p>I am aware that partnership can mean different things to different people and disciplinary differences need to be acknowledged and considered. Linking back to the last suggestion by FG4, I need to work with the faculty learning and teaching coordinators to see how I can work with them in implementing an ethos of partnership in their respective areas.</p>
<p>Consider how partnership might work in different contexts e.g. professional bodies involved in designing curricula and how we could have student input to all these activities.</p>	<p>Over the last five years, the SU in conjunction with myself have encouraged course teams to involve students in curriculum design. However, this has mostly focused on getting their feedback on existing curriculum design and delivery rather than engaging students in developing new curricula. I believe that this Guide could form the basis for encouraging this activity and I will work with the SU to implement a pilot of this in 2016/17.</p>
<p>Consider how the notion of partnership might feed into the learning landscape project.</p>	<p>As the University is currently investing in new teaching blocks at two campuses and the development of a new campus in the city of Belfast to replace the Jordanstown campus in 2019; active learning spaces are currently being designed and student and staff capacity to engage in these spaces will be a priority over the next 2-3 years. I believe that this presents an opportunity to link with this project, to inform it, in terms of developing a culture of partnership. I believe that this is necessary before we encourage staff and students to learn in new ways, determined by the physical and digital environment. I will work closely with the Director CHERP and determine how I can be involved in 'active classroom' pilots in 2016/17.</p>
<p>The Guide will be useful to inform the 'Making the University Work for You'</p>	<p>This is a great opportunity to influence new incoming students. The Chair has committed to taking this further at the next meeting of the project group where each</p>

project for incoming students	member of the group will take charge of a context pod. Contact will be made with me in relation to how the Guide might be used to inform the making of a video aimed at new students. The online module will be piloted over the summer 2016.
Corresponding staff advice should recommend that staff take students on a tour of the campus that includes Student Support as well as suggesting that students familiarise themselves with Student Support.	I agree that the onus shouldn't just be on the students to find out about Student Support so I have added an additional recommendation for staff to take students on a tour and include a visit to Student Support.
Work with SU in relation to the development of a Partnership Agreement	This was also raised in FG1 and FG3 and represents a great opportunity to influence at an institutional level. Since this focus group, I presented a paper on 'students as partners' at the University and SU forum in April 2016, which incorporated the results and outcomes of this work-based study. This paper was welcomed and the SU are now developing a draft Partnership Agreement for the next forum meeting in June 2016.
The Guide could be used as further reading or another resource for staff and students in relation to the new Ulster Student Learning Experience Principles, which are being developed.	As I was also involved in the development of the new Principles, in particular Principle 1: the Ulster Learning Model. The Guide could underpin the model and suggest practical recommendations. The Principles being rolled out in 2016/17.

6.3 Synthesis of focus group outcomes

The five focus groups have proved to be very valuable for two main reasons: as a first step in the dissemination of the research within the University, and as a consultation exercise with key stakeholders on how the participants' lived experience of working in partnership could be used to inform the Guide for the wider audience of Ulster staff and students. The final focus group in particular has allowed me to situate the emerging evidence-base at a

strategic institutional level and will help facilitate further buy-in to considering the wider promotion and adoption of staff student partnership as an ethos to enhance SE. This is discussed further in Chapter 8.

Each focus group uncovered different ideas and suggestions as to how the Guide might be enhanced, and subsequent reflection on these and actions taken are detailed in Tables 4-8 above. A synthesis of these is summarised below as: refining the Guide, exploring opportunities for dissemination, and further implementation.

6.3.1 Refining the Guide

There was a number of very useful suggestions made in relation to the content and format of the Guide and these have been actioned and are reflected in the final version (see appendix 2):

- The Guide is written for both staff and students to: provide the opportunity for both parties to appreciate the other's perspective, help each see what is expected of the other, to break down the 'them and us' approach to engagement, and enable partnership working at a modular level.
- The Guide includes an introductory text which sets the context for partnership in HE and situates it in relation to *engagement through partnership*.
- The benefits and challenges of partnership are portrayed based on the results discussed in Chapter 5. It was felt that challenges should remain in the Guide as not all potential readers might necessarily want to embrace engagement through partnership and some might continue to resist a change in practice. The advice to 'start small' was felt to be particularly apt.
- Recommendations are included which provides evidence-based practical advice for staff and students on engagement through partnership. This draws on research carried out at Ulster as part of the WWSRS change programme.
- Text that was in vertical columns is now displayed in horizontal rows to improve readability.

- Further reading and resources drawing on a sector-wide evidence base are included.

6.3.2 Exploring opportunities for dissemination

The dialogue with all the focus groups provided useful suggestions for dissemination of the Guide. These include:

- Incorporate into content of the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Practice (PgCHEP). This programme is taken by all new staff and offered to PhD students involved in teaching.
- Include in revalidation workshops with staff to inform discussions when planning new curricula.
- Include in Course Director Induction programme
- Liaise with staff on the Making the University Work for You project, which is an online programme, aimed at new incoming students. Advice for students could be incorporated into the context pods.
- Liaise with the SU as to how the Guide can be used in Student Representative training.
- Liaise with Heads of School and Faculty Learning and Teaching Coordinators to see how the Guide can be used in different disciplines. It was felt, in particular Heads of School, need to embrace partnership, as there is inconsistency in practice amongst staff and in some cases a preponderance to work in silos. The Guide may help to promote a more collegiate way of working.

6.3.3 Further Implementation

Suggestions were also made in relation to how the outcomes from this research study and the Guide might inform strategic work being planned for implementation in 2016/17. In essence these are aimed at enhancing and developing staff and student practice. These include:

- To underpin Principle 1: the Ulster Learning Model – in particular the practical recommendations for staff and students;
- To inform future policy/strategy, in particular a Partnership agreement that would replace the Student Charter;
- Inform the Learning Landscape Project to underpin capacity building for staff and students to work in new active learning spaces;

- To inform further work with the SU in relation to capacity building of students to develop curricula with staff;
- To explore alternative formats of the Guide, which may include: an infographic, and a video, which could be used for multiple purposes.

6.4 Summary

Considering the positive reaction and feedback received, it has become apparent that there is an appetite for the Guide and with the content aimed at both staff and students, there are multiple purposes and discrete audiences for which the Guide might be targeted. Another key learning point has emerged due to the consultation and that is that whilst not all of the content is necessarily 'new' information, how it is packaged and the media format is important.

It may not be possible, or particularly wise to seek to 'complete' the Guide for now while it is being developed and risk the danger of it becoming another policy document, dated, and put on a shelf. Participant responses suggested that it is desirable that the Guide becomes a 'living' document, which can be added to as time goes on, and as new effective practices emerge. Ultimately, it is the enhancement and development of staff and student practice that is sought, through the adoption of a partnership ethos, where each appreciates the others' perspective and the barriers to learning are reduced. Chapter 7 discusses the results from the interviews and the outcomes of the focus groups in relation to current literature and Chapter 8 provides conclusions and next steps for this work-based study.

Chapter 7 Discussion

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter I outline the relevance and significance of this study to HE today. I also discuss the results of the interviews and the outcomes from the focus groups in relation to recent literature and the Ulster University context. I describe the implications of each theme: personal development, and enhancement of the learning climate in relation to how this will impact on further implementation of the research. I consider the challenges of staff student partnership that are evident from this study and the wider sector. Finally, I provide a reflection on valuable learning points and new understanding emerging from this research project, which shapes my conclusions.

7.2 Relevance and significance of the study

Engaging students through collaborative working between staff and students is not new, however, following the dramatic rise of mass forms of higher education (discussed in Chapter 1), SE has become problematic (Kahn, 2014). Coates and McCormick (2014) concur and state that as student populations in many countries become larger and more diverse, there is a growing need to understand how to engage students across the student lifecycle. Harper and Quaye (2015) remind us that institutional policies and philosophy on learning and teaching can encourage or discourage and hinder student learning and success, and that it is no longer sufficient to think of the institution as a one-size-fits-all into which students must 'fit'. Drivers for 'students as partners' in HE to challenge the conception of 'students as consumers' are discussed in Chapter 2 and they include inter alia: increasing numbers of students entering HE, increased diversity of students, and a change in how HE is funded. In the UK, Tomlinson (2014) carried out a study, which investigated how the shifting policy landscape, particularly in relation to fee increases, has affected students' approaches to higher education. This was based upon a cross-national and cross-institutional qualitative study, involving interviews and focus groups with 68 undergraduate students across a range of Higher Education Institutions in the four countries of the UK. One of the key findings of the study highlights that students clearly value more personalised modes of interaction at a time

of mass attendance and lower staff-student ratios. Students perceived that the recent fee increase would sharpen expectations of good teaching and make them less tolerant of lower standards.

This finding chimes with the suggestion that our goal should be to foster deep and transformative learning for all students, through building strong partnership learning communities, and a rethinking of the curriculum (Bryson, 2015; Healey, Flint and Harrington, 2014). They acknowledge that whilst this is challenging, it is also worthwhile for both students and staff. This focus is more in keeping with a qualitative approach to SE which is prevalent in the UK rather than the more positivist approach that dominates the US and Australia. Chapter 2 expands on these two contrasting approaches to measuring and enhancing SE and the argument that I wish to make here, based on the results in chapter 5 and recent literature is that a partnership approach provides an opportunity for staff and students – where each appreciate the others' perspective and the barriers to learning are reduced.

This is particularly relevant in the context of my own institution. At the beginning of this project, the University had just developed its new learning and teaching strategy (Ulster, 2013) based on its vision of empowering learners to excel in professional life through transformative higher education. Strategic Aim 2 of the Learning & Teaching Strategy (2013/14 – 2017/18) clearly articulates how we should realise our vision:

To provide transformative, high quality, learning experiences through the promotion of meaningful staff student partnerships that engender a shared responsibility.

As stated in Chapter 1, the University's involvement in the WWSRS change programme (HEA, 2013a) was identified as one of the supporting objectives for achieving strategic aim 2 above. The What Works? Model (see Figure 2, Chapter 2) underpinning this change programme puts SE and belonging at the heart of improving student retention and success. However, the model didn't go as far as providing guidance on how to initiate and sustain partnership work between staff and students and Thomas (2012) identified capacity building as an area where further evidence is needed. It is that which the central aim of this study is based. The WWSRS provided an

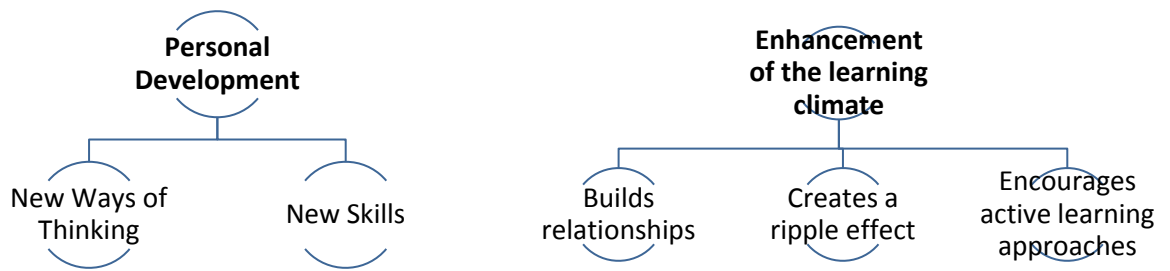
opportunity for me to capture descriptions of the lived experience, at a point in time, of staff and students involved in partnership working thereby providing an evidence-base, through interpretation and communication, to help the institution (all staff and students) to achieve strategic aim 2. The author of the strategy: the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Learning, Teaching and Student Experience agreed the project aim, objectives and outputs as articulated in Chapter 3 and has directly sponsored this work-based research project.

7.3 Results in relation to recent literature and the Ulster context

The results discussed in Chapter 5 and the outcomes of the focus groups discussed in Chapter 6 demonstrate within the context of this research study, that staff-student partnerships creates a more favourable learning environment in which individual learning is optimised by developing student capacity to engage and staff capacity to be engaging.

To explore in more detail, I discuss this in relation to the themes identified in the results articulated in chapter 5. One thing that surprised me at the data collection and data analysis stage was that there was a high level of consensus between staff and students in how they described their lived experiences and the impact that being involved in partnership was having on them. This is a recurrent finding in other studies, which have also set out to explore the outcomes of staff student partnership (Bovill, Cook-Sather and Felten, 2011; Cook-Sather, 2011; Cox, 2001) and as stated by Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 'partnership's roots in reciprocity and shared responsibility create a solid foundation for all participants to learn and grow in similar ways' (2014, p100). In the context of this research project, partnership working also allowed both staff and students to see things from the other's perspective and in essence it broke down the 'them and us' status quo.

The thematic map shows two main themes, which became evident through the data analysis process and which conceptualises the benefits of staff-student partnership.



Whilst individual participants experienced partnership in nuanced ways, there was a striking degree of accord in the descriptions of the impact of the partnership on the individual and this is articulated in the two main themes. These and the sub themes as illustrated above are discussed in the sections that follow.

7.3.1 Theme 1 Personal Development

Staff and students indicated the value of partnership work in providing an opportunity for all participants to develop new ways of thinking and new skills aligning to Aubrey’s definition of personal development as improving: self-awareness, self-knowledge, skills and quality of life (2010). Reflecting on the three dimensions of SE referred to in Chapter 2, which include: behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement, it became apparent that within this study the three dimensions are inter-related and work together. Emotion was evident in the descriptions of lived experience and participants described how they were *feeling* engaged or motivated or more involved which was changing their thinking. This in turn was affecting their behaviours, which is discussed below in the second theme, enhancing the learning climate. Elder (1996) refers to this as the three basic mental functions operating in a dynamic relationship to each other and where there is thinking, some related feeling exists. It became clear that for some staff and students this came as a surprise and not something they had thought would happen because of their involvement. For the students, the partnership allowed them an insight into the world of academia, which is a very unfamiliar environment particularly for new, incoming first years. It enabled them to think about the teaching perspective, this was mostly evident where students were taking on roles such as: coaching or mentoring lower level students, carrying out research, and leading on induction activities etc. For staff, the partnership

enabled them to think about the learning perspective and this was very evident in the interviews when staff described how they were now thinking about the effectiveness of their previously unchallenged teaching practice and were beginning to look at students through a new lens. Findings such as this were echoed in similar evaluations carried out on staff student partnerships in different learning contexts, e.g. inquiry-based learning approaches (Healey and Jenkins, 2009; Levy, Little and Whelan, 2011) where it was found that the collaborative nature of the approach to learning resulted in enhanced SE and personal development in areas such as changed beliefs and understanding about the roles in learning and knowledge creation. Further discussion of the results in relation to studies like these are in the following subsections, first, I will focus on the subtheme of 'new ways of thinking' and second, 'new skills'.

7.3.1.1 New ways of thinking

It became evident that for some students, the staff student partnership encouraged dialogue and mutual respect. This sometimes happened outside of the normal class contact time and had the knock on effect on making students feel more comfortable talking with staff, which developed their confidence. It also provided an insight into the complex world of HE and challenged them to question the adequacy of a passive role in their own learning. Students in this study described feelings of being surprised at the willingness of tutors to help them and that this went beyond their expectations of university. Levy, Little and Whelan (2011) describe this as students feeling that they were being treated as equals by staff and this enhanced their understanding more about how the university works. A comparable reporting was made by Barnes et al. (2011) who found that student-staff partnerships led to students being more aware of their role and place in the university community. Healey and Jenkins (2009) describe students' involvement in collaborative undergraduate research and suggest that this is critical for their intellectual and personal development. For staff, the partnership provided an insight into what its like to be a student in today's world and whether their prevailing approach to teaching was impactful. Bovill (2013) found this also and for some staff involved in investigations into co-created curricula, staff members stated that the partnership was

transformative in that it prompted them to think about their teaching in new ways. This new lens or perhaps more accurately, partnership lens is particularly useful as a reflective process, which can open up the minds of both staff and students to challenge the assumptions that we make about one another and the learning process (Flint, 2015). It also speaks to work referred to by Jarvis and Graham (2015) in a three part pedagogical approach that enables teachers to enhance their understanding of their own and others' perspectives and to develop professional relationships with learners. Jarvis and Graham (2015) go on state that 'empathy is an important professional attribute' and 'part of the building relationships involves a curiosity and motivation to understand oneself and others' (p3). This approach shares in many ways the outcomes and benefits of the staff-student partnerships under discussion in this research study. Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten (2014) also discuss empathy in relation to staff student partnership and how it makes students more empathetic towards the work and experiences of the teachers. Coates and Radloff (2014), in suggesting broader strategies for developing SE – suggest that 'participating in co-curricular activities plays an important role in developing high quality graduate outcomes. Beyond-class experiences make formal learning more relevant and provide valuable learning experiences of their own' (p142).

7.3.1.2 New skills

For staff and students that were interviewed, there was recognition that they were gaining new skills. Student partners talked about gaining real-life skills that would enhance their employability. Students reported that skills such as: note taking, being reflective, team working, writing, and presenting had got better. These enhanced skills brought: increased confidence, motivation, and readiness for different learning situations. Staff reported that the partnership prompted them to: stand back, solicit ideas from the students, and to take on the role of a facilitator. This is an important point to consider and in terms of moving forward at Ulster, it relates to the Learning Landscapes project that was discussed in the focus groups and the need to develop staff and student capacity to teach and learn in new active learning spaces. It reinforces the need to consider how a staff student partnership ethos is desirable as the foundation for a new campus-learning environment. For some staff the

partnership mimics the profession, for example in the case of courses linked to professional bodies where partnership working is expected; this enhances students' readiness for employment. This is also an important contention and relates to another point raised in the focus groups in relation to how partnership might work in different contexts. The role of partnerships in developing curricula, which includes staff, students and professional bodies, needs to be explored as Ulster moves forward but this is also presents a challenge. Jarvis, Dickerson and Stockwell (2013) report similar findings in an evaluation of staff-student collaborative projects at the University of Hertfordshire. They found that the partnership had a significant impact on students' employability skills and attributes amongst other things and for members of staff involved in the projects, they found working with students to be extremely inspirational particularly in how students worked with other students. Barnes et al. (2011) also highlighted the development of students': knowledge, skills, and values, for those who engaged in national projects at two universities. Montesinos, Cassidy and Millard (2013) believe that participation in staff student partnerships leads to enhanced higher-order learning outcomes, such as: critical thinking, complex problem solving, and communication, which may be related to the tasks communities undertake and lead to greater student employability.

7.3.1.3 Implications of the personal development theme

It has become evident through this research study at Ulster that the results generated through the lived experiences of the participants are similar to the benefits of partnership working, as described in the literature. However, this research brings new understanding to stakeholders at Ulster in relation to how this can help us think more holistically about SE particularly in relation to the emotional dimension. Whilst it became apparent that the participants' thinking had changed as a result of their involvement, quite often the catalyst for this change was in relation to how the participants were feeling. The findings speak specifically to elements of the framework identified by Kahu (2013): Conceptual framework of engagement, antecedents and consequences (see figure 3, Chapter 2). In particular, the psychosocial influences which include staff and student attributes and the relationship between them, which are depicted as having a clear impact on SE. The

theme of personal development discussed above enables us to appreciate, and build on the role that this plays in developing staff and student capacity to engage. Implications for further implementation of staff student partnerships suggest that we should consider carefully the potential benefits of partnership to:

- Promote positive feelings of being engaged through effective relational-based partnerships which in turn can change thinking;
- Encourage dialogue and mutual respect between staff and students;
- Provide an insight into each other's world within the HE context;
- Challenge assumptions made by both parties in relation to expectations of roles;
- Develop confidence in own abilities and respective roles as learners and teachers;
- Enable staff to view students as individuals rather than a homogenous group;
- Enable students to see staff as approachable and appreciate their role in facilitating learning;
- Enhance students academic skills;
- Enhance staff skills in facilitating learning, which is critical to the University's, successful move to active learning spaces.

7.3.2 Theme 2 Enhancement of the Learning Climate

It became evident that for those that participated in a partnership approach it can lead to more motivated learners and enthused academic staff. Students talked about the breaking down of barriers and how they experienced a better classroom experience. Students felt the benefit of being able to sit down around a table and discuss issues with the staff that make decisions. As indicated by the results, students felt that partnership is very beneficial in bringing staff and students closer together. Similarly for staff, they described their increased engagement as a result of getting to know the student cohort better. This is potentially very powerful and we need to consider how staff and students could be supported to initiate and sustain change through this dialogue, and not just some students who happen to be involved in a partnership initiative but all students. This is very much in

keeping with an active learning climate, desired by the University and discussed in Chapter 2. It is underpinned by previous research which asserts that in order to promote deep learning for all students, it is desirable to move from a content-focussed, teacher-led climate to learning situations which focus on what the student does and engages students in active learning (Biggs and Tang, 2011; Chickering and Gamson, 1987; Entwistle, 2009; Thomas, 2002). The experiences felt by staff and students in this study also relate to research, which demonstrates that teachers and institutions create a certain learning climate through interactions with students which in turn has a strong effect on students' learning (Gardner, 1993; McGregor, 1960; Pintrich and Schunk, 2002). In the following subsections, I will focus on first, the subtheme of 'builds relationships' and second, 'creates a ripple effect' and third, 'encourages active learning approaches'.

7.3.2.1 Builds relationships

It became very evident in the interviews that for both staff and students - breaking down the barriers and building relationships leads to better communication. For students, getting to know staff within and outside of the classroom: reduces student anxieties, builds belonging, and prompts them to approach staff for support and guidance. It also enables students to appreciate more fully the breadth of staff roles. Students described this in their narratives as: allowing them to see the other things that lecturers do, it's different now than the hierarchy at school, not being expected to sit quietly, and it's nice to see staff outside of the classroom environment. For staff, the partnership helps to see students as individuals with different goals and aspirations. Staff describe this as: being more open to students, not being as judgmental, being seen as more human and approachable, and knowing their capabilities which allows guidance and feedback to be better targeted. Staff and students also referred to: better working relationships, the building of trust, breaking down of barriers, and a blurring of roles. Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten (2014) also refer to sharing of responsibility, and that for some teaching staff, they may 'start to see students more as people engaged in similar struggles to learn and grow' (p111). This may also reflect a change in view and the move away from the view of 'student-as-consumer'. Coates and Radloff (2014) refer to a broad research evidence-base which 'suggests

that high levels of student-staff interactions have positive effects on learning, motivation, persistence – on engagement’ (p147). Hardy and Bryson also refer to the emotion aspect of SE and suggest that for first year students:

‘emotion is key and integration into academic, cultural and social communities at university is equally important for instilling a ‘sense of belonging’ or ‘sense of being a student’ which is a precursor for engagement...it is not sufficient just to create relationships, it is trust relationships which make a difference’ (2009, p6).

This highlights a challenge going forward in that if the building of trust relationships is an outcome of staff student partnerships for those involved; then how do we then ensure that there are opportunities for all students to experience trust relationships.

7.3.2.2 Creates a ripple effect

Staff participants in the study reported that when learners get to know staff and each other outside of the classroom through course-based opportunities such as: pre-entry contact, induction activities, and field trips; the ripple effect is felt back in the classroom through a sense of a cohesive team with everybody learning together. It is suggested that the partnership not only benefits staff and student directly involved in initiatives or projects. Students report that when enthused student partners are more active in the classroom, it rubs off on the other students and promotes more collaborative learning for everyone. In this sense, it encouraged students who didn’t initially speak up to gain the confidence to join in classroom discussion. Some students also found that events that occurred outside the classroom allowed them to see the ‘person’ behind the tutor and this had the effect of encouraging the student to be more receptive to that particular tutor’s style of delivery. The increased student confidence leading to enhanced engagement was identified in studies carried out by Little et al. (2011) and Sambell and Graham (2011) where they found that the benefits of partnership transferred into other learning situations. Beachboard, Beachboard and Adkinson (2011) argue that the primary benefit of another form of partnership: student learning communities is in the development of belonging and relatedness, which in turn leads to enhanced motivation and academic benefits. This has also been identified by several of the most influential researchers in SE (Kuh, 2001;

McInnis, 2001; Wenger, 1999). This is very much in keeping with advice from Coates and Radloff who state:

Opportunities for informal interactions open up possibilities for conversations across a wide range of topics, introduce students to previously unexplored ways of engaging with their subjects and disciplines, and place the learning project in a relaxed context which supports engagement.

(2014, p148)

In relation to this, at Ulster, one of the thematic areas in the WWSRS was co-curricular activity and two of the discipline areas implemented: field trips, and events that occurred outside of regular class time to involve all year groups. The staff from these areas, when interviewed, described how this type of partnership working creates opportunities for trust relationships to develop [referring to first-years] and prevents students from being lonely and can kick-start engagement or enhance it.

7.3.2.3 Encourages active learning approaches

Staff student partnership can break down the 'them and us' situation and promote active engagement. Students relate that, they are more likely to ask questions and put forward ideas and suggestions which leads to taking responsibility for their own learning. They also feel that they have a better understanding of staff expectations of independent learning. Students describe feelings of empowerment, through having a voice that helps staff to make decisions about shaping the course. For staff, involvement in the partnership has provided the impetus for some to take more risks in the classroom – in the sense of 'letting go' complete control. It can free staff up to be innovative in their approaches to suit their contexts, which ultimately leads to a growing sense of a discipline community. Staff refer to being: less concerned with transmitting information, more focused on using class time better, reflecting on their delivery style, and feeling more relaxed which makes students feel more relaxed. Similar findings were highlighted by Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten (2014) where they found that the engagement outcomes of staff student partnerships for staff were similar to that of students in relation to motivation and learning. These were identified as: a) transformed thinking about and practices of teaching; b) changed understanding of learning and teaching; and c) reconceptualising of learning

and teaching as collaborative processes. This shift is important in the context of Ulster and as discussed in relation to the personal development theme and suggested by the focus groups, this needs to be considered as we build capacity for new campus learning spaces. Active and technology-enhanced learning has been identified as critical to success. The challenge is not just to promote the technology or the chosen active learning approach, it will be necessary to also work on changing the process or attitude to SE.

7.3.2.4 Implications of the enhancement of the learning climate theme

It has also become evident through this research study at Ulster that the theme of enhancement of the learning climate discussed above enables us to appreciate and understand better the role that staff student partnership has in impacting on the intellectual, social, emotional and physical environment in which our students learn (Ambrose, 2010). This focus acknowledges that learning is a joint activity, depends on how students are feeling about being engaged, is predicated on staff and student interactions and ultimately changes the learner's perspective on knowledge (Mezirow, 1991; Prosser and Trigwell, 1999). According to Biggs and Tang (2011) conditions for such a change away from a culture of didactic teaching to active learning include inter alia: student motivation and students working collaboratively with others, both peers and teachers. In order to develop staff and student practice in the pursuit of engendering shared responsibility for learning, implications for further implementation of staff student partnerships suggest that we should consider carefully the potential benefits of partnership to:

- Support staff and *all* students to initiate and sustain change through dialogue;
- Provide opportunities for all students to experience trust relationships which is important as a precursor for engagement;
- Promote informal interactions in relaxed contexts which supports SE;
- Optimise a staff student partnership ethos as the foundation for capacity development of staff and students to learn and teach in new active campus learning spaces.

However, it cannot be assumed that all staff and students will embrace learning and teaching as a joint activity and there will be individuals and

discipline areas that may wish to retain a traditional didactic approach and avoid change that will require them to think and act differently in relation to SE. Some of these challenges are discussed below.

7.4 Challenges

Staff-student partnerships are not without their challenges and these are also documented in (Bovill, 2013; Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 2014; Crawford et al., 2015; Curran and Millard, 2015; Healey, Flint and Harrington, 2014; Little et al., 2011). In this research study, they included issues such as: time, resistance, and capacity (for both staff and students) and how these challenges are addressed can differ across the disciplines. Students in particular referred to their busy lives and the struggle to find time to get the balance right between their studies and other activities such as their involvement in partnership activities. For a part-time student, involvement in daytime activities was particularly difficult as they were holding down a full-time job. Staff described resistance to partnership as problematic and in this study this was felt in respect to course teams who were involved in partnership activities in which they didn't have the full buy-in from their colleagues. Staff described this as unsustainable going forward and that if the University wants to promote a culture of partnership then perhaps reward mechanisms for staff developing effective partnership may be one way in which it this might be achieved. As outlined in Chapter 1 (section 1.3.2) when staff were consulted at the CHERP annual conference in January 2013 on *students as partners*, almost half of the 70 respondents stated that resistance would be a barrier or a challenge to the partnership approach. In relation to capacity, students described that sometimes they lack the confidence to know when to speak up or come forward. They also feel that it can be hard to make a judgment as to whether an idea or suggestion is worthy of consideration. Some students also described a feeling of pressure from being a student partner, pressure to do well academically. Staff described the struggle with letting go – in the sense that they had to know when to give some control to the students, this was something that didn't happen naturally perhaps after years of 'being in control' in a learning and teaching context. It was also suggested in the focus groups that partnership working in different disciplinary contexts e.g. professional bodies and

students involvement in designing curricula etc. needs to be considered and this aligns to concerns expressed by Weller (2016) and Brint, Cantwell and Hanneman (2008), that the discipline-specific nature of SE can be overlooked even though the discipline can determine how students engage differently even within institutions.

Other studies describe similar challenges, *risk* was described by Bovill (2013), in relation to participants involved in co-creating curricula, as being nerve-wracking and tutors feeling threatened by students being in control of elements of the curriculum, professional bodies might too be resistant to such a move. Little et al. (2011) refers to *transience* as a barrier to staff student partnerships, for staff involved, who are often a constant in partnership activities, trying to engage and involve a constant stream of new students can be frustrating. Participants in this study also alluded to large class sizes, which can also seem like a deterrent to staff-student partnerships but it's worth remembering that students can learn nearly as much through facilitated conversations with their peers as with their teachers (Falchikov, 2001; Thomas, 2012). However, where resistance prevails, strategies may need to be employed that address this at an individual or school level. Flint (2015) describes this succinctly and advises that staff and students may not automatically see themselves as a partner in learning and teaching. Cook-Sather (2014) also points out that partnership challenges HE norms and may require staff and students to step outside of their comfort zone. Indeed, in this study at Ulster, staff and students described feeling surprised at the impact of partnership working on their own practice which was not something they had expected to happen, it had prompted them to feel and think differently about HE and the traditional roles within it. Healey, Flint and Harrington (2014) describe specific tensions and troublesome questions a partnership approach in learning and teaching raises and offer some suggestions as to how to create conditions for enabling fruitful change through learning and working in partnership. These relate to specific areas such as: differences in staff and student perspectives, policy and pedagogy, cognitive dissonance, students' unions and institutions, and fundamental purpose and structure of higher education.

Staff-student partnership may also be considered a ‘threshold concept’ for some academic staff and students and perhaps one that doesn’t get priority in the busyness of academic practice (Cook-Sather, 2014; Marquis et al., 2016). The construct ‘students as partners’ may in itself contribute to some of the resistance to staff-student partnerships particularly in certain disciplines. It can threaten staff in terms of their position as ‘experts’ in their field by them assuming that it means handing over complete control to students. The issue of power can prevail and it has to be acknowledged so that both staff and students can collaborate in meaningful ways that suit their context. Students may feel that it is not their job or their right to criticise academic practice or to make suggestions as to how HE should be organized. I see the ‘students as partners’ ethos as being instrumental in enhancing SE activities. Therefore, I have moved from using this phrase (since sharing outcomes from this study) to thinking and talking about staff student partnership as ‘engagement through partnership’. I didn’t experience negativity or resistance to ‘staff-student partnership’ at the data collection stage but as discussed in chapter 7, my stratified sample of participants were staff and students currently engaging in staff student partnerships and who were experiencing the benefits. However, in the dissemination phase, some staff in particular seemed to have difficulty with the concept of partnership and questioned whether students ever can be true partners. This would seem to be a shared challenge across the sector and in a recent article in *The Times Higher* (Havergal, 2015), ‘Should students be partners in curriculum design’, Alison Cook-Sather responds, ‘It is not calling their [staff] authority or expertise into question, it is about [offering] a different angle on what’s happening in the classroom’. In the same article, Mick Healey, co-author of the HEA report on students as partners, stated that it takes time to change the traditional hierarchical relationship between students and academics, ‘we are pretty good at listening to students in terms of moans, groans and satisfaction, we are not as good at going to the next stage, where partnership comes in, where we have students sitting at the table with us and making decisions’.

Bovill et al. (2015) also articulates in a recent article addressing resistance in staff-student partnerships that cultivating a partnership ethos among staff and students, and across an entire unit or university remains a big challenge.

Whilst, Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten (2014) suggest that challenges may be overcome by considering principles of partnership such as: starting small; making collaboration meaningful; and ensuring that practices such as co-creation are voluntary.

However, students as partners in curriculum design is only one way of adopting a partnership approach and for some staff this may not be something that they feel comfortable with. I would advocate starting small, as also suggested by the HEA (2015), and thinking about how to engage students through partnership initially in learning, teaching and assessment before engaging them in curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy and research and so on (see Chapter 8). This would build on the outcomes of this research which suggests that staff and students should be allowed to develop new ways of thinking and new skills through partnership before perhaps taking on more demanding roles.

7.4.1 Implications of challenges

The challenges indicated in this study and those experienced in other staff student partnerships require careful consideration particularly when further implementation of this study will be targeted at areas where there may be resistance to a staff student partnership culture. Specific factors to address include:

- The location of partnership – if it is perceived as outside of normal class time, staff and students may feel that there is no time for it.
- Resistance exists and this could be based on cultural, social, or disciplinary characteristics of staff and students. It is important not to push a ‘one size fits all’ approach to partnership and each area need to develop what works in their context. This is supported by findings alike of studies in the public sector (Cook, 2015) and in the HE sector (Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 2014).
- Capacity building for staff and students (in relation to personal development, as discussed) – partnership working for some is a shift in mind-set and can challenge the status quo. Both need time to develop as individuals in order to embrace a different modus operandi.

- Sustainability of activities – if time is invested in establishing partnership activities and the players either move on or graduate or all the stakeholders didn't buy-in in the first place then it is difficult to keep the momentum going.
- The construct of 'students as partners' can be a threshold concept in itself and may need to be couched in more meaningful terms such as 'engagement through partnership'.

7.5 Valuable learning points and new understandings

The themes discussed in this chapter of 'personal development' and 'enhancement of the learning climate', along with partnership challenges and how they relate to recent literature and the Ulster context provides a new lens through which to think about SE. The learning from staff student partnerships in the context of this study can be summarised as follows:

- The importance of emotion as an integral part of student engagement;
- The potential of staff student partnerships based on trust relationships to promote transformative learning;
- Staff and student capacity to engage needs developing so that learning and teaching can be based on shared responsibilities appropriate for the disciplinary context;
- Students can be very influential over other students, therefore it is important to view learning as socially constructed and promote communities of practice whereby students can experience a sense of belonging to enable engagement;
- Relational-based partnerships can promote more active learning as the barriers between stakeholders are broken down. This in turn can shift the emphasis from being content-focussed to more about the students' sense of being and becoming;
- Staff student partnerships can require a significant change in thinking about HE and for some may be a threshold concept. Disciplinary and other contextual differences mean that 'no one size fits all'.

Whilst these findings resonate with the recent SE framework developed by Pittaway, (2012) (See Figure 4, Chapter 2) particularly in relation to the roles

of both staff and students and the development of respectful and supportive relationships which is paramount for learning. This research brings new understanding to stakeholders at Ulster in relation to how this can help us think more holistically about SE. In particular, it highlights for us the importance of maintaining a focus on all three dimensions of engagement: emotional, behavioural and cognitive and the importance of remaining vigilant to the feelings of both students and staff which can act as a catalyst to change thinking and behaviours. Kahu's (2013) framework described in Chapter 2 outlines the university's structural influences of SE as: culture, policies, curriculum, assessment and discipline along with students' structural influences as: background, support, family and lifeload. In addition, she describes the psychosocial influences for university as: teaching, staff, support, and workload whereas the students' psychosocial influences are: motivation, skills, identify and self-efficacy. Kahu (2013) also points out that engagement is not an outcome of any one of these but the complex interplay between them. As evidenced in this research study, the personal development of both staff and students is a welcome outcome of partnership working and one which has the potential to enhance skills, motivation and self-efficacy in order to optimise transformational learning. Wimpenny and Savin-Baden (2013) highlight that student persistence and resilience perhaps is overlooked in relation to SE. It is argued here that paying attention to the emotional dimension of SE which is integral to a relational-based partnership approach can provide students with an insight into the working of HE which in turn can demystify some of the perceived barriers and help students to become resilient.

I also agree (based on the research from this study and the WWSRS change programme) with Tomlinson's (2014) recommendations made in his study, which shows that fee increases are having an important impact on students' approaches to higher education. Recommendation 6 strongly advocates a partnership approach which aligns with thinking about SE as focusing on being and becoming a student and a sense of transformation (Hardy and Bryson, 2009; Solomonides, 2013):

...There is a strong case for reframing student learning and experience in terms of a partnership and co-production as these alternative approaches depict more active processes that

foreground wider intrinsic values and benefits of HE and the role of the students as developing a sense of personhood through their time at university.

(Tomlinson, 2014, p44)

7.6 Organisational change

I believe that the themes identified in this research study indicate the potential of staff student partnership to enhance and develop what influences SE at Ulster. The University is experiencing rapid change not least with a new Vice Chancellor and a practically new senior management team. This is in addition to an ambitious capital build (£250 million), which will result in a new city centre flagship campus in Belfast due to open in 2019 alongside the remodelling of learning spaces at the other campuses. It is posited (Ulster, 2016) that the learning landscape at each campus will be student-centred with an emphasis on learning hubs and social learning spaces; this is couched in medium and long-term objectives relating to academic excellence. However, it is critical that the physical environment and technological advances going forward do not determine the rationale for learning and teaching approaches, rather the emphasis should be on the interactions and relational-based partnerships between staff and student and student peers. In relation to the new senior management team, further changes are unfolding which are affecting faculty and professional services structures. The full detail of this will be known in 2017/18. In relation to the context of this study, the PVC Learning, Teaching and Student Experience (sponsor of this project) has stepped down and the new PVC for Education, an external appointment, took up post in November 2016. Whilst Ulster is going through a period of transformation, it is also a time of opportunity and it is intended that the research outputs from this study including the Guide, case studies and Ulster Student Learning Experience Principles (discussed further in Chapter 8) form part of the pedagogical evidence-base on which future decisions to enhance SE are based.

As articulated earlier, the challenge going forward is how staff student partnership is not just for a few super engaged students but for all students. The ethos of staff student partnership rather than the project of staff student partnership needs to be pursued institution-wide so that all staff and students

approach their practice akin to Pittaway's principles above. I also feel that as an institution we need to challenge our pre-existing notion of what is meant by partnership and think about it in relation to what Healey, Flint and Harrington (2014, p12) state that:

Partnership is understood as fundamentally about a relationship in which all involved – students, academics, professional services staff, senior managers, students' unions, and so on – are actively engaged in and stand to gain from the process of learning and working together. Partnership is essentially a process of engagement, not a product. It is a way of doing things, rather than an outcome in itself.

Chapter 8 builds on the discussions in this chapter and shows how these valuable learning points shaped my conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter 8 Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

The study set out to explore the lived experiences of Ulster staff and students working together in partnership in the national What Works? Student Retention & Success (WWSRS) Change Programme, phase 2 (2012-2015) of which I was Project Lead. The overall aim of the project was to develop a framework for effective staff student partnerships in a higher education institution that can inform staff and student relationships and engender a shared responsibility in HE (see Chapter 3). The research has identified the benefits and challenges of staff student partnership and in doing so has revealed a consensus between staff and students on how their involvement in partnership working had impacted on them positively as individuals. However, challenges to this type of working do exist for all players. The main findings have been discussed in Chapter 7 which see the benefits under two main themes: personal development and enhancement of the learning climate, and the challenges have been identified as: time, resistance, and capacity. The study also developed guidelines for staff and students to support the establishment and sustainability of student-staff partnerships as a catalyst for transformational change and given the current institutional structural and strategic changes being implemented (Ulster, 2016) and discussed in Chapter 7, the outcomes from this study are timely. This has in effect achieved objective 1 and 2 of the research study. Objective 3 is discussed below in relation to dissemination. To recap, the objectives of this project are to:

1. Identify the enablers and barriers to developing effective partnership working between students and staff in pursuit of enhanced learning and teaching practice;
2. Identify critical success factors and guiding principles for staff and students to support the establishment and sustainability of student-staff partnership;
3. Disseminate the beneficial outcomes for students, staff and the institution in terms of student-staff partnerships as a catalyst for transformational change.

The general theoretical literature on this subject is fairly recent specifically in the context of 'students as partners' but the idea of staff and students working together is of course, not new. This is discussed in Chapter 2 along with drivers for a 'students as partners' approach and the increasing positing that this approach can challenge a students as consumer attitude that positions the student as a passive learner. In recent years, awareness of the benefits of student-staff partnerships across the UK and beyond has increased with many institutions adopting and evaluating different types of partnership including those based on activities located in the areas of: learning, teaching and assessment; curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy; subject-based research and inquiry; and scholarship of teaching and learning. However, there can still be reluctance or a capacity deficit on the part of both staff and students on adopting a partnership approach and this became particularly apparent at the dissemination phase in relation to objective 3 but as Healey, Flint and Harrington highlight:

it is also true that where resistance is most pronounced, the potential for powerful and transformative learning and change is greatest.

(2014, p21)

This study provides the basis for demonstrating how staff-student partnership as an ethos creates a more favourable learning environment in which individual learning is optimised by developing student capacity to engage and staff capacity to be engaging. Through analysis of the lived experience description provided by participants in partnership activities, it is evident that for both staff and students involved it can challenge existing beliefs on HE and prompt both to adapt their practice to embrace new understandings of the other's perspective. The learning from the study is summarised in Chapter 7 (section 7.5) and this has been translated into the research outputs to influence the wider academic staff and students at Ulster.

The outputs included in this research study form the basis of the overall framework for effective staff student partnerships and have been developed in response to the question of how staff student partnership can enhance and promote meaningful SE. The dissemination phase is discussed and this includes on-going work in Ulster involving both staff and students in addition

to dissemination external to my home institution. The challenges with partnership working and the dissemination of the research findings in an effort to promote further implementation of the ethos of staff-student partnership at an individual, course team, school and institutional level at Ulster are also considered. The recommendations included in this chapter inform how we have begun to attend to this, and are based on what emerged from this study and the wider WWSRS change programme. They are also based on my reflections throughout the project activities as I reflected on my own personal experience.

8.2 Implementation, dissemination and progress to date

Through implementation, dissemination and publications, I have sought to provide guidelines for staff and students on partnership working with suggestions on how practice may be enhanced to improve SE; thereby encouraging a mind-set change which may be prevalent based on assumptions of what the HE environment is about (Healey, Flint and Harrington, 2014; Jones, 2012; Thomas, 2012). My initial advice to ‘start small’ is being well received in this regard and seems to address some of the resistance that staff have around staff-student partnership. Implementation and dissemination is to both staff and students and is discussed under each heading below. The research outputs form the overall framework and complement each other by facilitating a way of telling the story of ‘staff-student partnerships’ whilst providing guidance underpinned by the case studies and journal article.

8.2.1 Dissemination to Ulster staff

What Works? case study

As part of the overall WWSRS change programme, Ulster along with the other 12 institutions involved were committed to developing outputs in the form of an institutional final report submitted in June 2016 and a minimum of four case studies of effective practice. All of the final reports will be merged and edited for publication by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation (What works funders) to form the overall What Works? Phase II final report due to be published in 2017. It has also been confirmed that the case studies will be collated and published on-line as a searchable resource for the sector.

At Ulster, with seven discipline teams involved, 10 case studies of effective practice have been submitted. This research study provided a useful and additional strand to the WWSRS research, relating to the lived experience of staff and students involved in the overall programme, I authored and submitted a case study (3,000 words) entitled, '*Building Capacity for Student Engagement through a Staff-Student Partnership Approach*' (Curran, 2015) This was submitted in November 2015 and peer-reviewed by the HEA and Action on Access (co-ordinators of the What Works? Programme). The case study is already published on Ulster's Centre for Higher Education Research and Practice website and provides Ulster staff with an insight in how partnership working can be initiated and sustained to enhance SE.

Case examples of effective practice in student-staff partnerships

The discipline teams involved in the overall WWSRS change programme have authored case studies of effective practice in relation to the overall objective of the project i.e. to improve student retention and success. Each case study provides evidence of the critical nature of staff-student partnerships in improving student belonging, self-confidence and engagement. The evidence across the disciplines points to three areas where staff and student should focus in order to improve student retention & success. These are:

- Engagement through partnership
- Relationship building
- Individual feedback and growing of community

I led the discipline leads in the development of the case studies, which began with a two-day residential writing retreat in September 2015 and culminated with internal submission in early November 2015. I peer-reviewed each case study and provided feedback to enable revisions and submission to the HEA by 30 November 2015. Similar to my individual case study above, these case studies are already published on Ulster's Centre for Higher Education Research and Practice (CHERP, 2016) website, and will be available sector-wide when the What works final report is published by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation in 2017. The case studies include the following:

Case Study	Author
Addressing student expectations and building confidence for the study of law through a pre-arrival activity	Discipline Lead Law
Building the environment: Academic Mentors and enhanced communication supporting transition and building belonging	Discipline Lead Built Environment
Improving first year student confidence, team working and success through active and collaborative learning strategies both inside and outside the classroom	Discipline Lead Creative Technologies
Strengthening collaborative partnerships between staff and students through the establishment of a student society	Discipline Lead Accounting
Enhancing induction to promote belonging and professional identity of mental health nursing students	Discipline Lead Nursing (Mental Health)
Cloth, colour and communities of practice: embedding co-curricular learning in Textile Art, Design and Fashion	Discipline Leads Textile Art, Design & Fashion
SPICE: Student Partners In Curriculum Enhancement	Discipline Lead Computing
Peer Relations: a supportive 'route' to student success	Core Team
The importance of team work to benefit the student experience: changing the culture of a course team	Core Team

Staff and Student Guide to Engagement through Partnership

The Guide is aimed at all Ulster staff and students and articulates the benefits of adopting a staff-student partnership philosophy to SE. It is intended to inspire and enhance practice through practical recommendations for staff and students. The development of the Guide was made possible by staff and student feedback from the focus groups and this is discussed in Chapter 6. The first version of the Guide (Appendix 1) was developed following data analysis carried out on the interviews with staff and students and is discussed in chapter 5. The final version (Appendix 2) is a result of an iterative process whereby feedback from the five focus groups (representing a cross-section of institutional stakeholders: staff and students at Ulster) was used to enhance the format and content. The Guide consists of:

- Context setting in the pedagogical literature;
- Impact of staff-student partnership on engagement (drawing directly from my primary research);
- Recommendations for both staff and students (drawing on the wider What works evaluation and case studies);
- Challenges;
- Acknowledgements;
- References and further reading.

Although primarily targeted at Ulster staff, I received an invitation from Colleges Northern Ireland: the membership body for Northern Ireland's six Colleges of Further and Higher Education, to present at their FE conference, in January 2016. This was attended by staff from across the different colleges who teach HE in FE. The Guide formed the basis for discussion at workshop sessions, in which I facilitated, and staff felt it was particularly useful in explaining the concept of partnership and the recommendations for practice.

The results of this research study and accompanying Guide was also presented at an L&T conference held at the University of Glasgow in April 2016 attended by approximately 300 delegates from across the HE sector. My session (see Curran, 2016a) had over 70 participants and I received very positive feedback on the usefulness of this research study and the practical recommendations included. I received follow-up emails from the organisers and a number of delegates. The keynote was particularly interested in this research study and suggested some possible future collaborations.

Contribution to Ulster Student Learning Principles (Principle 1 – Ulster Learning Model)

The University (via a working group, commissioned by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Learning, Teaching and Student Experience, comprising a wide range of staff and the SU) is currently developing Student Learning Experience Principles aimed at staff and it is planned that these will be implemented from Spring 2017. The research from this study has been used to inform this initiative. The six Principles: the Ulster learning model;

employability; internationalization; digital fluency; the research teaching nexus; and ethics and sustainability have been identified to:

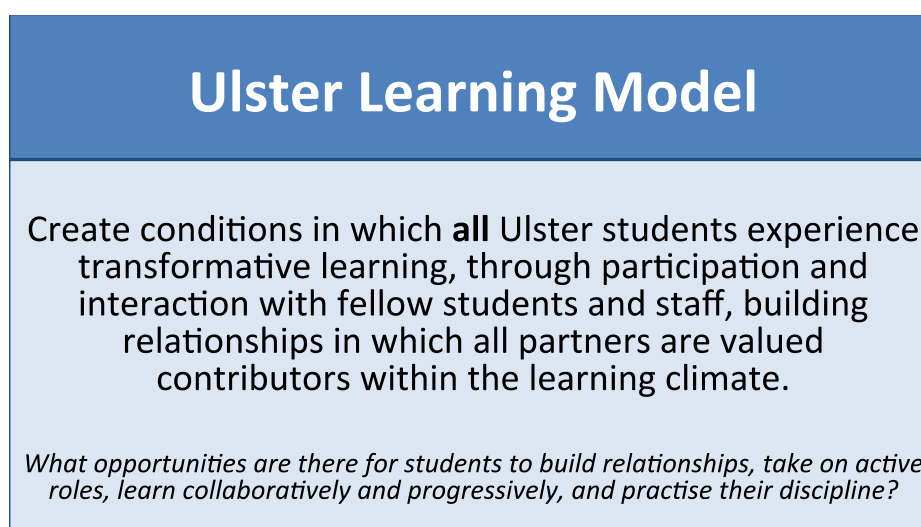
- Define what we mean by the student learning experience at Ulster and to provide a shared understanding across disciplines;
- Bring together a range of current Learning and Teaching strategies;
- Realise the University's graduate qualities in all students.

Whilst it is recognised that these are not new, it is hoped that in implementation they can provide a useful impetus for discussion amongst course teams. The Principles can be applied in any discipline, at any stage of the student journey and define a common learning experience which will be brought to life in different ways across different disciplines. As a member of two working groups involved in, firstly, the development of the Principles, and secondly, the implementation group, I have been able to contribute directly to the development of Principle 1, the Ulster Learning Model. Drawing on my findings, discussion and experiences working with staff and students (see Chapters 5,6 and 7) and using the wider literature base, I led the development of Principle 1. The Ulster Learning Model is based on a student-centric approach, which recognises that learning is a joint activity and that students should have opportunities to engage as partners in communities of practice. It builds on the discussion in Chapter 7 and encompasses the following:

- Ulster students will be at the heart of the learning experience;
- Ulster students will engage in a collaborative, learner-centred, active and participative learning environment;
- Learner-centred teaching will promote inquiry-based learning methods to facilitate exploration, innovation, critical-thinking, leadership and problem-solving;
- Learning will be facilitated through critical reflection of transformative learning experiences individually and in teams;
- Ulster students and staff will be engaged in a learning community, which facilitates the transition through programmes of study and onto employment.

Resources are being developed in the form of Viewpoints resources (Masson, 2012), which are tools to aid curriculum development (Viewpoints was an Ulster University project funded by Jisc and ran from 2008-2012). Each Principle has a resource attached, which is being made available to staff to help them unpack what each Principle means – see figure 6: Ulster Student Learning Experience Principle 1: Ulster Learning Model:

Figure 6: Student Learning Experience Principle 1: Ulster Learning Model (Front of Card)



The front of the ‘Viewpoints’ card includes a statement, which aims to encapsulate the ‘student as partner’ ethos and using the evidence-base from this study, encourages staff to think about creating conditions within the learning climate, which engage students through partnership. The question at the bottom of the card encourages staff to reflect on existing opportunities in their curriculum for students to engage in this way. The reverse of the card, see figure 6: then offers some further prompts for staff which are based on the ‘Staff and student Guide to Engagement through Partnership’, as discussed above and in Chapter 6.

Figure 7: Student Learning Experience Principle 1: Ulster Learning Model (Reverse of Card)

Key considerations

- Create a welcoming environment so that incoming students can easily make friends, find their way around, and get ready to learn in a different way;
- Foster student belonging through supportive peer relationships and meaningful interaction between staff and students;
- Structure learning sessions so that students obtain a deep understanding of the material through actively doing rather than passively receiving;
- Create opportunities for small group activities especially within large classes, encouraging mutual and constructive discussion between students and staff;
- Stimulate ongoing critical dialogues and collaborative exchanges between students, strengthening important life skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving and teamwork;
- Place students in different roles (e.g. as mentors, coaches or assessors), which cast students as active participants in partnership approaches;
- Design authentic assessment tasks which relate to professional practice and provide formative feedback;
- Provide clarity and direction to students regarding what is expected in terms of independent learning;
- Provide opportunities for students to engage in activities beyond the classroom (e.g. field trips, subject-based societies);
- Liaise with students regularly throughout their study, offering them informal and formal advice and support.

Informed by research undertaken as part of Ulster's What works? Student Retention & Success Change Programme (2012-2015), the HEA Framework for Student Engagement Through Partnership (2014) and the NUS Comprehensive Guide to Learning & Teaching (2015)

From 2016/17, the cards illustrated above will be implemented and disseminated to all staff via the CHERP (2016) website. Staff will particularly be required to engage with them, to inform curriculum design and delivery planning during revalidation workshops and when undertaking the PgCHEP.

To date, Principle 1 of the Ulster Student Learning Experience Principals, the Student and Staff Guide to Engagement through Partnership and the case studies has been included in:

- The course content of the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Practice (PgCHEP), specifically the 'Learning & Teaching @ Ulster' level 7 module. Approximately 80 participants including new staff and PhD students who teach are currently taking this module.
- The Centre for Higher Education Research and Practice (CHERP) annual Conference on 21 January 2016. Approximately 25 members of staff attended this paper in one of the parallel sessions.
- Presentations to the six faculty boards in semester 2, 2015/16 to raise awareness and prompt staff engagement with the research outcomes.
- The annual revalidation briefing/workshop, February 2016 attended by staff from across the disciplines preparing for revalidation in 2016/17.

8.2.2 Dissemination to Ulster students and SU

As discussed in Chapter 6 in relation to the focus group outcomes, the University is involved in an initiative: 'Making University Work For You' which

is an online programme aimed at incoming first years. It is based on Epigeum content and contains various text and video pods. I have submitted the 'Staff and student Guide to Engagement through Partnership' to the group and have had confirmation from the Chair that the recommendations for students contained therein will be used to populate two of the context pods:

- Adapting to higher education - Short description of expectations of what Ulster will provide and be responsible for, and the expectations on students.
- Starting your studies - Short description about the different ways to learn at Ulster and how this might differ from their previous experience.

A pilot of this online programme has taken place in Summer 2016 and the feedback from this will be used to enhance the overall programme for roll-out to incoming students in September 2017.

I was also invited by the University and SU forum to present a paper at their meeting in April, 2016 in relation to how this research study may inform the development of a University Partnership Agreement, which will effectively replace the existing Student Charter. The paper was well received and it invoked a lot of discussion around a holistic approach to SE and the multifaceted nature of it. The SU are now tasked with developing a draft partnership agreement and I am in on-going discussions with them to progress this.

8.2.3 Dissemination external to Ulster

I also seek to disseminate the research outputs at relevant conferences and in print and online journals. Detailed below are some examples of this:

Conferences:

- University of Glasgow annual learning and teaching conference, Paper, 12 April 2016 (see Curran, 2016a);
- International conference on professional doctorates, Belfast, 15-16 March 2016 (see Curran, 2016b);

- College-based Higher Education Conference, Northern Ireland, Workshop, 22 January 2016 'Students as Partners in HE'.
- RAISE conference, Manchester, 11 September 2014, Joint paper with staff and students, '*A partnership approach in and between disciplines to improve student engagement, belonging and retention*'.
- ICED Conference, Sweden - Educational Development in a Changing World, Paper, 16-18 June 2014, '*Students as Partners: an exploration of process to effect transformational change*'.

Journal Articles

- International Journal for Academic Development (IJAD)

I took the opportunity to co-author a paper (6,000 words) for an IJAD special issue, 'Engaging students as partners in learning and teaching: Implications for academic development' which was published in December 2015. IJAD is the journal of the International Consortium for Educational Development (ICED). It enables academic staff and educational developers around the world to debate and extend the theory and practice of academic development, in support of the quality of higher education. IJAD's editorial team is deliberately representative of different regions of the world. Our paper (Curran and Millard, 2015) entitled, '*A partnership approach to developing student capacity to engage and staff capacity to be engaging: opportunities for academic developers*' was submitted in November 2014 and underwent a rigorous peer-review process. It was accepted in July 2015 and published by Taylor and Francis online in December 2015. The paper demonstrates, through two UK-based institutional case studies (Ulster University and Birmingham City University), that a partnership approach provides an opportunity for staff and students – where each appreciate the others' perspective and the barriers to learning are reduced. The message to the academic development community is that in order to initiate and sustain staff student partnerships, five learning points should be considered which include: building a strong links between the SU and the institution; embed partnership working in policy and strategy documents; explore opportunities to engage students in pedagogic projects; disseminate effective partnership approaches; and recognize and reward partnership work. Our paper also acknowledges that sustainability is key and institutional adoption within key

strategies, influenced by the weight of coherent evidence from staff and student bodies (in studies such as this) drawn from activities that enhance both the student and staff experience, is crucial if the 'students as partners' approach is to successfully and productively thrive in any university. To date (December, 2016) the article has received over 300 views.

- International Journal for Students as Partners (IJSaP)

I have received an invitation from the editor of the above new international journal to submit a paper for its inaugural edition, due to be published in 2017.

8.3 Recommendations

In promoting a staff student partnership ethos, I believe that the recent HEA framework is particularly useful in situating partnership working, see figure 1, Chapter 2. I see the benefits of partnerships as articulated by this research study to be mainly located in the learning, teaching and assessment and curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy areas of focus and the research output 'Staff and student Guide to Engagement through Partnership' that I have developed recommends starting small and that staff and students engage through partnership through students being welcomed into a discipline community and cast as active participants in their learning as discussed in Chapter 7. This provides the opportunity for staff and students to develop personally and to build capacity for active learning where student and staff interaction builds trust relationships which enhances SE. This also creates a level playing field for all students, in that it creates opportunities not just for a few super-engaged students, such as those who might naturally put themselves forward e.g. student representatives, it offers each student an opportunity to engage in a community of practice which is predicated on a partnership ethos. This may then provide a basis for engaging students as partners in the other three areas of focus of the HEA framework. Bovill et al. (2015) state that they 'have found that breaking down traditional teacher–student boundaries, while simultaneously recognising and maintaining the professional standing of academic staff, opens possibilities for redefining and broadening understandings of academic expertise in the rapidly changing world of teaching and learning' (p12).

The overall aim of this research study was to develop a framework for effective staff student partnerships in a higher education institution that can inform staff and student relationships and engender a shared responsibility in HE. I believe that the framework in the form of the research outputs and the ongoing implementation and dissemination is, and may slowly, break down the 'them and us' attitude that still prevails in some areas. Across the disciplines involved in the WWSRS change programme, it has been shown that interventions that foster early belonging and build student confidence through staff-student relationships allow our students to adapt to an unfamiliar educational environment. This is critical to addressing retention and it provides a platform on which meaningful SE and success can be realised.

Partnership should be an ethos or a process of engagement; it works best when it becomes a mind-set not just at individual level but at module, course, discipline and institutional level. I believe that partnership working between staff and students in HE should be conceptualised as partnership with a small 'p' rather than conceptualising it as a 'project' or with a capital 'P'. In my role as academic developer, working with staff and students grappling with this concept, time needs to be taken to allow both to consider what it means to them individually and collectively. My own thinking about staff-student partnership has changed considerably over the life of this research study, whilst I had always believed that it was a 'good' thing, I now appreciate further the emotional side of SE and how powerful relationship-building between staff and students is to promote belongingness, build confidence and optimise learning. This is, I believe, a precursor to SE. This research study on the 'lived experience' of staff and students involved in partnership working at Ulster, as part of the WWSRS change programme has enabled me to build an evidence-base to convince others to adopt a staff-student partnership approach.

8.4 Next steps

I have considered the benefits and implications of staff student partnership as articulated through the two themes in this study as: personal development,

and enhancement of the learning climate; along with the challenges associated with partnership working. I have also reflected on the outcomes of the focus groups undertaken with key stakeholder groups in the University and in taking this study forward I have identified and begun implementing the next steps to support the strategic development at Ulster as:

- Use the Guide to inform content of initial and continuing professional development programmes: PgCHEP, revalidation workshops, and course director induction;
- Work closely with the SU in relation to the development of a Partnership Agreement – this has the potential of sending out a very positive message about the University's and SU's commitment to an institution-wide culture of partnership;
- Work with the 'Making University Work For You Project' to see how the Guide can inform a short video which is targeted at prospective students;
- Liaise with Heads of School and Faculty Learning and Teaching Coordinators to explore how the Guide can be used to inform the adoption of a partnership ethos in different disciplinary contexts;
- Continue working with the Chair of the group leading on the development of the new Ulster Student Learning Experience Principles in relation to how the Guide can be used to underpin their implementation;
- Work closely with the Director of CHERP in relation to how this study and its outputs can inform the Learning Landscape projects as the University seeks to develop staff and student capacity to work in new active learning spaces;
- Work with the SU in relation to the development of processes where students and/or professional bodies along with staff can work collaboratively on developing curricula;
- Continue to be cognisant of the challenges of partnership working and work in local contexts to develop discipline appropriate ways of staff and students working together;
- Above all, continue to advocate, starting small and locating partnership in the learning, teaching and assessment area of focus

(see Figure 1) so that *all* students have the opportunity to experience an optimal learning experience.

8.5 New research question

A question for me at this stage is in relation to all students. Throughout this study I worked with staff and student partners involved in the WWSRS and the impact on them individually has been discussed. It has been clear that for students, working in partnership promotes personal development and enhances their learning. For that reason, the research outputs are focused on 'Engagement through Partnership' so that *all* students can benefit and achieve their potential. However, if 'SE is complex, dynamic, not amenable to measurement and impossible to fully capture or predict in any overarching single model' (Bryson, 2014b, p231), then we need to creatively develop new processes that allow the student and staff voice to be heard in relation to the impact of the multifaceted recommendations above. Therefore, I wish to remain vigilant on how SE is measured particularly in the context of the TEF, and through collaboration with colleagues across the sector, seek out ways to use qualitative data alongside quantitative metrics so that the three dimensions of SE are considered synergistically.

Chapter 9 Reflection

9.1 Starting out

Bassot (2013) suggests that beginning something new in our lives is almost always challenging and that it can be helpful to understand the different stages of transition to perhaps explain, and learn from, our thoughts and feelings as we experience change. Adams, Hayes and Hopson (1976) describe seven stages of transition as: immobilization; reaction of elation or despair; self-doubt or minimization; acceptance and letting go; testing; search for meaning; and integration. I began this professional doctorate in 2012 and on reflection, four and a half years later; several of these stages stand out in my memory. These are not limited to the initial period of transition – in becoming a doctoral student; rather they are more representative of feelings and thoughts that occurred over the entire period. Before exploring these in the section below – I wish to provide some background contextual information to explain my motivations to complete this work-based project. I am a mature, part-time student and employed full-time as an academic developer at Ulster University. My professional identity as discussed in Chapter 1 provides a reflection on my career transitions from working in the private sector, to becoming a lecturer in FE and subsequently an academic developer in HE. This was a useful process and enabled me to think more deeply about the history, environment and culture of the workplace, as well as my influence as an individual (Costley, Elliott and Gibbs 2010). The whole idea of *agency* was relatively new to me but extremely helpful in thinking about the impact that I had, potentially had, and am having as a work-based researcher. Acknowledging external and internal factors to the University and being able to recognize and appreciate my own place and position within that allowed me to put forward a research proposal with which I was confident, as an insider-researcher, would make a valuable contribution to the literature on ‘students as partners’. Before embarking on this work-based research, I was a consumer of research – using the literature to underpin my teaching in order to influence others. Four and a half years on, using a reflexive approach, I acknowledge the influence that I have as a researcher on the workplace. This didn’t happen altogether smoothly and there have been a few bumps on the road, although my strong work ethic and

pragmatism has undoubtedly helped to sustain the project and bring it to conclusion.

9.2 Self-doubt and threshold concepts

According to Adams, Hayes and Hopson (1976), self-doubt can replace feelings of elation as the transition becomes more real and this is precisely what I experienced at certain stages of the research process. Questions arose such as 'is this good enough?' and 'can I do this?' Looking back, I recognize that self-doubt crept in when I experienced a threshold concept (Meyer and Land, 2003). For example, as I endeavoured to develop my methodology, I at times felt overwhelmed by the 'need to get this right' and the importance of a robust methodological framework and I struggled to confidently use and understand terms such as 'ontology' and 'epistemology'. I read and re-read multiple texts and learned that I needed to be patient with myself – that I couldn't rush this. Realising this in itself was a sort of turning point or 'eureka' moment and something that I carried with me throughout the project. Being patient did pay off and it allowed me to 'enjoy' the reading time and not to berate myself for 'not writing'. In the case of the example above regarding methodology, it allowed me to use the literature (for example: Creswell, 2003; Punch, 2005; Smith, 1998) to confidently articulate my choice of constructivism ontology leading to the selection of interpretivism epistemology, using an inductive approach with the application of qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. Another threshold concept was met at the data analysis stage but this time I feel I handled this 'messy stage' better and building on my learning to date, I was able to turn self-doubt to minimisation (Adams, Hayes and Hopson, 1976) with thoughts turning to, 'maybe I can do this after all'.

9.3 Implementing the research study

Carrying out a professional doctorate has allowed me to integrate professional and academic knowledge and to generate an evidence-base on which I can use to influence and shape the practice of others in relation to SE. The phenomenological study has potential to make a significant contribution to the existing literature and debate on students as partners. It raises awareness and highlights the importance of maintaining a focus on all

three dimensions of SE, which includes the emotional dimension alongside the cognitive and behavioural dimensions. Whilst the study employed relatively conventional methods (survey, interviews and focus groups) to gain insight and understanding of the lived experiences of the participants, this may be useful in persuading others to effect change which may challenge long-time held views on HE. Students as partners, for some (both staff and students), represents a significant shift both in mind-set and practice and it is necessary to continue the discussion using robust research which can enhance and improve our understandings of its operation, merits and challenges. This study, which contributes to that sector debate, also has its limitations and these relate to the context for the research and include factors such as: scale and homogeneity of participants. In addition as an insider-researcher, I had to constantly be aware of the potential of bias and strived throughout the process to be reflexive and to maintain curiosity for the topic.

9.4 Feedback

Feedback played a vital role throughout the process and this came in two formats: written feedback on draft chapters, and oral feedback during supervision meetings (either by Skype or face-to-face). Initially, I didn't find receiving feedback easy. Perhaps I was scared of 'being found out' or as described by Clance and Imes (1978), I was experiencing 'imposter syndrome' and that really I wasn't worthy or capable of carrying out doctoral research. However, the pragmatic me prevailed and I recognised that in order to move forward I needed to actively seek and make good use of feedback, otherwise I could be in danger of deceiving myself that all was well (Eraut, 1994). Over the period, I received feedback on eight draft chapters and it wasn't until near the end, when I was putting all the chapters together, that I totally appreciated all of the comments and feedback provided. Somehow, putting it all together allowed me to stand back a little and to try and envisage the reader of my work. Addressing all of the comments challenged me but also helped me open up to new interpretations and drawing conclusions. This was a period of intense reflection and involved the four stages of Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle: doing, reviewing/reflecting, concluding/learning, and planning/trying out (Kolb, 1984).

Another pivotal point in the process occurred when I submitted a joint paper to an academic journal for publication. The feedback received clearly stated that whilst the paper was relevant and had potential; it needed significant revisions. Here, I believe I experienced all seven stages of the transition process (Adams, Hayes and Hopson, 1976). Initially, I froze and had feelings of despair and self-doubt. I was faced with a choice – will I do what Jarvis (1994) describes as non-consideration and rejection and just not respond to this learning opportunity or do I positively engage and move forward. After a period of time, feelings of despair were replaced with feelings of acceptance and I began to work on the revisions. What helped greatly was the support and guidance I received from a trusted colleague – she was my critical friend and very experienced as an accomplished author and editor of an academic journal. The feedback and guided reflection through her insights was invaluable and really helped me to deal with the experience. It also made me realise that for professional growth and development, I need to be always open to feedback and perhaps be more willing to self-disclose (ask for help when it is needed). Relating this to the Johari Window model (Luft, 1984), I feel that being more open to feedback and receiving it developmentally, has allowed me to become more aware of those things that others know about me but that I do not know about myself. This period of reflection fostered a critical assessment of practice (Ostermann and Kottkamp, 2004) and I am pleased to report that the paper was successfully re-submitted and subsequently published (see Chapter 8). The learning for me, from this experience, is invaluable; I now appreciate better the role of feelings in professional practice and models such as Gibbs' (1998) Reflective Cycle is particularly useful to help understand more about how I process these as I move forward beyond being a doctoral student.

9.5 Transformation

Conducting this research study as part of the WWSRS change programme, involving seven discipline areas has allowed me to take my professional learning to a deeper level. It has allowed me to challenge my own assumptions and engage in critically reflective practice that has made me question my own personal values and beliefs in order to think about my default *modus operandi*, a concept espoused by Argyris and Schön (1974) as

double-loop learning. In my learning agreement completed in 2012-13, I identified that I have a strong student-centred focus, this stems from my own experiences as a student – the majority of my undergraduate and all of my postgraduate study was conducted as a part-time student whilst simultaneously working full-time and juggling family commitments. Being a student allows me to experience what it's like from a student perspective and allows me to empathise and recognise effective practice. Coupled with this were my views on what it means to be 'a professional'. Having worked in the corporate world in the eighties and nineties, my notions of being a professional were perhaps very 'black and white' and I compartmentalised my personal and professional life. I can probably relate some reason for this to Kahler's Transactional Analysis (TA) drivers: Be Perfect, Be Strong, Try Hard, Please People, and Hurry Up (Kahler, 1975). I recognise my own TA drivers as trying hard, pleasing people and hurry up. I grew up in a household with a strong work ethic and even when working part-time as a teenager, I was persistent and resilient and found it uncomfortable to receive praise. I also work well as part of a team but perhaps in the past this has meant that I was unassertive and I liked to get things done in a set amount of time. Being an insider-researcher and engaging in the process of carrying out the research and subsequent dissemination has allowed me to recognise that no individual can be completely neutral and that instead of drawing hard lines between what I think, who I am and what I do, I now try to embrace a reflexive approach which involves awareness of multiple influences and tacit knowledge which has helped me to write more convincingly and confidently than previously (Costley, Elliott and Gibbs, 2010, Ghaye, 2011). During a face-to-face supervision meeting in February 2016 I received feedback on this very issue and it was noted to me that although I write well, I perhaps wasn't using tacit knowledge as effectively as I might.

9.6 Going forward

I feel that engaging in this research project has enabled me to feel legitimacy as a researcher and as well as talking about research and working with colleagues who carry out research, I now have a sense of credibility regarding my own position. In addition, as an academic developer, enhances my position as a change agent in driving forward institutional change in

relation to influencing the practice of others to enhance SE. I also feel that given the changing context and shifting landscape of HE with the introduction of the TEF and with more pressure on institutions and staff to achieve accreditation through the UK Professional Standards Framework my role as an academic developer will change with a further move from formal training courses towards learning by doing, peer-to-peer support and self-reflection (Locke et al. 2016). I am grateful for the opportunity to have gained the skills, knowledge and experience that will be required and the capacity to continue as a reflexive practitioner to meet the challenges ahead.

In addition, I have gained confidence to embrace opportunities to widen my participation in communities of practice, to seek recognition and to take on new roles. Over the last three years, I have: achieved recognition as a Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (PFHEA), taken on the role of External Examiner for an M.Ed. in another institution, become an External Assessor for PFHEA on another institution's professional development scheme, become a SEDA (Staff and Educational Development Association) mentor and accreditor, and have mentored successfully several colleagues applying for SFHEA and PFHEA on our own internal university scheme.

Finally, I don't want the journey to end here; I have contributed to a national and international conversation on the subject of students as partners (Curran and Millard, 2015) and I am recognised as a subject leader in my own institution and regionally (see Chapter 8). In the final report, submitted June 2016, of the WWSRS change programme in which this research study was situated, I have made recommendations for policy changes at Ulster which uses this research to inform practice that will enhance the staff and student experience at Ulster. I also wish to explore opportunities for further collaborations and research with practitioners nationally and internationally.

Appendix 1: Staff and Student Guide to Engagement through Partnership (Version 1)

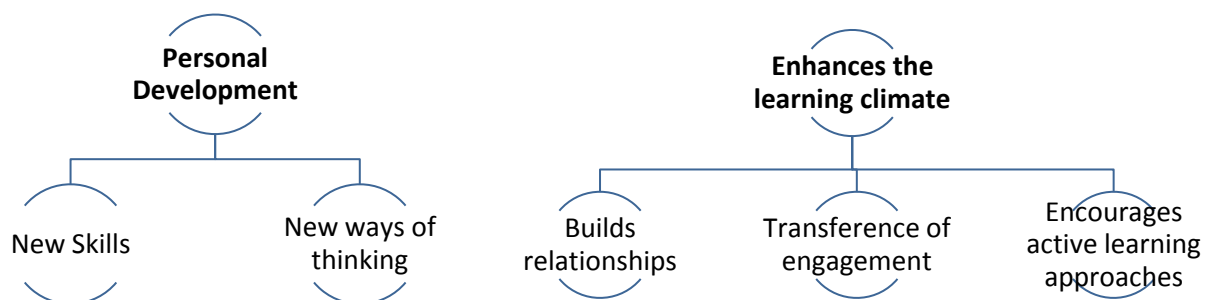
Students as Partners?

'Partnership is understood as fundamentally about a relationship in which all involved...– are actively engaged in and stand to gain from the process of learning and working together. Partnership is essentially a process of engagement, not a product. It is a way of doing things, rather than an outcome in itself' (Healey, Flint and Harrington, 2014, Engagement through partnership: students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education p.12).

'Students as partners is not just a nice-to-have, I believe it has the potential to help bring about social and educational transformation, as long as we know what we are trying to do and we maintain a critical attitude about the ways the concept is adopted and used'
(Rachel Wenstone, NUS, 2013, Manifesto for Partnerships, p.1).

What are the benefits of engaging in staff-student partnership?

For both students and staff, it can challenge traditional norms in HE and provide each with an insight into the other's perspective thereby motivating each to adopt new approaches to staff-student engagement. Benefits realised include:



How do I get started or build on what I'm already doing?

For staff, **critically reflect** on your approach to supporting and enhancing the student experience. What opportunities are there for students to; build relationships; take on active roles; exercise choice in tasks/assessments; learn collaboratively; practice their discipline; engage in research; work on curriculum enhancements and so on...

For students, **seek opportunities** to develop your skills, confidence and performance. This may mean that you have to step out of your comfort zone, and shift from a passive to an active role in your own studies.

See Recommendations overleaf...

What are the challenges?

In the complex world of HE with so many competing demands on our time, the following may need to be considered so that barriers to partnership working are diminished.

Time

Resistance

Capacity

Class size

Appendix 2: Staff and Student Guide to Engagement through Partnership (Updated Version April 2016)

Context

Decades of research show that effective student engagement promotes deep learning, focuses on what the student does and engages students in active learning (Biggs and Tang, 2011; Chickering and Gamson, 1987; Entwistle, 2009; Thomas, 2002). This focus on students acknowledges that learning is a joint activity, starts from the student's experience and changes the learner's perspective on knowledge (Mezirow, 1991; Prosser and Trigwell, 1999). Learning therefore is less about the absorption of knowledge and more about how we set the right conditions for conceptual change to take place. According to Biggs and Tang (2011) conditions for such a change include *inter alia*: student motivation and students working collaboratively with others, both peers and teachers.

The learning climate that promotes independent lifelong learners is one that is based on high trust and the extent to which we lean more towards this trusting climate translates into action at all levels of student-teacher interaction (McGregor, 1960; Gardner, 1993; Pintrich and Schunk, 2002; Biggs and Tang, 2011). More recently across the higher education sector, there has been a focus on the process or ethos of engagement, evidenced by publications such as the NUS Manifesto for Partnerships (2013) and the HEA Framework for engagement through partnership (2014). This HEA framework illustrates four overlapping areas of focus where partnerships may be fostered, and this guide relates to one of these areas: learning, teaching and assessment. International research shows that if we engage our students as partners in learning and teaching, and this partnership is based on respect, reciprocity and shared responsibility, then we can make learning and teaching more engaging and effective for students and staff (Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 2014).

Partnership is understood as fundamentally about a relationship in which all involved... – are actively engaged in and stand to gain from the process of learning and working together. Partnership is essentially a process of engagement, not a product. It is a way of doing things, rather than an outcome in itself

(Healey, Flint and Harrington, 2014, p.12).

At Ulster, Strategic Aim 2 of the Learning & Teaching Strategy (2013/14 – 2017/18) clearly articulates how we should realise our goal

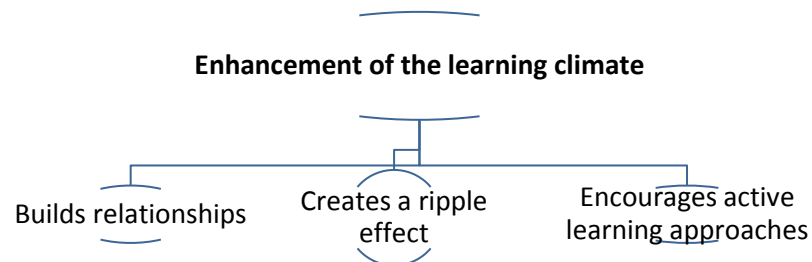
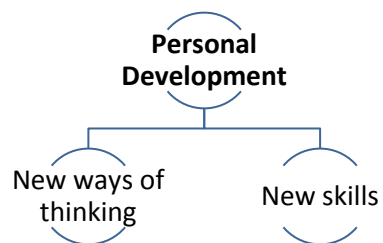
To provide transformative, high quality, learning experiences through the promotion of meaningful staff student partnerships that engender a shared responsibility.

Aim

This guide is aimed at all staff and students and articulates the benefits of adopting a philosophy of staff student partnership to student engagement. It is intended to inspire and enhance practice through practical recommendations for staff and students.

What is the impact of staff-student partnership (SSP) on engagement?

The benefits of SSP are very similar for both staff and students, and are outlined below under two main themes: personal development and enhancement of the learning climate. For both students and staff, it can challenge traditional norms in HE and provide each with an insight into the other's perspective, thereby motivating each to adopt new approaches to staff-student engagement.



Personal Development	
New ways of thinking	<p>SSP encourages dialogue and mutual respect. For students, it provides an insight into the complex world of HE and challenges them to question the adequacy of a passive role in their own learning.</p> <p>For staff, SSP provides an insight into what it's like to be a student in today's world, and challenges them to think about assumptions that they make about students and the effectiveness of their current practice.</p>
New Skills	<p>Students report that skills such as note-taking, being reflective, team working, writing and presenting have improved and with this brings increased confidence, motivation and readiness for different learning situations.</p> <p>Staff report that SSP prompted them to stand back, solicit ideas from the students and to take on the role of a facilitator. For some staff SSP mimics the discipline profession, which enhances students' readiness for employment.</p>
Enhancement of the learning climate	
Builds Relationships	<p>SSP breaks down barriers which can impede learning. For students, they get to know staff within and outside of the classroom which reduces student anxieties and prompts them to approach staff for support and guidance.</p> <p>For staff, SSP helps to see students as individuals with different goals and aspirations. Knowing their capabilities allows guidance and feedback to be better targeted. It also gives staff on-going feedback on their teaching practice.</p>
Creates a ripple effect	<p>SSP benefits staff and student directly involved in initiatives or projects. However, students report that when enthused student partners are more active in the classroom, it rubs off on the other students and promotes more collaborative learning for everyone.</p> <p>Staff report that when learners get to know staff and each other outside of the classroom through course-based opportunities such as pre-entry contact, induction activities and field trips, the ripple effect is felt back in the classroom through a sense of a cohesive team with everybody learning together.</p>
Encourages active learning	<p>SSP breaks down the 'them and us' situation and promotes active engagement. For students, they are more likely to ask questions and put forward ideas and suggestions which leads to taking responsibility for their own learning and a better understanding of staff expectations of independent learning.</p> <p>For staff, SSP has provided the impetus to take more risks in the classroom – in the sense of 'letting go' complete control. It has freed staff up to be innovative in their approaches to suit their contexts, which ultimately leads to a growing sense of a 'discipline community'.</p>

How do I get started or build on what I'm already doing?

For staff, **critically reflect** on your approach to supporting and enhancing the student experience. What opportunities are there for students to build relationships, take on active roles, exercise choice in tasks/assessments, learn collaboratively, practice their discipline, engage in research, work on curriculum enhancements and so on...

For students, **seek opportunities** to develop your skills, confidence and performance. This may mean that you have to step out of your comfort zone, and shift from a passive to an active role in your own studies.

Recommendations

Developing strong partnership learning communities which engage staff and students is key to embedding partnership as part of the culture and ethos of the institution (Healey et al, 2014). Here are some recommendations, to consider which can promote partnership.

Staff	Students
<p>Create a welcoming environment so that students coming to HE can easily make friends, find their way around and get ready to learn in a different way.</p> <p>What Works?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small group working to aid socialisation is critical at pre-entry and induction to promote belongingness. Information overload at this stage should not be the primary focus;• Introduce students to key staff that they will come into contact with that year so that relationships can be initiated;• Peer mentoring – students welcome the wisdom and support offered by higher-level students. Current students could be involved at open evenings, pre-arrival and induction activities;• Provide a tour of the campus, identifying key spaces such as classrooms, seminar rooms, library, Student Support and catering facilities.	<p>Be open and flexible and remember that everyone is feeling the same at the start. Get involved and participate in activities offered.</p> <p>What Works?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attend all course induction and Week 0 activities;• Join in group activities and get to know other students and staff;• Seek guidance and support from your Studies Adviser, Module Tutor or higher-level students who have already been through this;• Familiarise yourself with Student Support on your campus. Advice and guidance is available on health and wellbeing, disability and medical conditions and student finance.

Staff	Students
<p>Make all timetabled sessions interactive so that relationships are developed and learning is collaborative, interesting and worthwhile.</p> <p>What Works?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt a friendly approachable and facilitative style – this is hugely valued by students and has a considerable impact on engagement; • Small group activities especially in large classes can promote a shift from passive to active learning and enthuse students to become involved; • Consider how digitally based learning resources can facilitate pre-reading and revision of fundamental concepts thereby freeing up time in-class for discussion and clarification; • Provide clarity and direction of what is expected in terms of independent learning. 	<p>Attend and participate in all timetabled sessions and get to know staff and other students.</p> <p>What Works?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Come prepared to all sessions by reading module handbooks and learning resources. Participate in discussion and ask questions; • Contribute to group work activities as it is widely recognised that you learn more by sharing and collaborating; • Consider your existing skill-set and avail of support provided to develop this. This may come from within your course, central departments or online; • Use your unscheduled time to engage in independent learning. Each module will have a reading list with required and recommended resources.
<p>Provide opportunities for students to engage in activities beyond the classroom which can motivate students and help them to make connections in their learning.</p> <p>What Works?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry-focused field trips which link theory to practice and promote collaboration between staff and students and amongst students; • Co-curricular activities which link modules together and provide opportunities for students to work across year groups; • Subject-based society which actively encourages debate and activities about the profession and is accessible to all students; 	<p>Remember that not all learning happens in the classroom. Your timetable only schedules contact time with your tutors but there are other opportunities to practise your discipline.</p> <p>What Works?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avail of opportunities to participate in trips and discipline-related activities outside of normal class time; • Suggest other activities in which you might wish to get involved; • Attend SU events; join a club or your subject society – its never too late to do this, you can still join later in year 1 or year 2.

Staff	Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create roles for students, which allow them to work alongside staff in different ways. Examples include; acting as ambassadors at open evenings and induction activities, peer-mentoring, curriculum planning etc. 	
<p>Design authentic assessment and feedback tasks, which help students to test the application of their knowledge and understanding and to learn from constructive feedback.</p> <p>What Works?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authentic assessments, which are industry- and/or discipline-related and provide students with real-life skills in preparation for employment; • Group-work activities that are well structured allow students to gain team-working skills and to learn from each other; • Choice in assessment allows students to pick a topic of interest, which is highly motivational and prompts learners to take responsibility for their own learning; • Assessments, which are clear and unambiguous with assessment criteria made available in advance; • Formative feedback available to all students to help them self-correct and to learn from mistakes. Cumulative assessment tasks work well here. 	<p>Assessment and feedback tasks are not just hoops to be jumped through. They are opportunities to see how far you've come and to receive feedback on how to improve.</p> <p>What Works?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sufficient time to complete assessment tasks and submit on time; • Be prepared to take on different roles within a group task and contribute as part of a team; • Familiarise yourself with the assessment criteria, this will help you see where the goal posts are and should allow you to assess yourself before submission; • Use formative feedback to self-correct, make an action plan for yourself in terms of what you are going to do to improve; • Be prepared to give peers feedback, this will help you to judge your own work more adequately.

What are the challenges?

Staff-student partnerships are not without their challenges and these are also documented in (Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Crawford et al., 2015; Curran and Millard, 2015; Healey et al., 2014). They can include issues such as **time, resistance and capacity** (for both staff and students) and how these challenges are addressed can differ across the disciplines. **Large class sizes** can also seem like a deterrent to staff-student partnerships but it is widely recognised that students learn more by sharing and collaborating. If you are thinking of adopting a student partnership ethos, then the advice generally is to **start small** – situate it within a module and make sure that all students are aware of what you are trying to do. Although only a few students might put themselves forward initially, try to think of ways of getting others involved – creating roles for students as indicated above is an excellent way of collaborating with students.

Acknowledgements

This work was undertaken as part of the What Works? Student retention and success change programme, funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, co-ordinated by the Higher Education Academy and Action on Access.

These guidelines are one of the outputs from research carried out during Ulster's involvement in this Change Programme (2012-2015) where the research involved:

- An exploration of the 'lived experience' of staff and students involved in partnership during the change Programme, through semi-structured interviews.
- Focus groups (17) with first-year students across seven discipline areas and focus groups with the staff involved in these course teams, using an Appreciative Inquiry methodology.
- A Belonging survey which identified changes over time in students' sense of belonging to their institution, their academic engagement and their self-confidence. Four surveys containing 16 questions rated on a Likert scale were administered to all first years in the seven discipline areas, the first of these in November 2013 (n=274), the second in April 2014 (n=230), the third in November 2014 (n=359) and the fourth in April 2015 to both first years (n=333) and second years (n=240). The data was compared with the findings in 12 other UK Universities (n=3718).

They are also informed by a 2014 HEA publication, Engagement through Partnership: Students as Partners in Learning and Teaching in Higher education. These guidelines focus specifically on student engagement through partnership in learning, teaching and assessment.

Contact Roisín Curran, Project Lead What Works? Change Programme, r.curran@ulster.ac.uk

References and further reading

Biggs, J. and Tang, C. (2011). *Teaching for Quality Learning at University*. 4th edn. Berkshire: McGraw-Hill.

Chickering, A. and Gamson, Z. (1987). Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education, *American Association for Higher Education Bulletin*, 39: 3-7.

Cook-Sather, A., Bovill, C. and Felten, P. (2014). *Engaging Students as Partners in Learning and Teaching: A Guide for Faculty*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Crawford, K., Horsley, R., Haggard, A. and Derricott, D. (2015). *Pedagogies of Partnership: What works*. York: HEA. Retrieved from <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/project/pedagogies-partnership-what-works>

Curran, R. and Millard, L. (2015). A partnership approach to developing student capacity to engage and staff capacity to be engaging: opportunities for academic developers. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 21.1,67-78.
DOI:10.1080/1360144X.2015.1120212.

Entwistle, N. (2009) *Teaching for Understanding at University: Deep Approaches and Distinctive Ways of Thinking*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gardner, H. (1993). *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. New York: Basic Books.

Healey, M., Flint, A. and Harrington, K. (2014). *Engagement through partnership: students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education*. York: HEA. Retrieved from <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/engagement-through-partnership-students-partners-learning-and-teaching-higher-education>

McGregor, D. (1960). *The Human Side of Enterprise*. New York: McGraw-Hill

Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

NUS (2012). *Manifesto for Partnership*. Retrieved from <http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/a-manifesto-for-partnership>

Pintrich, P.R. and Schunk, D.H. (2002). *Motivation in Education: Theory, Research and Applications*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill-Prentice Hall.

Prosser, M. and Trigwell, K. (1999). *Understanding Learning & Teaching: The experience in Higher Education*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Thomas, L. (2002). Student Retention in higher education: the role of institutional habitus. *Journal of Education Policy*, 17, 4:423-42.

Ulster Principles of Assessment and Feedback for Learning (2011). Retrieved from <http://www.ulster.ac.uk/centrehep/resources.html>

Ulster Student Learning Experience Principles (2016) Retrieved from <http://adl.ulster.ac.uk/principles/>

Ulster Learning and Teaching Strategy, 2013/14 -2017-18. Retrieved from <http://www.ulster.ac.uk/tls/>

Appendix 3: Interview Transcript

(Example of transcript with one student with coding carried out)

Interview 1 Student 1

7th March 2014 (29:55 Minutes)

Transcription

		Coding
INT	(00:00)How do you feel about staff student partnerships?	
STUDENT	What way do you mean?	
INT	Do you think it's a good idea? Do you think that staff and students working together would be beneficial for the student – I'm thinking about the student experience?	
STUDENT	I do think so (.). As you know I'm a class rep for mental health and we do a lot of things with the adult nurses. What people are feeding back to me is that feel there is a bit of a barrier between staff and students, maybe it's more the adult nurses that are feeling this. They email their studies adviser and its takes maybe three weeks to get a response	Previous role Barrier between staff and students Delay in response from staff
INT	So the students perceive then that there is a barrier to communicating with staff, that's interesting isn't it	
STUDENT	I feel like I am touting of people but WHEN they get a response back it can be quite abrupt. Students find that a bit off putting, maybe it's just our school	Abrupt response from staff Students find it off-putting
INT	No, not necessarily, I think that can happen in any discipline area	
STUDENT	Having this partnership could be very beneficial - bring them closer together	Enable relationship development
INT	So it's not even about the learning and teaching, its just about the interaction – the communication – the basic communication	
STUDENT	That is, yeah,	
INT	It's about being approachable then?	
STUDENT	Yeah	
INT	Is it because of the large numbers in nursing, is that a problem?	
STUDENT	In adult nursing, there's over 200 in first year	
INT	Do you have large numbers in lectures?	
STUDENT	The year is divided up into 5, basically 50 in a tutorial group, people are finding it very hard to get feedback and get in contact with their lecturer. When they email a lecturer, it comes across that the lecturer is having difficulty coping with the volume of emails they receive. I'm just thinking about how do I word this?	Barrier between staff and students Delay in response from staff
INT	Don't worry about how you word it? Just say what you want to say	
STUDENT	It's like if they receive a high volume of emails, they will come in the next day and say that they received a lot of emails about something and it's like they're struggling with the high volume of emails	Sympathetic to staff
INT	So do you think that partnerships such as in the SRS involving class reps like yourself could go some way to address that?	

STUDENT	It would, definitely, almost as if we could explain to the lecturer how people are feeling and if there's better communication then this could reduce the number of emails that they are receiving.	Enable better dialogue which would reduce numbers of emails
INT	It might also be about looking at what the emails are about, perhaps there are other ways that students could get that information	
STUDENT	There's certain lecturers good at doing discussion boards on Bbl but there's only a few doing that because it's almost from what I gather because they are being emailed about minor things but they're not minor to the students. It's about fear of asking stupid questions. Maybe there should be more ways to discuss problems that's not just emails	Inconsistency among staff regarding communication Student fear Alternative modes of communication
INT	So the key thing that you are saying – the SSP might be one way of breaking down that perceived barrier between staff and students and if it aids communication would be good	
STUDENT	Yeah exactly	
INT	(06:55)I know you haven't been involved in SSP that long, you've talked about the opportunities, do you think there are challenges around that as well – staff and students working together?	
STUDENT	Well... its probably about the time thing... time constraints, physicality problems, where if there is anything that needs discussed, it might be hard to... everybody has busy lives, that might be a barrier.	Time and physical barriers
INT	Have you been involved in a meeting yet? Have you met the year 3 student rep yet?	
STUDENT	I've had two mental health rep meets with some of the staff team, two meetings to date	
INT	He will be coming to the residential so you both along with your Tutor will be able to work together with the L&T coordinator. The four of you will be able to work together.	
STUDENT	The pressure (laughs)	
INT	It's not about being right or long... you are a first year so your experience is very relevant, there's nothing more valid that someone living it. You are a class rep so you will be able to represent the views of others, that will be good. The challenges then are the physical things. Anything else?	
STUDENT	Ammm! I've taken a mind blank	
INT	Don't worry you might think of something later	
STUDENT	I can email you	
INT	You as a student, have you seen any differences in the way you interact with other students and or staff?	
STUDENT	I think (...) that (...) I've become more confident, I come from a background of retail management, I have a degree in ancient history from when I was younger but even compared now with then, I maybe wouldn't have had as much confident speaking to the lecturers. Coming back to the university for the 2 nd time and becoming a class rep, it's almost I have become more confident, maybe it's just an age thing, I'm more confident speaking to the lectures. More confident with – people are coming to me with issues – I think there are other class reps who are younger and are not confident in speaking	Previous role

	<p>out. I just think I've become more confident, more of an advocate, it's maybe given me more of a role in the class!! I feel as if I'm doing a good job like, I think its maybe helped me to settle back into university again, and it's made me feel like I want to finish the course more and there is a less chance of me dropping out maybe, but that isn't a typical experience of everybody else because they obviously aren't a class rep but for me personally it's given me more involvement. It's made me more likely to finish</p>	<p>Contrast between older and younger students</p> <p>Student role as advocate</p> <p>Student rep role contributes to motivation to complete course</p> <p>Contrast with students who are not class rep</p> <p>Involvement – promotes motivation and commitment</p>
INT	<p>That's interesting as well, so there the class rep but also being involved in a project like this – because you're involved does it make you feel you have a role now and it links into your own motivation to finish your course</p>	
STUDENT	<p>Exactly!</p>	
INT	<p>That can be quite powerful can't it</p>	
STUDENT	<p>I think, compared to other people who are thinking of dropping out, I think it's because they feel they are left to their own devices or something like that. I feel as if I'm in more contact with the school, I feel it would be harder for me not to finish my course. So maybe that is exactly why we would be doing something exactly like this – because I've even noticed a change in myself that I feel as if I'm definitely going to finish this and there are others who aren't in this kind of role and they are feeling a bit 50/50.</p>	<p>Involvement promoting motivation</p>
INT	<p>So even going back to the first question where we talked about SSP, we could almost say that by being involved it actually enhances your own motivation to finish your course because you feel more involved.</p>	
STUDENT	<p>Yeah, yeah</p>	
INT	<p>That could be quite a powerful impact of SSP which has even got nothing to do with the project goals, its almost an additional thing it actually has the impact on the students. What I would like to find out – what impact does that have on staff – does it make them more motivated as a teacher? I want to try and draw that out as well – is it just people like yourself or can it apply to more people. That's very interesting. That's exactly what we want, we want learners to be more motivated, we want first years to feel that they belong. The research underpinning this states that if learners feel that they belong, then they are more likely to be successful. What can we do collectively on this.</p>	
STUDENT	<p>Yeah</p>	
INT	<p>The confidence you talk about dealing with staff – can you talk a bit more about how you interact with other students.</p>	
STUDENT	<p>I feel that in the role that I have here (...) it's weird – if they have any issues – I feel that they come to me – it's almost that they feel that they have a link to the nursing staff through me or they almost fell oh Rona will know what to do or she'll be</p>	<p>Role as intermediary between students and staff</p>

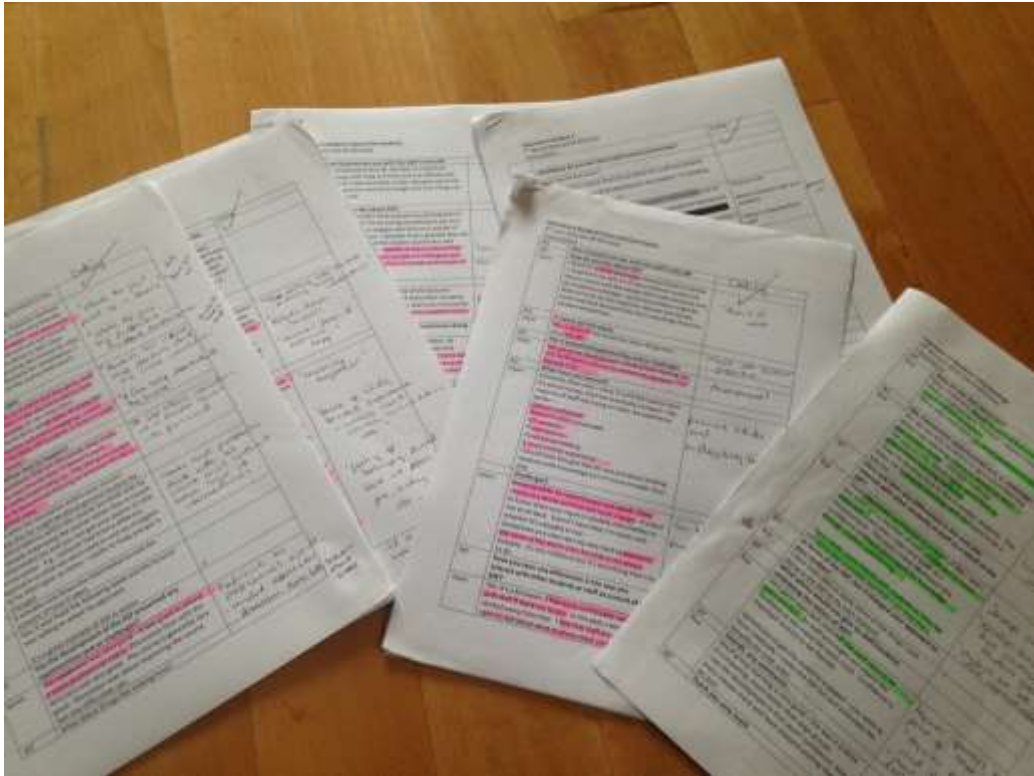
	able to find out – so I almost feel that they like having that intermediary – that they would be happier to come and ask me about something than go straight to the staff	Confidence bestowed on student rep by other students An opportunity to manage barriers
INT	Is that because they know you are the class rep or is that you have an approachable personality?	
STUDENT	((Laughs)), I hope it would be a wee bit of both. Even the adult nurses know that I'm the class rep	
INT	So that's obviously a successful thing – so being the class rep could be – we talked earlier about the barriers – so having the class rep is so important. Is class rep the right title? It's more than representing their views – you also have a different role to play as well– some of the things you were describing.	
STUDENT	Yeah	
INT	Ok, we might even have covered this question. Has it changed your approach to your studies? Is there anything else around that?	
STUDENT	It's almost something negative, I feel that because people are always asking me things... about assignments and stuff like that, it almost puts you under pressure to do well	Pressure on student to perform well academically
INT	Okkkk, right (very interesting insight)	
STUDENT	I know that's a really weird thing to say, I think people think you know everything	Student expectations of rep is high
INT	So the expectations are high?	
STUDENT	Exactly - you almost feel that there is extra pressure	
INT	Do you perceive that extra pressure coming from the staff or the other students?	
STUDENT	Students	
INT	From the other students	
STUDENT	Yeah	
INT	So you don't want to fail in front of them?	
STUDENT	It's weird, (...) I don't know where they got this from but whenever.. they would always say – what do you think of this essay? What do you think they're asking ... oh Rona you're really smart and then it just puts you under undue pressure to...	Misguided expectations of student rep – causes undue pressure
INT	Do you feel you have to live up to these expectations?	
STUDENT	Yeah	
INT	As long as that wouldn't negatively impact on you. I think it would be ok to say talk to them about this.	
STUDENT	And say "Im glad you have such a high opinion of me..."	
INT	Its ok to say that "I have challenges too, I can struggle too" maybe you need to say that "we need to seek clarification on this together". Maybe then it would feel that you and them are working together	
STUDENT	Rather than me being the lone leader ((laughs))	
INT	And font of all knowledge, because that could impact negatively on you.	
STUDENT	Maybe it's my fault for letting it happen. I think some people are confused about what a student rep is. They understand that if you have issues, I take it to meetings...	Confusion over student rep role – student voice versus student guidance

	I think someone says to me - oh I thought they consulted you on what the essays were about... I think there is a bit of confusion	
INT	Right ok	
STUDENT	They think that we are giving consultations on what they (staff) expect from an essay	
INT	Yeah, it's almost like you are some sort of a learning adviser... like a PASS adviser [explains PASS] but that is a known scheme. It's almost like you kind of have been assumed into that role without that training	
STUDENT	I know, without my knowledge ((laughs))	
INT	Maybe it's about you saying "we are all in this together" I suppose that if first years are needing information and you are the 'go to' person	
STUDENT	I know	
INT	It's easy to assume that role going forward... interesting... but yeah but almost a negative side to it but something that needs to be managed	
STUDENT	Yeah yeah	
INT	Ok, is there any advice you would give to other SSP?	
STUDENT	I think it's almost too early to say for me, because I'm not... I don't have anything helpful at this stage	
INT	That's grand. I'm almost finished. Is there anything else you would like to share with me?	
STUDENT	I was just going to say that...amm... why was mental health chosen, law chosen	
INT	Explains rationale for subjects involved.	
STUDENT	Its something that a lot of people in our class are saying – they feel like a lot of the people – almost they don't take it seriously – why were certain people selected. They don't have the emotional maturity to be there – maybe that's why they drop out – they feel that 'I am not ready for this' Its perceived like – why were these people given a place? – but obviously you can't tell this at interview stage. There should maybe be a tighter process	Students questioning the recruitment process as they feel that some students are not taking their studies seriously
INT	Not all course interview	
STUDENT	Maybe there should be a more rigorous process. You wonder why there is still a higher dropout rate.	
INT	Even in your course this year	
STUDENT	Yes	
INT	Across the sector, its 8% , 1 in 12 students will drop out. Between 33 and 42 think about dropping out. We really want to address this? We need to think about pre-entry	
STUDENT	Yeah, awareness of what you're signing up for... nursing isn't like any other university course. Its so intense, its kind of life and death. I don't think the younger ones come into it wit... realising that it is intense and there's some people who have left well paid jobs to come and do this and there are others sitting at the back and having conversations with each other. They should be made more aware of how...	Suggests raising awareness at pre-entry Student frustration at other students not engaging
INT	Almost like the rules of engagement	
STUDENT	Yeah	
INT	Like if youre in this we are all in this to learn	

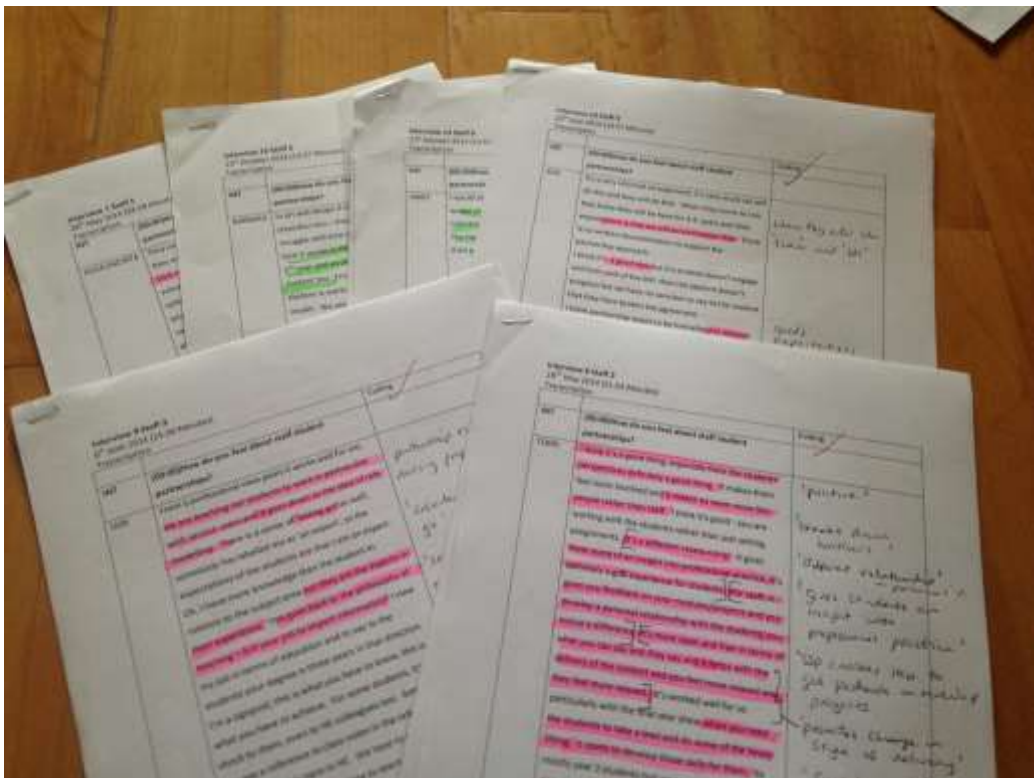
STUDENT	Yeah, maybe that is something that certain courses – they should be made more aware of what is expected	
INT	I agree	
STUDENT	How you would do that – I don't know	
INT	In a robust way – that is exactly what we want to find out in this project -	
STUDENT	How would you exactly do that? That's what the problem is...	
INT	Knowing the issues is half the battle, we can go some way to tackle that, it could be better information to the schools – are you picking the right course, why are x numbers of students drooping out	
STUDENT	And costing a place for someone else, maybe you had a bad day in the interview. I know when you're doing your UCAS forms, I think for certain course, there's should be a recommendation from somebody else – that they think the person is ready for this course.	
INT	Part of this project is looking at what happens elsewhere – where is their good practice	
STUDENT	And what are they doing?	
INT	If we see something good elsewhere – were going to take that idea, what research has been done, were not in a vacuum here, that's why the residential is so important	
STUDENT	Which ones?	
INT	BCU, GCU, St marys That's been very helpful? Is there anything else?	
STUDENT	No, I feel its not been helpful	
INT	Not at all, thank you very much.	

Appendix 4: Other Interview Transcripts (showing coding)

Student interview transcripts with coding (carried out by hand)



Staff interview transcripts with coding (carried out by hand)



Appendix 5: Initial list of codes derived from coding of individual transcripts

Initial coding June 2014

Codes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breaks down barriers between staff and students • Develops relationships between staff and students • Leads to better communication • Students can be used as a sounding board for new interventions • Mirrors professional practice • Can lead to a blurring of roles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can reduce student fear • Personal development/new skills • Opportunity to become involved in professional events e.g. workshops, residential etc. • Better working relationships • Builds trust • Student viewpoint can lead to new ways of thinking • A flexible outlook • Time/physical barriers • Uncertainty about value of input • Difficult to get initial 'buy-in'
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages dialogue and mutual respect • Increases confidence • Breaks down barriers (human and approachable) • Changes mindsets (motivational)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More reflective • More engaged • More inclusive • Different perspective • Pressure to perform well academically • Wary

Appendix 6: Initial theming of codes

Change Mindsets
Change Behaviours

personal Development
Uncertainty
break down barriers

Coding Hierarchy

Code	Description	Notes
CB	Trust - 20% of the process - reports - lower	Student numbers + diversity + advantage
CB	Breaks down barriers between staff and students	
CB, B1B	Trustless relationships between staff and students	
CB	Leads to better communication	
CB	Students can be used as a sounding board for new statements	
CB	Mitigates professional practice	
CB	Contributes to a lowering of roles	
CB	Integrates into other's perspective	
CB	These students with students in department - removes part of the barrier	
CM	Can reduce student fear	
CB - PD	Personal development/new skills	
CB	Opportunity to become involved in professional events e.g. workshops, residential etc.	
CB	Build working relationships	
CM	Builds trust	
CB	Student viewpoint can lead to new ways of thinking	
CM	A flexible outlook	
CB	Non-physical barriers	
CM	Uncertainty about value of input	is imbalance in partnership
CB	Difficult to get initial buy-in	
CB	Confidence & self-efficacy in class - promotes engagement	
CM, CB	Encourages dialogue and mutual respect	
CM	Increases confidence	increases class engagement
CM	Breaks down barriers (human and approachable)	student rep role visible - + breaking down barriers
CM	Change mindsets (motivational)	
CM	Builds engagement in class as a result of having lectured as a person	
CB	More engaged	- provides support/commitment to complete
CB	More positive	- is as unassuming
CM, L1	Pressure to perform well academically	
CB	Requires additional student support	more work place commitment
CB	There and in exists at that	
CB	Interactive resources are critical	
CB	Self-approachability is key	
CB	Students need to push themselves - report back questions	
CB	Students want more interdisciplinarity/collaborative working	
CB	Feedback ethics can prevail - good to see this as an indication	

Appendix 7: Codes themed with quotes

Coding October 2014 (student and staff quotes against codes/themes)

Themes	Staff	Students		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breaks down barriers between staff and students • Develops relationships between staff and students • Better working relationships • Breaks down barriers (human and approachable) • Leads to better communication 	SF2	“It makes us seem more like people rather than staff.”	ST6	“I think it’s a really good idea, because there is a divide – its good to be able to sit down around a table and discuss issues with the people that make decisions and do implement changes. Some issues/ideas might be fickle but one or two might be relevant and faculty could overlook because they don’t see things from the student perspective.” “Yes, it allowed me to see the other things that lecturers do!”
	SF2	“For staff, it gives you feedback on your modules/projects and you develop a personal relationship with the students...”		
	SF2	“...I would have their ear a lot and have got to know them and they trust me.”		
	SF2	“They see me more human and approachable. I see them in the same way. I don’t see them as a student cohort now, I know them individually and their capabilities and personalities a bit better.”	ST6	“the faculty meeting has been the big stand out star in my first year. A faculty meeting is held every semester, all the reps are invited from the school of law. All the lecturers attended with the reps. There is a high level of input from the students, and the staff are outnumbered.
	SF2	“The students you have a better relationship with is linked to the amount of time you have with them”	ST5	The SSP breaks down barriers definitely – it’s a lot more open. There is an idolisation of professors as experts especially for a first year student. With the programme in particular it’s kind of overrunning in the class. In law, we allowed too many class reps, it then goes into the classroom – and it translates that there are a lot more questions being asked in the classroom.”
	SF4	“You get to know your students better, what they are doing and what they are thinking. We are lucky in a shared office with 4 of us and the students relate to us as a team of staff rather than as individuals. They get a team approach.”		
	SF4	“In relation to the two SP events and the residential there were opportunity to get an	ST5	“I possibly took it for granted they are the teacher; you are the student and its very well defined relationship. Outside of this it’s interesting, the guys

	SF4	<p>insight into the student experience. Those who participate were appropriate, some other students couldn't."</p> <p>"We are more conscious of 'looking after' students we know our first years and look after them very well. We have even counselled three off the course, they would not have succeeded and success for them was not BS, success was going somewhere else. We do this more now than in the past – because we know them better and know how to engage them better."</p>	<p>ST4</p> <p>ST4</p> <p>ST4</p> <p>ST3</p> <p>ST1</p>	<p>are just like me and like my colleagues and it's useful to see them more as people and not just as lecturers."</p> <p>"It's different now than when I was at school. At school, you're taught that there is a respect line between the teacher and student. When I came back to Uni at 29/30, I still felt that way, that I was going in to school as a kid. You sit quietly. It's nice to see them outside of that environment."</p> <p>"I'm a student rep and that how I became involved. I was asked to come to a meeting, it was very friendly and it made me feel like part of a team – not them and us. They kept it all down to earth and not too formal.</p> <p>At the start I didn't know much about it, but I then became aware it's about improving the course for next year. To make it better particularly for revalidation. I can also feedback aspects of the course that aren't working well."</p> <p>"Most of the staff know me by first name. I have a more close relationship with staff."</p> <p>"School teachers tell you that uni lecturers don't care about you, they say we do too much for you.. I found that it is not true, the lecturers here are very good – much better relationship here with the lecturers. "</p> <p>"I think it's good; we would get together with the tutors and get feedback. We have class reps and I was one last year, we would go around and ask other students what could be done to be improved. It's good for the tutors to be on our kind of level. There's</p>
--	-----	--	--	---

				<p>not this feeling of petrified of going to speak to the tutors Through the drawing classes the tutors are creating their own work and once we see them working we think we need to work. It's good to have that crossover."</p> <p>"Having this partnership could be very beneficial - bring them closer together"</p>
Mirrors professional practice (Employability)	<p>SF3</p> <p>SF3</p> <p>SF3</p> <p>SF2</p> <p>SF2</p>	<p>"From a professional point of view it works well for me, SAP mimics the profession – we are teaching our students to work in partnership with service users"</p> <p>Professional philosophy transferred to HE – "my philosophy of being a MHN is to help an individual grow and to flourish to the best of their ability...I can get a lot out of it working closer this year with students directly. I can get to influence their growth and flourishing and in a sense bring the skills that I use in a MH ward into the HE field"</p> <p>"I'm now acting on my (PgCHEP) philosophy as opposed to just aspiring to it"</p> <p>It's a different relationship – it gives them more of an insight into professional practice, it's definitely a good experience for students."</p> <p>"It's worked well for us particularly with the final year show when you need students to take a lead and do some of the heavy lifting –</p>		

		it starts to develop those skills for them (students taking a lead)”		
<p>Can lead to a blurring of roles</p> <p>Student viewpoint can lead to new ways of thinking</p> <p>A flexible outlook</p> <p>Students can be used as a sounding board for new interventions</p>	<p>SF3</p> <p>SF3</p> <p>SF4</p>	<p>‘sense of letting go – somebody has labeled me as an expert...but the students are the experts in their experience’</p> <p>“The students were full of ideas, it didn’t really reflect what I wanted to do but I stood back and let them run with it and my role became – a facilitator”</p> <p>“We can’t work in isolation without the students. The students have quite an influence and they should be partners. They give us a sounding board, they are here for 4 years, and we are here longer. In the SSP, it is working well but depends on the students. It’s probably the top 6 students out of 40 final year students who participate, the others either wouldn’t or couldn’t.”</p>		
<p>Personal development/new skills</p>	<p>SF3</p>	<p>I’ve gained in confidence</p>	<p>ST6</p>	<p>“University does care – came in with the opinion that it’s about money, that has drastically changed – the majority of staff are trying to make the experience better –</p> <p>Gained confidence</p> <p>Research skills – invaluable</p> <p>ICT sessions</p> <p>Presentations</p> <p>Focus group training</p> <p>A more holistic experience</p> <p>I would have thought that HE was just about stuffing students with knowledge but it’s much broader than that”</p>

			ST5	it's a good thing for me personally for development – that is the basis on to which I had been sold it.”
			ST4	“The residential was very good – it was great to attend a more professional event. Discussion time with the lecturers was very good. The course is generally very good. Discussion was about improving the course.”
			ST4	“you know the lecturers well, and it's all basically - if you don't know someone it harder to speak to them. Giving people confidence for interviews etc. it all helps... it helps you develop as a person. Our discipline is very communicative, these personal skills are important”
			ST3	“I want to do teaching; it's going to benefit me greatly. I will be able to talk about this. In our second year, part of our module, you do a placement. I was involved in setting up an exhibition. I suggested an exhibition that would involve first years. The tutors don't have time to give you one-to-one. If you are feeling lost it can hold you back.”
Builds trust	SF3	“A challenge is being able to let go and trust my students, I've had to let go the notion that I know best, that I know what the students are experiencing”		
Increases confidence				
Changes mindsets (motivational)	SF3	“I am more open to students, I'm probably not as judgmental; I'm more open to hearing what they have to say and taking on their suggestions and doing something if we can...”	ST6	“I feel more comfortable speaking with staff if there are issues. In the past, I would have shirked away from that. I find that staff are a lot more open to ask about what students think and feel.”

Encourages dialogue and mutual respect		having the students lead themselves, them actually doing what they want to do. They will all have different journeys, rather than looking at people as a cohort, I see them as individuals who have their own hopes and aspirations. How I work with the students probably has changed”		
Different perspective	SF3	There can be levels of partnership and it depends on what you want to achieve		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing practice (behaviours) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ change in style of delivery ○ e.g. can lead to innovations e.g. ibook ○ More reflective ○ More engaged ○ Differentiates the course from other Unis <p>Could be a link to teacher training</p>	<p>SF3</p> <p>SF3</p> <p>SF2</p>	<p>Prompts questioning/re-examination of teaching philosophy “it’s given me an opportunity to sit back and reflect what do you want to do as a teacher?”</p> <p>“I’ve spent more time thinking about what I want to achieve, taking that approach of being a facilitator has given me the space to explore further and rather than trying to cover everything, I can focus on one aspect which causes difficulty and we will focus on this. I can direct the students to the independent study better – its made me less worry about transmitting information out and focus on how to use class time better. I’ve become more open to risk-taking in classroom” e.g. ibook innovation e.g. flipped classroom – I have to build trust that they will read before they come to class. There is an aspect of role modeling of what I want the students to do.</p> <p>“you notice a difference, its more open and free in terms of what you can say and they</p>	<p>ST6</p> <p>ST6</p> <p>ST6</p>	<p>“There is an idolisation of professors as experts especially for a first year student. With the programme in particular it’s kind of overrunning in the class. In law, we allowed too many class reps, it then goes into the classroom – and it translates that there are a lot more questions being asked in the classroom.”</p> <p>“It rubs off on the other students – when they hear questions being asked, it gives them confidence to speak up? In the past there would only be 30 seconds of questions, now it could be up to 20 minutes and I think it’s down to the barriers being broken down. After the first meeting, there seemed to be a whole change in the class.”</p> <p>“My confidence has improved. I am a bit better at note taking. As a class rep, I’m better at keeping a diary, I never did it at school but now I do and I’m better at being reflective. I wouldn’t have entertained the notion of being reflective but now I see the benefit of it. We had to write something for the Edge and I did the reflective essay, it was really good to read the diary and it was useful to see how far I’d come.”</p>

		say and it helps with the delivery of the content and you feel more relaxed and they feel more relaxed”	ST5	“If I’m being honest, I found one of the lecturers difficult, I didn’t expect I would enjoy their company outside of UNi, but I did, and if I was to be lectured by him again, I probably would be more receptive to him and by his style.”
	SF2	“you can track their progress better and you can read more signs and be more atuned to what’s going on and spot the issues. With a larger group you focus on the content and the delivery.”	ST4	“Its a better idea, it gives us a voice and also gives staff a feeling that helps them make decisions about how they can shape the course. It can help them differentiate the course form other Unis, to make the course more interactive and more engaging, unless they can bounce the ideas off students it doesn’t really help them that much.”
	SF2	“Yes, there has been a big change in my approach to my teaching. It has made me question a lot of how I deliver the work, the link between the content and the assessment has been strengthened. Even now in the middle of assessment, I feel better about it, intended outcomes, module deliverables.”	ST4	“A lot of the questions that are discussed, they invite our input, the way the SU does it doesn’t work. There’s not really much tying up. The SSP gives us our course and its focused on helping us whereas the SU is a more global view.”
	SF4	“We do a lot of group work now, we have a first year project, various land surveying activities so that the students get to know each other. Students meet socially in the learning environment – linked to the sense of belonging. Our students know each other well now better than before. This makes a difference e.g. MK ran a focus group and noticed the banter between them we noticed in the past that groups of students who commuted from Fermanagh wouldn’t have mixed with the others but now they do.”	ST4	“problems within the course are dealt with by the people organising the course rather than a couple of intermediaries and you can get your points of view across easier. E.g. Lecturer had tried a different approach to what we were used to and we struggled as he didn’t give us notes. I spoke to Greg and got it changed... it was fixed the following week and the lecturer was willing to adapt his approach.”
			ST4	“Willing to engage more in class and ask questions, more confident. I’m willing to give out answers. I’ve grew much more confidence since becoming involved in this.”

			ST4	“I am used as a window to the lecturers by other students I think. I’m now happy to email the lecturers to ask a question if I’m stuck.”
			ST3	“I would have stepped back more. I would have been casual, now I am there for other students, I am like a counsellor. Even chatting in the car on the way to the residential with the students was very interesting.”
			ST3	“There was fun in the dyeing day – it’s not just a one day event – everyone is using the fabrics now in their work. Our studio space has changed a lot from last year when it was just drawing, now its full of fabrics. There has been opportunities – foe us partners to be able to experience it”
			ST3	“I want to teach and how students are learning. The issues that are being brought up by other teams and the proposed solutions are giving me a different perspective. I am used to the creative industries and I think collaborative projects would be interesting. For example, within Belfast, architecture and Vis com.”
			ST1	“I think (...) that (...) I’ve become more confident, I come from a background of retail management, I have a degree in ancient history from when I was younger but even compared now with then, I maybe wouldn’t have had as much confident speaking to the lecturers. Coming back to the university for the 2 nd time and becoming a class rep, it’s almost I have become more confident, maybe it’s just an age thing, I’m more confident speaking to the lectures. More confident with – people are coming to me with issues – I think there are other class reps who are younger

			ST1	<p>and are not confident in speaking out. I just think I've become more confident, more of an advocate, it's maybe given me more of a role in the class!! I feel as if I'm doing a good job like, I think it's maybe helped me to settle back into university again, and it's made me feel like I want to finish the course more and there is a less chance of me dropping out maybe, but that isn't a typical experience of everybody else because they obviously aren't a class rep but for me personally it's given me more involvement. It's made me more likely to finish."</p> <p>"I think, compared to other people who are thinking of dropping out, I think it's because they feel they are left to their own devices or something like that. I feel as if I'm in more contact with the school, I feel it would be harder for me not to finish my course. So maybe that is exactly why we would be doing something exactly like this – because I've even noticed a change in myself that I feel as if I'm definitely going to finish this and there are others who aren't in this kind of role and they are feeling a bit 50/50."</p>
SAP enabler	<p>SF2 "The field trip should probably happen at the start and be used as an ice breaker. It helped with the socializing and the group work. At the beginning I tried to allocate roles even cooking dinner and cleaning up. They were starting to organize themselves."</p> <p>SF4 "We do a lot of group work now, we have a first year project, various land surveying activities so that the students get to know each other. Students meet socially in the</p>		ST6	<p>"I think there should be more integration between the different schools. From a couple of the bigger meetings, a lot of people are of the same opinion; everybody is doing individual things e.g. social sciences. The social work is separate from the law school. It might be nice for the students to come together, that law students could mix with other students – this could start at induction. Very little social element at Magee, I think the SU has forgotten about the social element, they are doing good work in relation to finances. I haven't really</p>

	SF4	<p>learning environment – linked to the sense of belonging. Our students know each other well now better than before. This makes a difference e.g. MK ran a focus group and noticed the banter between them we noticed in the past that groups of students who commuted from Fermanagh wouldn't have mixed with the others but now they do.”</p> <p>“get a social network going, a social mix within the group.”</p>	ST3	<p>talked to a student outside of law, or a year above me. I have loved the opportunity to talk to other students at the SSP events.”</p> <p>“The class rep is useful to get across to staff what the students want. In first year, you are part of a bigger group and you are crossing over workshops, in second year it's more personal and the tutors get to know your name. One girl was too timid to approach staff when her dad died and she asked me to do it for her.”</p>
			ST3	<p>“in our first year, we had artists in residence, they were so much help to us. If they had a student in first year to help break you in and give you confidence in your work, that placement opportunity would be brilliant. Some second years are going to big companies but not always getting a great experience.”</p>
			ST3	<p>“I think crossover the students belonging with second year. Doesn't cost anything to setup a FB, I set our FB page when I was class rep. Every day without fail, someone posts something up on it, you tube clips, links etc. It keeps the students informed. Everybody says it helps them so much... we feel closer as a year group, particularly when were out of class, we post up questions when we're at home. Some of the mature students are getting FB because of hearing us talk about it.”</p>
			ST2	<p>“You know the CTNET, if you need something you post it and you get an instant answer from staff”</p>

			ST1	<p>“I feel that in the role that I have here (...) it’s weird – if they have any issues – I feel that they come to me – it’s almost that they feel that they have a link to the nursing staff through me or they almost fell oh ST1 will know what to do or she’ll be able to find out – so I almost feel that they like having that intermediary – that they would be happier to come and ask me about something than go straight to the staff”</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAP barrier <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Uncertainty about value of input ○ Pressure to perform well academically 	SF3	“Time for meetings is a challenge”	<p>ST6</p> <p>“Knowing when to come forward and speak. There always is a divide and that will never change. It’s hard to know when your input is valuable and whether or not to sit back. Even if I have idea, I’m never sure whether it’s valuable or not. Sometimes as a class rep I try very hard to represent the views of the entire class but that is not always possible. It’s not inhibitive but it’s something that I try to do.”</p> <p>ST5</p> <p>“You’re not entirely certain which of your points were valid or not valid. As a student you are the person there with the least amount of knowledge, as much as it was good to be in that environment – possibility more knowledge due to the fact that you are there as the student but I think that overall your opinions are less important than those of the lecturers who are administering the course.”</p> <p>ST5</p> <p>“when I agreed to do this. I didn’t realise there was going to be a residential or set times for meetings. If I realised there would be meetings during day time hours, I probably would have turned down the opportunity to do this. I was invited to this 12 months ago, if I hadn’t been to the residential, my</p>	

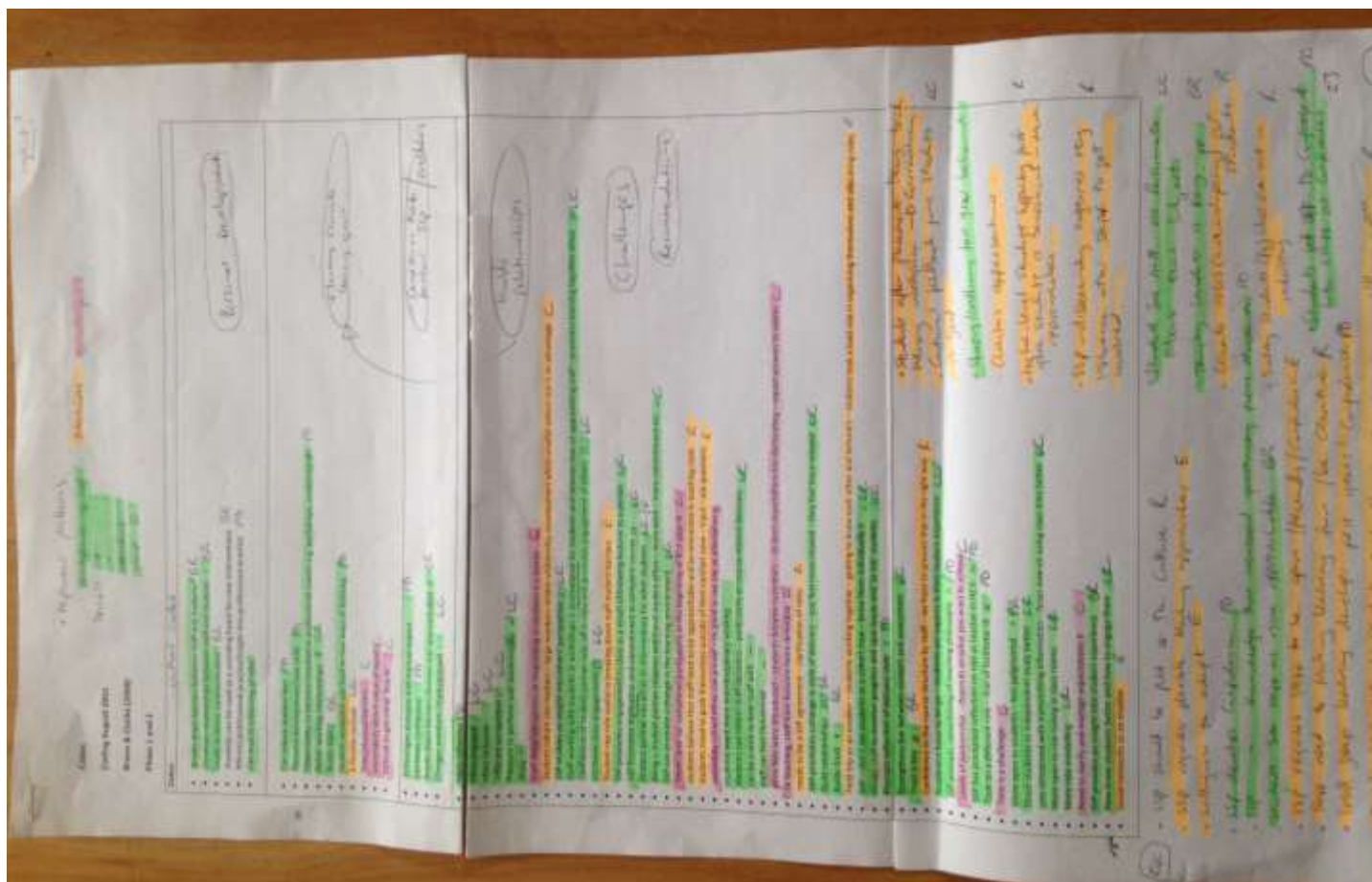
			<p>ST3 involvement would have been one meeting and one letter and I wouldn't have been happy with that."</p> <p>"Time! Meetings not as regular as they should be. There should be an allocated time for this. Maybe second years could do daring workshops with the first years and we could feedback to the tutors how this goes. Balancing the time from my own studies to make time for this. I don't mind, other students might."</p> <p>ST3 "Big problem we don't know students in fine art or architecture. SU has a role to play here. Its lost here, very little events run here. I was chatting to my house mates, there's no SU vibe here. I would love to create something, a welcome pack, give new students a memory pen, a lanyard with UU logo, a sketchbook with logo – creates a sense of belonging. I now want to aim projects at doing things like that, I would love to put forward designs for that – I would even pay for it myself."</p> <p>ST1 "Well... its probably about the time thing... time constraints, physicality problems, where if there is anything that needs discussed, it might be hard to... everybody has busy lives, that might be a barrier."</p> <p>ST1 "It's almost something negative, I feel that because people are always asking me things... about assignments and stuff like that, it almost puts you under pressure to do well."</p>
CSF	SF2	"There has to be trust, if you say something you must follow through. Confidence in the course structure by staff, we have to present	<p>ST6 "We were very lucky with the lecturers in semester 1, so we had really good teachers who were encouraging students. No matter how good your</p>

	SF4	<p>that in the right way, confidence that this is the right course for them. It goes right back to belonging... the student needs to feel that, you need the right staff, the right pathway, and the building up of trust over the three years.”</p> <p>“I think partnership needs to be formalised in relation to expectations. Then if there is conflict between the relationship/Uni they would know where they stand and there could be a mediation process to resolve it. A clarification of roles would be useful e.g. in schools there is an agreement where school pupils sign up to parameter’s etc. The student charter is used to address concerns or pursue appeals but it is not a reciprocal document. It’s used in the sense – a student can threaten us with the charter. Especially with students paying fees – there can be a consumer approach, we are paying to get a service and we expect certain things. Overall, I am positive about a partnership approach in the broader sense.”</p>	ST5	<p>university – unless you have a lecturer who is interactive you won’t be able to participate. Approachability is a good word to use – most of the school of law are encouraging. It surprised me how approachable they are in relation to my expectations.”</p> <p>“First thing I would say is to get involved – see it as something that is of benefit – to advance your ideas and opinions and that everyone’s ideas and opinions are valid. I would say – take it seriously – engage properly – don’t see it as a way – don’t enter into it in a spirit that you will get something out of it for very little effort.” “People shouldn’t get involved if they can’t commit”.</p>
	SF4	<p>“There are other staff not engaging in the SRS. Not sustainable going forward”</p>	ST5	<p>to explore other means of meeting up – e.g. Skype</p>
	SF3	<p>Need to manage expectations from the start</p>	ST4	<p>“Try and be very open and honest and as friendly as possible. For students, input and ask questions, you will get used to it over time. Your confidence will develop. Introverted students will find it hard. Try and talk and go with the flow....”</p> <p>“Service based is one option but very clinical. It should be more educational, different from other sectors. It should be based on relationships and these should be developed. Some lecturers are very smart but not good at interpersonal skills.... To be a successful lecturer, you don’t have to just know your area; you need to get your point across in a way that students understand it. You’re wasting your time if you’re spooning out theory; students won’t engage and won’t remember it. Why would I come here to be bored to death for two hours?”</p>

			<p>Some lecturers try and use jokes or change tone of voice this helps, two hour lectures and two hour seminar works well.”</p>
		ST3	<p>“we’re all creative people and you learn so much from them, you learn off each other. More work needs to be in at the start... New students are given summer projects and its hard to know if you are doing it right and you feel lost and scared to come in to Uni. I suggested to tutors to make students feel that they belong from day 1 so that they don’t choose another university instead of us. They should push that at open days – getting them sorted with accommodation, rather than spending a whole summer freaking out. Get them in a few weeks before they start – come in for a workshop to create a sketchbook in a couple of days working with the 2nd and 3rd years. Ice breakers don’t really work, it’s better to have the students actually doing something productive together which helps them get to know each other.”</p>
		ST3	<p>“Rather than staff decide alone – consult with the students – perhaps second years...on what would work in first year. If money was available it could be used on different things that would impact on the students directly.”</p>
		ST1	<p>“SSP would definitely help, almost as if we could explain to the lecturer how people are feeling and if there’s better communication then this could reduce the number of emails that they are receiving.”</p>

Appendix 8: Phase 1 and 2 using Braun and Clarke (2006) guide to qualitative data analysis

I double-checked original coding above and carried out their suggested stages on the data. 97 codes were identified.



Appendix 9: Phase 3 and 4 Identification of themes

Braun and Clarke (2006)

Themes	Codes	Extract staff	Extract student
Personal Development			
New Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal development/new skills • Opportunity to become involved in professional events e.g. workshops, residential etc. • More reflective • SSP develops knowledge through increased questioning by students • Students co-present, co-write with staff • Mirrors professional practice/insight into professional practice • 	<p>Sf3 “The students were full of ideas, it didn’t really reflect what I wanted to do but I stood back and let them run with it and my role became – a facilitator”</p> <p>Sf6 “SSP has allowed the students to present jointly with staff at conferences. It has developed their confidence. It is particularly good for those who are interested in becoming teachers’.</p> <p>Sf1 “It gives students employability skills. Students can work with staff and it can be viewed as work preparation”.</p> <p>Sf2 “From a professional point of view it works well for me, SAP mimics the profession – we are teaching our students to work in partnership with service users”</p> <p>Sf2 Professional philosophy transferred to HE – “my philosophy of being a MHN is to help an individual grow and to flourish to the best of their ability...I can get a lot out of it working</p>	<p>St6 “University does care – came in with the opinion that it’s about money, that has drastically changed – the majority of staff are trying to make the experience better – Gained confidence Research skills – invaluable ICT sessions Presentations Focus group training A more holistic experience I would have thought that HE was just about stuffing students with knowledge but it’s much broader than that”</p> <p>St5 it’s a good thing for me personally for development – that is the basis on to which I had been sold it.”</p> <p>St4 “The residential was very good – it was great to attend a more professional event. Discussion time with the lecturers was very good. The course is generally very good. Discussion was about improving the course.”</p> <p>St4 “you know the lecturers well, and it’s all basically - if you don’t know someone it harder to speak to them. Giving people</p>

		<p>closer this year with students directly. I can get to influence their growth and flourishing and in a sense bring the skills that I use in a MH ward into the HE field”</p> <p>Sf2 “I’m now acting on my (PgCHEP) philosophy as opposed to just aspiring to it”</p> <p>Sf3 “t’s a different relationship – it gives them more of an insight into professional practice, it’s definitely a good experience for students.”</p> <p>Sf3 “It’s worked well for us particularly with the final year show when you need students to take a lead and do some of the heavy lifting – it starts to develop those skills for them (students taking a lead)”</p>	<p>confidence for interviews etc. it all helps... it helps you develop as a person. Our discipline is very communicative, these personal skills are important”</p> <p>St3 “I want to do teaching; it’s going to benefit me greatly. I will be able to talk about this. In our second year, part of our module, you do a placement. I was involved in setting up an exhibition. I suggested an exhibition that would involve first years. The tutors don’t have time to give you one-to-one. If you are feeling lost it can hold you back.”</p> <p>St6 “My confidence has improved. I am a bit better at note taking. As a class rep, I’m better at keeping a diary, I never did it at school but now I do and I’m better at being reflective. I wouldn’t have entertained the notion of being reflective but now I see the benefit of it. We had to write something for the Edge and I did the reflective essay, it was really good to read the diary and it was useful to see how far I’d come.”</p>
<p>New ways of thinking</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student viewpoint can lead to new ways of thinking • A flexible outlook • Encourages dialogue and mutual respect • Increases confidence II 	<p>Sf3 ‘sense of letting go – somebody has labeled me as an expert...but the students are the experts in their experience’</p> <p>Sf3 ‘ve gained in confidence</p>	<p>St6 “I feel more comfortable speaking with staff if there are issues. In the past, I would have shirked away from that. I find that staff are a lot more open to ask about what students think and feel.”</p> <p>St7 “I have developed confidence as a result of this – and I feel I am a member of</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can reduce student fear PD • SSP has prompted reflection on role as teacher in HE II PD • Took on a different role – that of facilitator III PD • More open to students – less judgmental BR • • 	<p>Sf3 “A challenge is being able to let go and trust my students, I’ve had to let go the notion that I know best, that I know what the students are experiencing”</p> <p>Sf4 “We can’t work in isolation without the students. The students have quite an influence and they should be partners. They give us a sounding board, they are here for 4 years, and we are here longer. In the SSP, it is working well but depends on the students. It’s probably the top 6 students out of 40 final year students who participate, the others either wouldn’t or couldn’t.”</p> <p>Sf3 “I am more open to students, I’m probably not as judgmental; I’m more open to hearing what they have to say and taking on their suggestions and doing something if we can... having the students lead themselves, them actually doing what they want to do. They will all have different journeys, rather than looking at people as a cohort, I see them as individuals who have their own hopes and aspirations. How I work with the students probably has changed”</p>	<p>staff as I have got to know them [staff] well. This year, I have developed my knowledge through student questions... the students see me as more approachable and that I can help them”.</p>
<p>Enhances the learning climate</p>			

<p>Builds relationships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breaks down barriers between staff and students BR • Develops relationships between staff and students BR • Leads to better communication BR • Students can be used as a sounding board for new interventions BR • Can lead to a blurring of roles • Better working relationships BR • Builds trust BR • Breaks down barriers (human and approachable) BR • SSP provides an insight into student experience ER LC • SSP enables an insight into others' perspective LC • SSP promotes engagement in class as a result of knowing lecturer as a person LC • Build relationships BR • Builds trust BR 	<p>Sf2 “It makes us seem more like people rather than staff.”</p> <p>Sf2 “For staff, it gives you feedback on your modules/projects and you develop a personal relationship with the students...”</p> <p>Sf2 “...I would have their ear a lot and have got to know them and they trust me.”</p> <p>Sf2 “They see me more human and approachable. I see them in the same way. I don't see them as a student cohort now, I know them individually and their capabilities and personalities a bit better.”</p> <p>Sf2 “The students you have a better relationship with is linked to the amount of time you have with them”</p> <p>Sf4 “You get to know your students better, what they are doing and what they are thinking. We are lucky in a shared office with 4 of us and the students relate to us as a team of staff rather than as individuals. They get a team approach.”</p> <p>Sf4 “In relation to the two SP events and the residential there were opportunity to get an insight into the student experience. Those who</p>	<p>St6 “I think it's a really good idea, because there is a divide – its good to be able to sit down around a table and discuss issues with the people that make decisions and do implement changes. Some issues/ideas might be fickle but one or two might be relevant and faculty could overlook because they don't see things from the student perspective.” “Yes, it allowed me to see the other things that lecturers do!”</p> <p>St 6“the faculty meeting has been the big stand out star in my first year. A faculty meeting is held every semester, all the reps are invited from the school of law. All the lecturers attended with the reps. There is a high level of input from the students, and the staff are outnumbered. The SSP breaks down barriers definitely – it's a lot more open. There is an idolisation of professors as experts especially for a first year student. With the programme in particular it's kind of overrunning in the class. In law, we allowed too many class reps, it then goes into the classroom – and it translates that there are a lot more questions being asked in the classroom.”</p> <p>St5 “I possibly took it for granted they are the teacher; you are the student and its very well defined relationship. Outside of this it's interesting, the guys are just like me and like my colleagues and it's useful</p>
------------------------------------	---	--	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students see staff as more approachable 	<p>participate were appropriate, some other students couldn't."</p> <p>Sf4 "We are more conscious of 'looking after' students we know our first years and look after them very well. We have even counselled three off the course, they would not have succeeded and success for them was not BS, success was going somewhere else. We do this more now than in the past – because we know them better and know how to engage them better."</p>	<p>to see them more as people and not just as lecturers."</p> <p>St5 "It's different now than when I was at school. At school, you're taught that there is a respect line between the teacher and student. When I came back to Uni at 29/30, I still felt that way, that I was going in to school as a kid. You sit quietly. It's nice to see them outside of that environment."</p> <p>St4 "I'm a student rep and that how I became involved. I was asked to come to a meeting, it was very friendly and it made me feel like part of a team – not them and us. They kept it all down to earth and not too formal. At the start I didn't know much about it, but I then became aware it's about improving the course for next year. To make it better particularly for revalidation. I can also feedback aspects of the course that aren't working well."</p> <p>St4 "Most of the staff know me by first name. I have a more close relationship with staff."</p> <p>St4 "School teachers tell you that uni lecturers don't care about you, they say we do too much for you.. I found that it is not true, the lecturers here are very good – much better relationship here with the lecturers. "</p>
--	---	---	---

			<p>St3 “I think it’s good; we would get together with the tutors and get feedback. We have class reps and I was one last year, we would go around and ask other students what could be done to be improved. It’s good for the tutors to be on our kind of level. There’s not this feeling of petrified of going to speak to the tutors Through the drawing classes the tutors are creating their own work and once we see them working we think we need to work. It’s good to have that crossover.”</p> <p>St1 “Having this partnership could be very beneficial - bring them closer together”</p>
<p>Transference of engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff working with students in workshops is motivational for students and removes fear of approaching staff – promotes learning together ethos LC • Confidence of student partner rubs off in class and promotes engagement of others LC • Increases class engagement LC 	<p>Sf5 “In the SSP, the social integration is important. We included more field trips this year, the social integration was fantastic – students saying things like – are you new here? – have you many friends here? The relationships were then carried back into the workshops. One student had assumed that others knew each other and she felt on the outside, but realised they didn’t and she was immediately drawn in... seeing that before my very eyes has reminded me of the importance of the need for social integration”.</p>	<p>St6 “There is an idolisation of professors as experts especially for a first year student. With the programme in particular it’s kind of overrunning in the class. In law, we allowed too many class reps, it then goes into the classroom – and it translates that there are a lot more questions being asked in the classroom.”</p> <p>St6 “It rubs off on the other students – when they hear questions being asked, it gives them confidence to speak up? In the past there would only be 30 seconds of questions, now it could be up to 20 minutes and I think it’s down to the barriers being broStaff4 down. After the first</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student rep role useful in breaking down staff student barriers E • Student partner can act as an intermediary for other students LC • Students see staff as passionate about their subject 	<p>Sf5 “We are very good at what we do educationally – it’s all there but if they are lonely coming in and they have nowhere to sit or no one to talk to then this will impede learning. Social opportunities are the big thing”.</p> <p>Sf5 “The social thing is not just between students – its students and staff as well. Our big colour day was fantastic – there was a lot of banter going on. There was a sense of a teaching cohesive team and everyone was learning together. If you can transfer that into your subject then that would be exciting – drawing students into that disciplinary community. For students to witness that would be fantastic – you couldn’t give a lecture on that”.</p> <p>Sf1 “At induction, I’ve tried to make it more user-friendly and social and brought in the pre-arrival activity”.</p>	<p>meeting, there seemed to be a whole change in the class.”</p> <p>St5 “If I’m being honest, I found one of the lecturers difficult, I didn’t expect I would enjoy their company outside of UNi, but I did, and if I was to be lectured by him again, I probably would be more receptive to him and by his style.”</p>
<p>Changes in approach that promote active engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More engaged LC • More inclusive LC • Different perspective LC • Pressure to perform well academically LC • Now know students better and how to engage them LC 	<p>Sf3 “Prompts questioning/re-examination of teaching philosophy “it’s given me an opportunity to sit back and reflect what do you want to do as a teacher?”</p> <p>Sf3 “I’ve spent more time thinking about what I want to achieve, taking that approach of being a facilitator has given me the space to explore further</p>	<p>St4 “Its a better idea, it gives us a voice and also gives staff a feeling that helps them make decisions about how they can shape the course. It can help them differentiate the course form other Unis, to make the course more interactive and more engaging, unless they can bounce</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes mindsets (motivational) LC • SSP Promotes motivation and commitment to complete course LC • SSP can promote a change in the learning environment LC • SSP promotes a change in style of delivery – you feel more relaxed – they feel more relaxed LC • SSP – don't see students as a cohort now – know them individually II LC • Allows staff to monitor progress and spot issues and 'at risk' students LC • Prompts reflection of delivery style PD LC • Strengthens link between content and assessment LC • Academics have to let go – students are experts in their student experience LC • SSP prompts reexamining of teaching philosophy PD LC 	<p>and rather than trying to cover everything, I can focus on one aspect which causes difficulty and we will focus on this. I can direct the students to the independent study better – its made me less worry about transmitting information out and focus on how to use class time better. I've become more open to risk-taking in classroom" e.g. ibook innovation e.g. flipped classroom – I have to build trust that they will read before they come to class. There is an aspect of role modeling of what I want the students to do.</p> <p>Sf2 "you notice a difference, its more open and free in terms of what you can say and they say and it helps with the delivery of the content and you feel more relaxed and they feel more relaxed"</p> <p>Sf2 "you can track their progress better and you can read more signs and be more atuned to what's going on and spot the issues. With a larger group you focus on the content and the delivery."</p> <p>Sf2 "Yes, there has been a big change in my approach to my teaching. It has made me question a lot of how I deliver the work, the link between the content and the</p>	<p>the ideas off students it doesn't really help them that much."</p> <p>St4 "A lot of the questions that are discussed, they invite our input, the way the SU does it doesn't work. There's not really much tying up. The SSP gives us our course and its focused on helping us whereas the SU is a more global view."</p> <p>St4 "problems within the course are dealt with by the people organising the course rather than a couple of intermediaries and you can get your points of view across easier. E.g. Lecturer had tried a different approach to what we were used to and we struggled as he didn't give us notes. I spoke to Greg and got it changed... it was fixed the following week and the lecturer was willing to adapt his approach."</p> <p>St4 "Willing to engage more in class and ask questions, more confident. I'm willing to give out answers. I've grew much more confidence since becoming involved in this."</p> <p>St4 "I am used as a window to the lecturers by other students I think. I'm now happy to email the lecturers to ask a question if I'm stuck."</p> <p>St3 "I would have stepped back more. I would have been casual, now I am there for other students, I am like a counsellor.</p>
--	--	---	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct students to independent study better LC • Less concerned with transmitting information – focus now on using class time better LC • More open to risk-taking in class rooms LC • More role-modeling LC PD • Clarifies expectations • Higher level students supporting first-years is beneficial – perceived as more approachable • SSP • students can inform staff decisions – particularly on course-related decisions LC • 	<p>assessment has been strengthened. Even now in the middle of assessment, I feel better about it, intended outcomes, module deliverables.”</p> <p>Sf4 “We do a lot of group work now, we have a first year project, various land surveying activities so that the students get to know each other. Students meet socially in the learning environment – linked to the sense of belonging. Our students know each other well now better than before. This makes a difference e.g. MK ran a focus group and noticed the banter between them we noticed in the past that groups of students who commuted from Fermanagh wouldn’t have mixed with the others but now they do.”</p> <p>Sf2 “The field trip should probably happen at the start and be used as an ice breaker. It helped with the socializing and the group work. At the beginning I tried to allocate roles even cooking dinner and cleaning up. They were starting to organize themselves.”</p> <p>Sf2 “We do a lot of group work now, we have a first year project, various land surveying activities so that the students get to know each other. Students meet socially in the learning</p>	<p>Even chatting in the car on the way to the residential with the students was very interesting.”</p> <p>St3 “There was fun in the dyeing day – it’s not just a one day event – everyone is using the fabrics now in their work. Our studio space has changed a lot from last year when it was just drawing, now its full of fabrics. There has been opportunities – foe us partners to be able to experience it”</p> <p>St3 “I want to teach and how students are learning. The issues that are being brought up by other teams and the proposed solutions are giving me a different perspective. I am used to the creative industries and I think collaborative projects would be interesting. For example, within Belfast, architecture and Vis com.”</p> <p>St1 “I think (...) that (...) I’ve become more confident, I come from a background of retail management, I have a degree in ancient history from when I was younger but even compared now with then, I maybe wouldn’t have had as much confident speaking to the lecturers. Coming back to the university for the 2nd time and becoming a class rep, it’s almost I have become more confident, maybe it’s just an age thing, I’m more confident speaking to the lectures. More confident with – people are coming to me with issues – I think</p>
--	--	---	---

		<p>environment – linked to the sense of belonging. Our students know each other well now better than before. This makes a difference e.g. MK ran a focus group and noticed the banter between them we noticed in the past that groups of students who commuted from Fermanagh wouldn't have mixed with the others but now they do.”</p> <p>Sf4 “get a social network going, a social mix within the group.”</p> <p>Sf5 “SSP has been great. We have done quite a few things perhaps otherwise we wouldn't. Being part of a bigger team is useful and talking to others from different disciplines”.</p>	<p>there are other class reps who are younger and are not confident in speaking out. I just think I've become more confident, more of an advocate, it's maybe given me more of a role in the class!! I feel as if I'm doing a good job like, I think its maybe helped me to settle back into university again, and it's made me feel like I want to finish the course more and there is a less chance of me dropping out maybe, but that isn't a typical experience of everybody else because they obviously aren't a class rep but for me personally it's given me more involvement. It's made me more likely to finish.”</p> <p>St1 “I think, compared to other people who are thinking of dropping out, I think it's because they feel they are left to their own devices or something like that. I feel as if I'm in more contact with the school, I feel it would be harder for me not to finish my course. So maybe that is exactly why we would be doing something exactly like this – because I've even noticed a change in myself that I feel as if I'm definitely going to finish this and there are others who aren't in this kind of role and they are feeling a bit 50/50.”</p> <p>St7 “As a student mentor, I see variations in ug student learning. When I am teaching, I have to decide on most appropriate model – this is a challenge but</p>
--	--	---	---

			it allows me to learn how to differentiate teaching methods’.
Challenges			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time/physical barriers C • Uncertainty about value of input C • Difficult to get initial ‘buy-in’ • Wary C • Staff delay/abruptness in responding to students is a barrier C • Student cohort size matters – large numbers inhibit relationship development whilst smaller cohort size is an advantage C • Being a student partner requires additional student effort – more work – more commitment etc. C • ‘them’ and ‘us’ can prevail particularly at the beginning of first year III C • secondary school ethos can prevail – its 	<p>Sf3 “A challenge is being able to let go and trust my students, I’ve had to let go the notion that I know best, that I know what the students are experiencing”</p> <p>Sf1 “when students starting paying fees they became customers – sense of entitlement – they expect the answer.”</p>	<p>St6 “Knowing when to come forward and speak. There always is a divide and that will never change. It’s hard to know when your input is valuable and whether or not to sit back. Even if I have idea, I’m never sure whether it’s valuable or not. Sometimes as a class rep I try very hard to represent the views of the entire class but that is not always possible. It’s not inhibitive but it’s something that I try to do.”</p> <p>St5 “You’re not entirely certain which of your points were valid or not valid. As a student you are the person there with the least amount of knowledge, as much as it was good to be in that environment – possibility more knowledge due to the fact that you are there as the student but I think that overall your opinions are less important than those of the lecturers who are administering the course.”</p> <p>St5 “when I agreed to do this. I didn’t realise there was going to be a residential or set times for meetings. If I realised there would be meetings during day time hours, I probably would have turned down the opportunity to do this. I was invited to this 12 months ago, if I hadn’t been to the residential, my involvement would have</p>

	<p>good to see Uni as alternative C</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can be a stick to beat staff with C • staff can feel threatened C • since fees were introduced – students became customers – student expectations too demanding – expect answers to exams C • in teaching, staff have become more defensive C • Levels of partnership - depends on what you want to achieve C • Time is a challenge C • Need to clarify and manage expectations II C • 		<p>been one meeting and one letter and I wouldn't have been happy with that.”</p> <p>St3 “Time! Meetings not as regular as they should be. There should be an allocated time for this. Maybe second years could do daring workshops with the first years and we could feedback to the tutors how this goes. Balancing the time from my own studies to make time for this. I don't mind, other students might.”</p> <p>St3 “Big problem we don't know students in fine art or architecture. SU has a role to play here. Its lost here, very little events run here. I was chatting to my house mates, there's no SU vibe here. I would love to create something, a welcome pack, give new students a memory pen, a lanyard with UU logo, a sketchbook with logo – creates a sense of belonging. I now want to aim projects at doing things like that, I would love to put forward designs for that – I would even pay for it myself.”</p> <p>St1 “Well... its probably about the time thing... time constraints, physicality problems, where if there is anything that needs discussed, it might be hard to... everybody has busy lives, that might be a barrier.”</p> <p>St1 “It's almost something negative, I feel that because people are always asking me things... about assignments and stuff like</p>
--	---	--	--

			that, it almost puts you under pressure to do well.”
Recommendations			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • students believe that staff need to be approachable and be interactive in teaching style R • students need to push themselves outside of their comfort zone – input – ask questions R • students want more interdisciplinary working R • needs to be a SSP agreement – clarification of roles R • Field trip as an enabler – students working together – getting to know each other and lecturers – students took a lead role in organizing themselves and allocating roles E • Trust is key BR • Confidence in the course structure by staff – we have to present that in the right way R 	<p>Sf4 “We do a lot of group work now, we have a first year project, various land surveying activities so that the students get to know each other. Students meet socially in the learning environment – linked to the sense of belonging. Our students know each other well now better than before. This makes a difference e.g. MK ran a focus group and noticed the banter between them we noticed in the past that groups of students who commuted from Fermanagh wouldn’t have mixed with the others but now they do.”</p> <p>Sf2 “The field trip should probably happen at the start and be used as an ice breaker. It helped with the socializing and the group work. At the beginning I tried to allocate roles even cooking dinner and cleaning up. They were starting to organize themselves.”</p> <p>Sf2 “We do a lot of group work now, we have a first year project, various land surveying activities so that the students get to know each other. Students meet socially in the learning environment – linked to the sense of belonging. Our students know each</p>	<p>St6 “I think there should be more integration between the different schools. From a couple of the bigger meetings, a lot of people are of the same opinion; everybody is doing individual things e.g. social sciences. The social work is separate from the law school. It might be nice for the students to come together, that law students could mix with other students – this could start at induction. Very little social element at Magee, I think the SU has forgotten about the social element, they are doing good work in relation to finances. I haven’t really talked to a student outside of law, or a year above me. I have loved the opportunity to talk to other students at the SSP events.”</p> <p>St3 “The class rep is useful to get across to staff what the students want. In first year, you are part of a bigger group and you are crossing over workshops, in second year it’s more personal and the tutors get to know your name. One girl was too timid to approach staff when her dad died and she asked me to do it for her.”</p> <p>St3 “in our first year, we had artists in residence, they were so much help to us. If they had a student in first year to help</p>

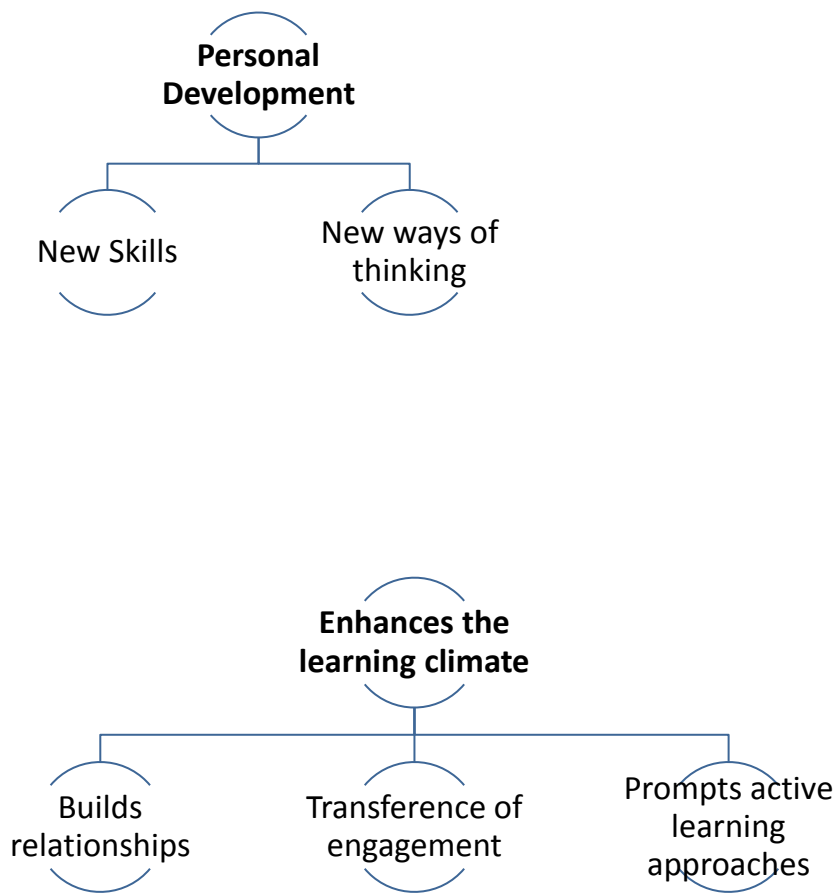
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social networks as an enabler E • SSP should be part of the culture • SSP requires flexible teaching approaches • There needs to be a willingness to adapt • Students want staff to be open, friendly and confident • Staff need to make learning fun – be creative • Small group teaching develops first years' self-confidence • Provide a framework for students that charts the student journey • Enabler for learning – opportunity for social integration • Draw students into disciplinary CoP • Continued feedback from students is good – students coming back from placement bring back industry intelligence • Disseminating outcomes of SSP is beneficial – may 	<p>other well now better than before. This makes a difference e.g. MK ran a focus group and noticed the banter between them we noticed in the past that groups of students who commuted from Fermanagh wouldn't have mixed with the others but now they do."</p> <p>Sf4 "get a social network going, a social mix within the group."</p> <p>Sf2 "There has to be trust, if you say something you must follow through. Confidence in the course structure by staff, we have to present that in the right way, confidence that this is the right course for them. It goes right back to belonging... the student needs to feel that, you need the right staff, the right pathway, and the building up of trust over the three years."</p> <p>Sf4 "I think partnership needs to be formalised in relation to expectations. Then if there is conflict between the relationship/Uni they would know where they stand and there could be a mediation process to resolve it. A clarification of roles would be useful e.g. in schools there is an agreement where school pupils sign up to parameter's etc.</p>	<p>break you in and give you confidence in your work, that placement opportunity would be brilliant. Some second years are going to big companies but not always getting a great experience."</p> <p>St3 "I think crossover the students belonging with second year. Doesn't cost anything to setup a FB, I set our FB page when I was class rep. Every day without fail, someone posts something up on it, you tube clips, links etc. It keeps the students informed. Everybody says it helps them so much... we feel closer as a year group, particularly when were out of class, we post up questions when we're at home. Some of the mature students are getting FB because of hearing us talk about it."</p> <p>StJ "You know the CTNET, if you need something you post it and you get an instant answer from staff"</p> <p>St1 "I feel that in the role that I have here (...) it's weird – if they have any issues – I feel that they come to me – it's almost that they feel that they have a link to the nursing staff through me or they almost fell oh Student1 will know what to do or she'll be able to find out – so I almost feel that they like having that intermediary – that they would be happier to come and ask me about something than go straight to the staff"</p>
--	--	--	---

	<p>influence other staff to get involved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create roles for students that provide opportunity for benefits of SSP to be realised • Survey students who are out in industry <p>CSF</p>	<p>The student charter is used to address concerns or pursue appeals but it is not a reciprocal document. It's used in the sense – a student can threaten us with the charter. Especially with students paying fees – there can be a consumer approach, we are paying to get a service and we expect certain things. Overall, I am positive about a partnership approach in the broader sense.”</p> <p>Sf4 “There are other staff not engaging in the SRS. Not sustainable going forward”</p> <p>Sf3 Need to manage expectations from the start.</p> <p>Sf6 “I do think it is worthwhile to engage in SSP. Continual feedback from the student is good. You can get a feeling from the class that they understand something or not. You need somebody that they can go to if they don't understand. The student demonstrators need to be well prepared too and that they know what to expect. The preparedness of the partners is crucial”.</p> <p>Sf6 “Industry intelligence being brought back to the curriculum delivery e.g. the students having to</p>	<p>St6 “We were very lucky with the lecturers in semester 1, so we had really good teachers who were encouraging students. No matter how good your university – unless you have a lecturer who is interactive you won't be able to participate. Approachability is a good word to use – most of the school of law are encouraging. It surprised me how approachable they are in relation to my expectations.”</p> <p>St5 “First thing I would say is to get involved – see it as something that is of benefit – to advance your ideas and opinions and that everyone's ideas and opinions are valid. I would say – take it seriously – engage properly – don't see it as a way – don't enter into it in a spirit that you will get something out of it for very little effort.” “People shouldn't get involved if they can't commit”.</p> <p>St5 to explore other means of meeting up – e.g. Skype</p> <p>St4 “Try and be very open and honest and as friendly as possible. For students, input and ask questions, you will get used to it over time. Your confidence will develop. Introverted students will find it hard. Try and talk and go with the flow....” “Service based is one option but very clinical. It should be more educational, different from other sectors. It should be based on relationships and these should</p>
--	--	---	---

		<p>use whiteboards at interview to assess students' ability to solve problems".</p> <p>Sf5 "The social thing is not just between students – its students and staff as well. Our big colour day was fantastic – there was a lot of banter going on. There was a sense of a teaching cohesive team and everyone was learning together. If you can transfer that into your subject then that would be exciting – drawing students into that disciplinary community. For students to witness that would be fantastic – you couldn't give a lecture on that".</p> <p>Sf5 "having students around at open days, interview day is critical – they remember what it is like for new prospective students. Outward facing occasions – these roles are critical. We have layers of partnership – right from open nights, pre-entry, getting students in there to talk to prospective students. Create roles for students.</p>	<p>be developed. Some lecturers are very smart but not good at interpersonal skills.... To be a successful lecturer, you don't have to just know your area; you need to get your point across in a way that students understand it. You're wasting your time if you're spooning out theory; students won't engage and won't remember it. Why would I come here to be bored to death for two hours?</p> <p>St3 Some lecturers try and use jokes or change tone of voice this helps, two hour lectures and two hour seminar works well."</p> <p>"we're all creative people and you learn so much from them, you learn off each other. More work needs to be in at the start... New students are given summer projects and its hard to know if you are doing it right and you feel lost and scared to come in to Uni. I suggested to tutors to make students feel that they belong from day 1 so that they don't choose another university instead of us. They should push that at open days – getting them sorted with accommodation, rather than spending a whole summer freaking out. Get them in a few weeks before they start – come in for a workshop to create a sketchbook in a couple of days working with the 2nd and 3rd years. Ice breakers don't really work, it's better to have the students actually doing something productive together which helps them get to know each other."</p>
--	--	--	---

			<p>St3 “Rather than staff decide alone – consult with the students – perhaps second years...on what would work in first year. If money was available it could be used on different things that would impact on the students directly.”</p> <p>St1 “SSP would definitely help, almost as if we could explain to the lecturer how people are feeling and if there’s better communication then this could reduce the number of emails that they are receiving.”</p> <p>St7 “SSP should be part of the culture – its very important as there is a lot of variation in students”</p> <p>St7 “SSP is a very good approach and staff have to be open-minded, confident and friendly... sometimes to get students engaged – you need to be creative – make learning fun and articulate the benefits”.</p> <p>St7 “small group learning is very good – I see the development in first years’ confidence”.</p>
--	--	--	--

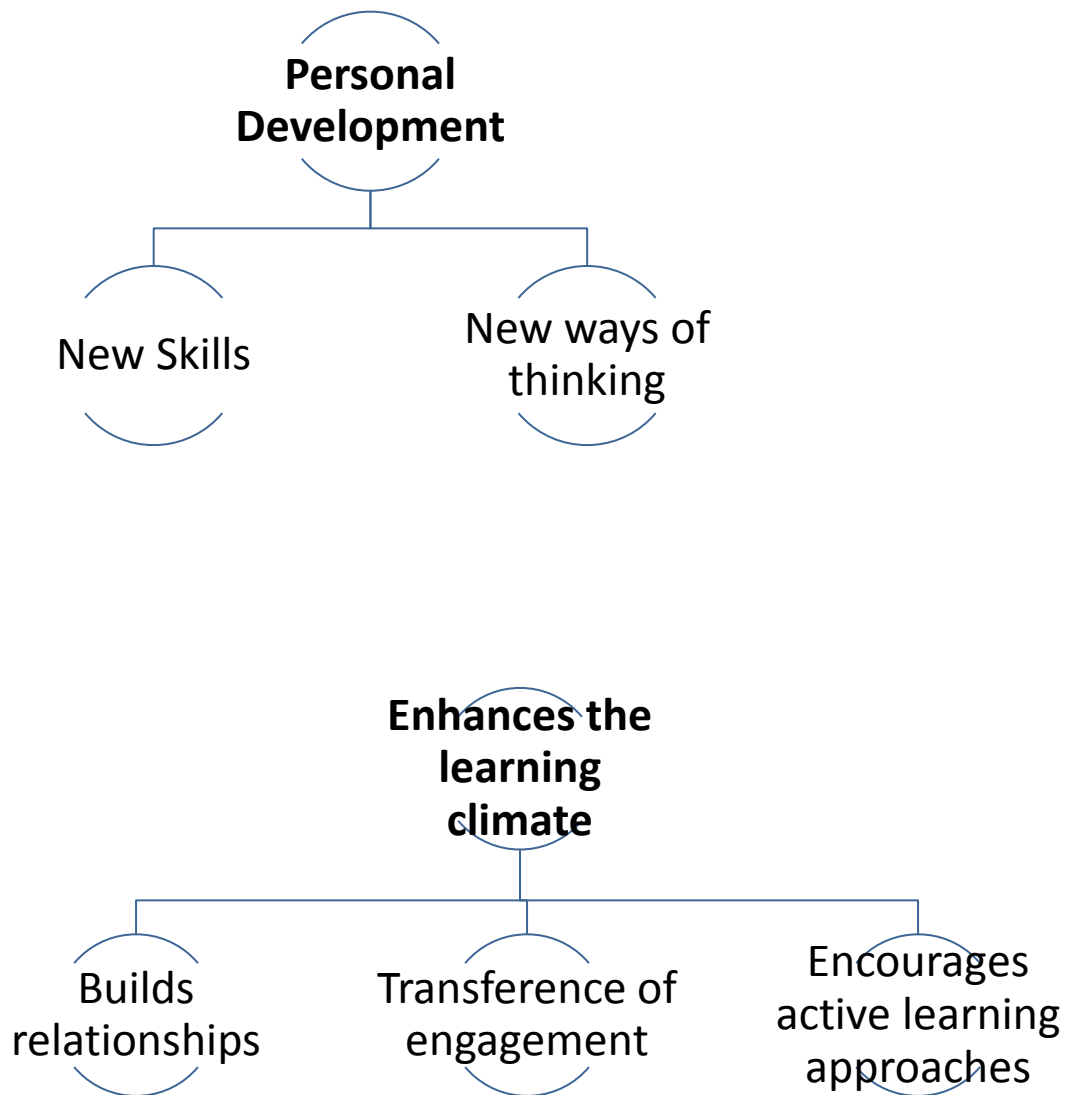
Thematic map, showing two main themes
Outcomes of SSP for staff and students



Appendix 10 Phase 5 Thematic map, showing two main themes

(Braun and Clarke 2006)

Benefits of SSP for staff and students



Glossary of Terms

AUSSE	Australian Survey of Student Engagement
CHERP	Centre for Higher Education Research and Practice, Ulster University
DEL	Department for Employment and Learning
HE	higher education
HEA	Higher Education Academy
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council England
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
ICED	International Consortium for Educational Development
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ISSE	Irish Survey of Student Engagement
NSS	National Student Survey
NSSE	National Survey of Student Engagement
NSSE-China	China Survey of Student Engagement
NUS	National Union of Students
OfS	Office for Students
PgCHEP	Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Practice
PFHEA	Principal Fellow Higher Education Academy
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
SaP	Students as Partners
SASSE	South African Survey of Student Engagement
SE	Student Engagement
SoTL	Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
SU	Students' Union
TEF	Teaching Excellence Framework
UES	University Experience Survey
Ulster	Ulster University
UUSU	Ulster University Students' Union
WWSRS	What Works? Student Retention & Success Change Programme

References

- Adams, J., Hayes, J. and Hopson, B. (1976). *Transition: understanding and managing personal change*. London: Martin Robertson.
- Ahern, K. (1999). Pearls, pith, and provocation: ten tips for reflexive bracketing. *Qualitative Health Research*, 9 (3), 407- 411.
- Allin, L. (2014). Collaboration between staff and students in the scholarship of teaching and learning: the potential and the problems. *Teaching & Learning Inquiry: The ISSOTL Journal*, 2 (1), 95-102. Available from <http://dx.doi.org/10.2979/teachlearning.2.1.95> [Accessed 30 August 2016].
- Ambrose, S. A., Bridges, M.W., DiPietro, M., Lovett, M.C. and Norman, K. (2010). *How learning works: seven research-based principles for smart teaching*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Argyris, C. and Schön, D. (1974). *Theory in practice: increasing professional effectiveness*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Ashford, P., Handal, G., Hole, C., Land, R., Orr, M. and Phipps, A. (2004). Who are 'we'? who are 'you'?, who are 'they'? issues of role and identity in academic development. In: Elvidge, L (ed.) *Exploring academic development in higher education: issues of engagement*. Cambridge: Jill Rogers Associates, 71-82.
- Astin, A. (1984). Student involvement: a developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Development*, 40 (5), 518-529. Available from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/220017441_Student_Involvement_A_Development_Theory_for_Higher_Education [Accessed 10 January 2013].
- Aubrey, B. (2010). *Managing your aspirations: developing personal enterprise in the global workplace*. Asia: McGraw-Hill.
- Badge, J, Yakovchuk, Hancock, A. and Porter A. (2011). Working together to reduce plagiarism and promote academic integrity: a collaborative initiative at Leicester. In: Little, S. (ed.) *Staff-student partnerships in higher education*. London: Continuum,48-61.
- Barnes, E., Goldring, L., Bestwick, A. and Wood J. (2011). A collaborative evaluation of student-staff partnership in inquiry-based educational development. In: Little, S. (ed.) *Staff-student partnerships in higher education*. London: Continuum,16-30.
- Bassot, B. (2013). *The reflective journal*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Baxter Magolda, M.B. (2009). Educating students for self-authorship: learning partnerships to achieve complex outcomes. In Kreber, C. (ed.) *The university and its disciplines*. Abingdon: Routledge, 143-156.

Beachboard, M., Beachboard, J., Li, W. and Adkinson, S. (2011). Cohorts and relatedness: self-determination theory as an explanation of how learning communities affect educational outcomes. *Research in Higher Education*, 52 (8), 853–874. Available from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41483821> [Accessed 12 May 2016].

Berger, P. L., and Luckman, T. (1967). *The social construction of reality: a treatise in sociology of knowledge*. New York: Irvington Publishers.

Biggs, J. and Tang, C. (2011). *Teaching for quality learning at university*, 4th ed. Berkshire: McGraw-Hill.

BIS (Department for Business Innovation and Skills) (2011). *Higher education white paper: students at the heart of the system*. Available from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-students-at-the-heart-of-the-system--2> [Accessed 30 March 2016].

BIS (Department for Business Innovation and Skills) (2016). *Success as a knowledge economy: teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice*. Available from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-success-as-a-knowledge-economy-white-paper> [Accessed 4 August 2016].

Black, I. (2006). The presentation of interpretivist research. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 9 (4), 319–324. Available from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/13522750610689069> [Accessed 17 September 2014].

Bovill, C. (2013). An investigation of co-created curricula within higher education in the UK, Ireland and the USA. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 51(1), 15-25. Available from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2013.770264> [Accessed 8 June 2014].

Bovill, C., Cook-Sather, A. and Felten, P. (2011). Students as co-creators of teaching approaches, course design and curricula: implications for academic developers. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 16 (2), 133-145. Available from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2011.568690> [Accessed 20 June 2014].

Bovill, C., Cook-Sather, A., Felten, P., Millard, L. and Moore-Cherry, N. (2015). Addressing potential challenges in co-creating learning and teaching: overcoming resistance, navigating institutional norms and ensuring inclusivity in student–staff partnerships. *Higher Education*, 71 (2), 195-208. Available from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10734-015-9896-4> [Accessed 20 February 2016].

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3 (2), 77-101. Available from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a> [Accessed 13 September 2014].

Brint, S., A. Cantwell, and R. Hanneman. (2008). The two cultures of undergraduate academic engagement. *Research in Higher Education*, 49, 383 - 402.

Brooks, R. (2014). *What role do students' unions play in today's HE system?* Department of Sociology, University of Surrey. Available from <https://blogs.surrey.ac.uk/sociology/2014/08/20/what-role-do-students-unions-play-in-todays-he-system/> [Accessed 24 April 2016].

Brooks, R., Byford, K. and Sela, K. (2016). Students' unions, consumerism and the neo-liberal university. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 37 (8), 1211-1228. Available from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2015.1042150> [Accessed 8 December 2016].

Browne, J. (2010). *Securing a sustainable future for higher education: an independent review of higher education funding and student finance*. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. Available from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/422565/bis-10-1208-securing-sustainable-higher-education-browne-report.pdf [Accessed 4 August 2016].

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods*. 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bryson, C. (2014a). Clarifying the concept of student engagement. In: Bryson, C. (ed.) *Understanding and developing student engagement*. Abingdon: Routledge, 1-22.

Bryson, C. (2014b). Reflections, and considerations about the future of student engagement. In: Bryson, C. (ed.) *Understanding and developing student engagement*. Abingdon: Routledge, 231-240.

Bryson, C. (2015). Opinion piece: on researching, advancing and inspiring student engagement (RAISE). In: Lea, J. (ed.) *Enhancing learning and teaching in higher education: engaging with the dimensions of practice*. Berkshire: Open University Press, 163-165.

Bryson, C., Cooper, G. and Hardy, C. (2010). Reaching a common understanding of the meaning of student engagement. Paper presented at Society of Research into Higher Education Conference, December 14–16, in Wales.

Cannell, S. (2012). *Proposed model of student engagement at ulster*. Available from <https://www.ulster.ac.uk/centrehep/sws.html> [Accessed 24 June 2013].

Chan, Z. C., Fung, Y., and Chien, W. (2013). Bracketing in phenomenology: only undertaken in the data collection and analysis process. *The Qualitative Report*, 18(30), 1-9. Available from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol18/iss30/1> [Accessed 14 January 2014]

- CHERP (2016). Centre for Higher Education Research and Practice. Ulster University. Available from <http://www.ulster.ac.uk/centrehep/> [Accessed 29 April 2016].
- Chickering, A. and Gamson, Z. (1987). Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. *American Association for Higher Education Bulletin*, 39, 3-7.
- Clance, P.R., and Imes, S.A. (1978). The impostor phenomenon in high achieving women: dynamics and therapeutic interventions. *Psychotherapy: Theory Research and Practice*, 15, 241-247.
- Coates, H. (2006). *Student engagement in campus-based and online education: university connections*. London: Routledge.
- Coates, H. and McCormick, A.C. (2014). Student engagement – a window into undergraduate education. In: Coates, H. and McCormick, A.C. (eds.) *Engaging university students: international insights from system-wide studies*. New York: Springer, 1-12.
- Coates, H. and Radloff, A. (2014). Broader strategies for developing student engagement. In: Coates, H. and McCormick, A.C. (eds.) *Engaging university students: international insights from system-wide studies*. New York: Springer, 139-150.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2011). *Research methods in education*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Cook-Sather, A. (2011). Teaching and learning together: college faculty and undergraduates co-create a professional development model. *To Improve the Academy*, 29, 219-232.
- Cook-Sather, A. (2014). Student-faculty partnership in explorations of pedagogical practice: a threshold concept in academic development. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 19 (3), 186-198.
- Cook-Sather, A., Bovill, C. and Felten, P. (2014). *Engaging students as partners in learning and teaching: a guide for faculty*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Cook, A. (2015). *Partnership working across UK public services*. Edinburgh: What Works Scotland. Available from <http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/> [Accessed 12 September 2016].
- Costley, C, Elliott, G. and Gibbs, P. (2010). *Doing work based research: approaches to enquiry for insider-researchers*. London: Sage.
- Cox, M.D. (2001). Student-faculty partnerships to develop teaching and enhance learning. In: Miller, J.E., Groccia, J.E. and Miller, M.S. (eds.) *Student-assisted teaching: a guide to faculty-student teamwork*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing Company, 168-171.

Crawford, K., Horsley, R., Hagyard, A. and Derricott, D. (2015). *Pedagogies of partnership: what works*. York: HEA. Available from <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/project/pedagogies-partnership-what-works> [Accessed 10 December 2015].

Creswell, J.W. (2003). *Research design: qualitative and quantitative and mixed-method approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J.W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Crosling, G., Thomas, L. and Heagney, M. (eds.) (2008). *Improving student retention in higher education*. New York: Routledge Falmer.

Curran, R. (2015). *Building capacity for student engagement through a staff-student partnership approach*. Coleraine: CHERP, Ulster University: Available from <http://wiki.ulster.ac.uk/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=36601885> [Accessed 01 December 2015]

Curran, R. (2016a). Staff-student partnership as a catalyst for student engagement for all. In: *University of Glasgow 9th Annual Learning and Teaching Conference*, 12 April 2016. Available from <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/learningteaching/events/annuallearningandteachingconference/conferenceprogrammeandregistration/#d.en.441393> [Accessed 29 April 2016].

Curran, R. (2016b). Building capacity for student engagement through a staff-student partnership approach. Unpublished poster presentation. In: 5th Internal Conference on Professional Doctorates, Titanic Belfast, 15-16 March 2016.

Curran, R. and Millard, L. (2015). A partnership approach to developing student capacity to engage and staff capacity to be engaging: opportunities for academic developers. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 21 (1), 67-78. Available from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2015.1120212> [Accessed 10 March 2016].

Department of Employment and Learning (DEL) (2012). *Graduating to success: a higher education strategy for Northern Ireland*. Available from <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/higher-education-strategy-documents> [Accessed 17 May 2012].

Delpish, A., Holmes, A., Knight-Mckenna, M., Mihans, R., Darby, A., King, K. and Felten, P. (2010). Equalising voices: student-faculty partnership in course design. In: Werder, C. and Otis, M.M. (eds.) *Engaging student voices in the study of teaching and learning*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 96-114.

Denicolo, P. and Becker, L. (2012). *Developing research proposals*. London: Sage.

Dickerson, C., Jarvis, J. and Stockwell, L. (2016). Staff–student collaboration: student learning from working together to enhance educational practice in higher education. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 21 (3), 249-265. Available from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2015.1136279> [Accessed 10 September 2016].

Drake, P. and Heath, L. (2011). *Practitioner research at doctoral level: developing coherent research methodologies*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Dunne, E. and Zandstra, R. (2011). *Students as change agents - new ways of engaging with learning and teaching in higher education*. Bristol: A joint University of Exeter/ESCalate/Higher Education Academy Publication. Available from <http://escalate.ac.uk/8064> [Accessed 12 May 2014].

Elder, L. (1996). Critical thinking and emotional intelligence. *Inquiry: critical thinking across the disciplines*, 16 (2) 35-49. Available from <http://dx.doi.org/10.5840/inquiryctnews199616211> [Accessed 3 October 2016].

Entwistle, N. (2009). *Teaching for understanding at university: deep approaches and distinctive ways of thinking*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Eraut, M. (1994). *Developing professional knowledge and competence*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Falchikov, N. (2001). *Learning together: peer tutoring in higher education*. London: Routledge.

Finlay, L. (2009). Debating phenomenological research methods. *Phenomenology & Practice*, 3 (1), 6-25. Available from <https://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/pandpr/article/view/19818> [Accessed 11 September 2014].

Finlay, L. (2014). Engaging phenomenological analysis. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 11 (2), 121-141. Available from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2013.807899> [Accessed 11 September 2014].

Fischer, C.T. (2009). Bracketing in qualitative research: conceptual and practical matters. *Psychotherapy Research*, 19 (4-5), 583-590. Available from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10503300902798375> [Accessed 3 May 2014].

Flint, A. (2015). Students and staff as partners in innovation and change. *Journal of Educational Innovation, Partnership and Change*, 1 (1). Available from <https://journals.gre.ac.uk/index.php/studentchangeagents/issue/view/35> [Accessed 20 June 2015].

Flint, A. (2016). Moving from the fringe to the mainstream: opportunities for embedding student engagement through partnership. *Student Engagement in Higher Education Journal*, 1 (1). Available from

<https://journals.gre.ac.uk/index.php/raise/issue/view/46/showToc> [Accessed 7 September 2016].

Fox, M., Martin, P. and Green, G. (2008). *Doing practitioner research*. London: Sage.

Fredricks, J.A., Blumenfeld, P. and Paris, A. (2004). School engagement: potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, 74, 59–109.

Fry, H. and Ketteridge, S. (2009). Enhancing personal practice: establishing teaching and learning credentials. In: Fry, H, Ketteridge, S. and Marshall, S. (eds.) *A handbook for teaching and learning in higher education: enhancing academic practice*. 3rd ed. Abingdon: Routledge, 469-484.

Gardner, H. (1993). *Frames of mind: the theory of multiple intelligences*. New York: Basic Books.

Ghaye, T. (2011). *Teaching and learning through reflective practice: a practical guide for positive action*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Gibbs, G. (1998). *Learning by doing: a guide to teaching and learning methods*. Oxford: Further Education Unit, Oxford Polytechnic.

Gibbs, G. (2014). *Student engagement, the latest buzzword*. Times Higher Education, 1 May. Available from <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/student-engagement-the-latest-buzzword/2012947.article> [Accessed 12 April 2016].

Gibbs, G. (2016). *53 powerful ideas all teachers should know about: 'student engagement' is a slippery concept*. SEDTA: online. Available from: <http://www.seda.ac.uk/53-powerful-ideas> [Accessed 12 April 2016].

Gibbs, G. R. (2007). *Analysing qualitative data*. London: Sage.

Gilmore, S. and Anderson, V. (2016). The emotional turn in higher education: a psychoanalytic contribution. *Teaching In Higher Education*, 21 (6), 686–699. Available from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2016.1183618> [Accessed 25 October 2016].

Grbich, C. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis*. 2nd ed. London: Sage.

Gulikers, J., Bastiaens, T. and Kirschner, P. (2004). A five-dimensional framework for authentic assessment. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 52 (3), 67-85.

Handel, G. (2008). Identities of academic developers: critical friends in the academy? In: Barnett, R. and Di Napoli, R. (eds.) *Changing identities in higher education*. Abingdon: Routledge, 55-68.

Hack, C., McKillop, A, Sweetman, S. and McCormack, J. (2015). An evaluation of resource development and dissemination activities designed to

promote problem based learning activities at Ulster University. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 52 (2), 218-228.

Hardy, C. and Bryson, C. (2009). Student engagement: paradigm change or political expediency? York: HEA. Available from <http://www.adm.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/features/student-engagement-paradigm-change-or-political-expediency/> [Accessed 10 December 2015].

Harper, S.R. and Quaye, S.J. (2015). Making engagement equitable for students in U.S. education. In: Quaye, S.J. and Harper, S.R. (eds.) *student engagement in higher education: theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for diverse populations*. Abingdon: Routledge, 1-14.

Harrington, K., Sinfield, S. and Burns, T. (2016). Student engagement. In: Pokorny, H. and Warren, D. (eds.) *Enhancing teaching practice in higher education*. London: Sage, 106-124.

Havergal, C. (2015). Should students be partners in curriculum design? *Times Higher Education*, 17 December. Available from <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/should-students-be-partners-in-curriculum-design> [Accessed 10 January 2016].

HEA (2011). *UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF)*. York: HEA, Guild HE, Universities UK. Available from <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ukpsf> [Accessed 29 October 2012].

HEA (2013a). *What Works? student retention and success change programme: phase 2*. York: HEA. Available from <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/enhancement/themes/retention-and-success/what-works-student-retention-and-success-change-programme> [Accessed 29 May 2013].

HEA (2013b). *Ulster vision statement*. Available from https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/srs_ulster_vs2_0.pdf [Accessed 30 March 2016].

HEA (2014). *Students as partners change programme 2012-13: An overview of the programme, participating institutions and case studies*. York: HEA. Available from <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/download/students-partners-programme-compendium-2012-13> [Accessed 14 April 2016].

HEA (2015). *Framework for Student engagement through partnership*. York: HEA. Available from <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/enhancement/frameworks/framework-student-engagement-through-partnership> [Accessed 12 April 2016].

Healey, M. and Jenkins, A. (2009). *Developing undergraduate research and inquiry*. York: HEA. Available from: <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resource/developing-undergraduate-research-and-inquiry> [Accessed 10 December 2015].

- Healey, M., Flint, A. and Harrington, K. (2014). *Engagement through partnership: students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education*. York: HEA. Available from https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/resources/engagement_through_partnership.pdf [Accessed 10 December 2015].
- Holmwood, J., Hickey, T, Cohen, R. and Wallis, S. (2016). *In defence of public higher education: knowledge for a successful society*. The Convention for Higher Education. Available from <https://heconvention2.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/awp1.pdf> [Accessed 14 September 2016].
- Husserl, E. (1982). *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy: general introduction to a pure phenomenology*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Husserl, E. (1999). *The idea of phenomenology (Husserliana: Edmund Husserl - Collected Works)*. The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publications.
- Hutchings, C., Bartholomew, N. and Reilly, O. (2013). Differential student engagement: lessons learned. In: Nygaard, C., Brand, S., Bartholomew, P. and Millard, L. (eds.) *Student engagement: identity, motivation and community*. Faringdon: Libri Publishing, 125-144.
- Illeris, K. (2014). *Transformative learning and identity*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Ingham, D. (2016). An answer from research to the Teaching Excellence Framework – student engagement and graduate engagement to evidence legacy. *Student Engagement in Higher Education Journal*, 1 (1). Available from <https://journals.gre.ac.uk/index.php/raise/issue/view/46/showToc> [Accessed 7 September 2016].
- Jackson, S. and Morris, K. (1994). *Looking at partnership teaching in social work qualifying programmes*. London: CCETSW.
- Jarvis, J. and Graham, S. (2015). *'It's all about the shoes': exploring the perspectives of others and ourselves in teacher education*. York: HEA. Available from <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/its-all-about-shoes-exploring-perspectives-others-and-ourselves-teacher-education> [Accessed 10 December 2015].
- Jarvis, J., Dickerson, C. and Stockwell, L. (2013). Staff-student partnership in practice in higher education: the impact on learning and teaching. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 90, 220-225. Available from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.07.085> [Accessed 10 June 2015].
- Jarvis, J., Dickerson, C., Clark, K., Stockwell, L. and Clark, A. (2016). *Partnership learning communities*. York: HEA. Available from https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/university_of_hertfordshire.pdf [Accessed 26 October 2016].

- Jarvis, P. (1994). Learning Practical Knowledge. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 18 (1), 31-43.
- Jones, G. (2012). Supporting staff to be supporters. In: Morgan, M. (ed.) *improving the student experience: a practical guide for universities and colleges*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Kahler, T. (1975). Drivers - The key to the process script. *Transactional Analysis Journal*, 5 (3), 280-284.
- Kahn, P. (2014). Theorising student engagement in higher education. *British Educational Research Journal*, 40 (6), 1005-1018. Available from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/berj.3121> [Accessed 26 June 2015].
- Kahu, E. (2013). Framing student engagement in higher education, *Studies in Higher Education*, 38 (5), 758-773.
- Keenan, C. (2014). *Mapping student-led peer learning in the UK*. York: HEA. Available from https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Peer_led_learning_Keenan_Nov_14-final.pdf [Accessed 22 July 2015].
- Kember, D. (1997). A reconceptualisation of the research into university academics conceptions of teaching. *Learning and Instruction*, 7(3), 255–275.
- Kolb, D. (1984). *Experiential learning: experience as the source of learning and development*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Krause, K. (2005). *Understanding and promoting student engagement in university learning communities*. Keynote address at James Cook University Symposium, Queensland, 21 September 2005. Available from http://melbourne-cshe.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/1761523/Stud_eng.pdf [Accessed 23 June 2015].
- Krause, K. and Coates, H. (2008). Students' engagement in first-year university. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 33 (5), 493-505. Available from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02602930701698892> [Accessed 24 June 2015].
- Krause, K., Hartley, R., James, R., and McInnis, C. (2005). *The first year experience in Australian universities: findings from a decade of national studies*. The University of Melbourne. Available from <http://melbourne-cshe.unimelb.edu.au/research/experience/the-first-year-experience-in-australian-universities> [Accessed 24 June 2015].
- Knight, P. and Yorke, M. (2003). *Assessment, learning and employability*. Maidenhead, UK: Society for Research in Higher Education and the Open University Press.

- Kreber, C. (2009). Supporting student learning in the context of diversity, complexity and uncertainty. In Kreber, C. (ed.) *The university and its disciplines*. Abingdon: Routledge, 3-18.
- Kuh, G. (2001). Assessing what really matters to student learning: inside the national survey of student engagement. *Change*, 33 (3), 10-17.
- Kuh, G. (2008). *High-impact educational practices*. Association of American Colleges and Universities. Available from https://keycenter.unca.edu/sites/default/files/aacu_high_impact_2008_final.pdf. [Accessed 19 June 2015].
- Kvale, S. (2007). *Doing interviews*. London: Sage.
- Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: legitimate peripheral participation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Lea, J. (2016). Turning down the volume control on student voice in order to enhance student engagement. *Student Engagement in Higher Education Journal*, 1 (1). Available from <https://journals.gre.ac.uk/index.php/raise/issue/view/46/showToc> [Accessed 7 September 2016].
- Leach, L. and Zepke, N. (2012). Student engagement in learning: facets of a complex interaction. In: Solomonides, I., Reid, A. and Petocz, P. (eds.) *Engaging with learning in higher education*. London: Libri, 231-256.
- Levy, P., Little, S. and Whelan, N. (2011). Perspectives on Staff-Student Partnerships in Learning, Research and Educational Enhancement. In: Little, S. (ed.) *Staff-student partnerships in higher education*. London: Continuum, 1-15.
- Lincoln, Y., and Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. London: Sage.
- Little, S., Sharp, H., Stanley, L., Hayward, M., Gannon-Leary, P., O'Neill, P. and Williams, J. (2011). Collaborating for staff-student partnerships: experiences and observations. In: Little, S. (ed.) *Staff-student partnerships in higher education*. London: Continuum, 215-226.
- Locke, W., Whitchurch, C., Smith, H. and Mazonod, A. (2016). *Shifting landscapes: meeting the staff development needs of the changing academic workforce*. York: HEA. Available from <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resource/shifting-landscapes> [Accessed 30 April 2016].
- Luft, H. (1984). *Group processes, an introduction to group dynamics*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield.
- Macfarlane, B. (2017). *Freedom to learn*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Marquis, E., Puri, V., Wan, S., Ahmad, A., Goff, L., Knorr, K., Vassileva, J. and Woo, J. (2016). Navigating the threshold of student-staff partnerships: a

case study from an Ontario teaching and learning institute. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 21 (1), 4-15. Available from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2015.1113538> [Accessed 10 March 2016].

Masson, A. (2012). *Viewpoints project*. Bristol: Jisc. Available from <http://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20140614084142/http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/elearning/curriculumdesign/viewpoints.aspx> [Accessed 10 March 2016].

Matthews, K.E. (2016). Students as partners as the future of student engagement. *Student Engagement in Higher Education Journal*, 1 (1). Available from <https://journals.gre.ac.uk/index.php/raise/issue/view/46/showToc> [Accessed 7 September 2016].

McCormick, A.C. and Kinzie, J. (2014). Refocusing the quality discourse: the United States national survey of student engagement. In: Coates, H. and McCormick, A.C. (eds.) *Engaging university students: international insights from system-wide studies*. New York: Springer, 13-30.

McCulloch, A. (2009). The student as co-producer: an alternative to the student as consumer metaphor. *Studies in Higher Education*, 34 (2), 171-183.

McGregor, D. (1960). *The human side of enterprise*. New York: McGraw Hill.

McInnis, C. (2001). *Signs of disengagement? the changing undergraduate experience in Australian universities*. The University of Melbourne. Available from <https://minerva-access.unimelb.edu.au/handle/11343/33660> [Accessed 25 June 2015].

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *Phenomenology of perception*. C Smith (trans.) London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. (Original work published in 1945).

Metcalf, D., Gibson, C and Lambert, C. (2011). A collaborative foray into undergraduate publishing. In: Little, S. (ed.) *Staff-student partnerships in higher education*. London: Continuum, 169 -184.

Meyer, J.H.F. and Land, R. (2003). Threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge: linkages to ways of thinking and practicing. In: Rust, C. (ed.) *Improving student learning - theory and practice ten years on*. Oxford: Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development (OCSLD), 412-424.

Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Miles, M.B. and Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Montesinos, I., Cassidy, D. and Millard, L. (2013). Student employment and the impact on student motivations and attitude towards university. In:

Nygaard, C., Brand, S., Bartholomew, P. and Millard, L. (eds.) *Student engagement: identity, motivation and community*. Faringdon: Libri Publishing, 109–124.

Morgan, D.L. (1998). *Focus groups as qualitative research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Morgan, M. (2012). The context of learning in higher education. In: Morgan M. (ed.) *Improving the student experience: a practical guide for universities and colleges*. Oxon: Routledge, 3-14.

Morrish, L. (2016). Why I think the TEF is pushing elite universities towards privatisation. *Times Higher Education*, 22 July. Available from <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/blog/why-i-think-tef-pushing-elite-universities-towards-privatisation> [Accessed 14 September 2016].

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. London: Sage.

Neary, M. (2016). Raised voices: from student engagement to political engagement. *Student Engagement in Higher Education Journal*, 1 (1). Available from <https://journals.gre.ac.uk/index.php/raise/issue/view/46/showToc> [Accessed 7 September 2016].

Neary, M. and Winn, J. (2009). The student as producer: reinventing the student experience in higher education. In: Bell, L., Stevenson, H. and Neary, M. (eds.) *The future of higher education: policy, pedagogy and the student experience*. London: Continuum, 126-138.

Northedge, A. and McArthur, J. (2009). Guiding students into a discipline: the significance of the teacher. In Kreber, C. (ed.) *The university and its disciplines*. Abingdon: Routledge, 107-118.

NSSE (2015). *National survey of student engagement*. Indiana University. Available from <http://nsse.indiana.edu/html/about.cfm> [Accessed 19 June 2015].

NUS (2012a). *Understanding the barriers to student engagement*. National Union of Students. Available from http://tsep.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/NUS_QAA-BarriersReport_V2.pdf [Accessed 4 August 2016].

NUS (2012b). *A manifesto for partnership*. National Union of Students. Available from <http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/a-manifesto-for-partnership>. [Accessed 29 April 2013].

Nygaard, C., Brand, S., Bartholomew, P. and Millard, L. (eds.) *Student engagement: identity, motivation and community*. Faringdon: Libri Publishing.

O'Donoghue, T. (2007). *Planning your qualitative research project: an introduction to interpretivist research in education*. Abingdon: Routledge.

- Osterman, K.F. and Kottkamp, R.B. (2004). *Reflective practice for educators*, 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Pace, R. (1982). *Achievement and the quality of student effort*. report to the department of education. Washington, DC: ERIC. Available from <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED227101> [Accessed 24 June 2015].
- Pascarella, E. and Terenzini, P. (1991). *How college affects students: findings and insights from twenty-years of research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Pascarella, E. and Terenzini, P. (2005). *How college affects students volume 2: a third decade of research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Pauli, R., Raymond-Barker, B. and Worrell, M. (2016). *The impact of pedagogies of partnership on the student learning experience in UK higher education: a psychological perspective*. York: HEA. Available from <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resource/impact-pedagogies-partnership-student-learning-experience-uk-higher-education> [Accessed 10 September 2016].
- Pintrich, P.R. and Schunk, D.H. (2002). *Motivation in education: theory, research and applications*. New Jersey: Merrill-Prentice Hall.
- Pittaway, S. and Moss, T. (2013). Student engagement in and through orientation. In: Dunne, E. and Owen, D. (eds.) *The Student engagement handbook: practice in higher education*. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing, 275-290.
- Pittaway, S.M. (2012). Student and staff engagement: developing an engagement framework in a faculty of education. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(4), 37- 45. Available from <http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2012v37n4.8> [Accessed 20 August 2015].
- Popovic, C. and Green, D. (2012). *Understanding undergraduates: challenging our perceptions of student success*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Prosser, M. and Trigwell, K. (1999). *Understanding learning & teaching: the experience in higher education*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Punch, K. (2005). *Introduction to social research: quantitative and qualitative approaches*. London: Sage.
- Punch, K.F. (2009). *Introduction to research methods in education*. London: Sage.
- QAA (2008). *Frameworks for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. Available from <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2718#.VvuzOFI3e7Y> [Accessed 01 December 2012].

QAA (2014). *UK Quality code for higher education: general introduction*. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. Available from <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=181#.V88me1JLU7Y> [Accessed 6 September 2016].

Ramsden, P. and Callender, C. (2014). *Literature review [part of the review of the national student survey report to the UK higher education funding bodies]*. London: NatCen Social Research, The Institute of Education, University of London and the Institute for Employment Studies. Available from <http://www.natcen.ac.uk/media/457945/nss-lit-review-.pdf> [Accessed 24 June 2015].

Rees, J., Mullins, D. and Bovaird, T. (2012). *Research report 88: partnership working*. Birmingham: Third Sector Research Centre. Available from <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/generic/tsrc/publications/> [Accessed 12 September 2016].

Rogers, C. (1961). *On becoming a person*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Roulston, K. (2010). *Reflective interviewing: a guide to theory and practice*. London: Sage.

Sambell, K. and Graham, L. (2011). Towards an assessment partnership model? students' experiences of being engaged as partners in assessment for learning (AfL) enhancement activity. In: Little, S. (ed.) *Staff-student partnerships in higher education*. London: Continuum, 31-47.

Savin-Baden, M. and Howell Major, C. (2013). *Qualitative research: the essential guide to theory and practice*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Scullion, R., Molesworth, M. and Nixon, E. (2011). Arguments, responsibility and what is to be done about marketisation. In: Molesworth, M., Scullion, R. and Nixon, E (eds.) *The marketisation of higher education and the student as consumer*. Oxon: Routledge, 227-236.

Seidman, I. (1998). *Interviewing as qualitative research: a guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Silverman, D. (2013). *Doing qualitative research*. London: Sage.

Smith, J. (ed.) (2003). *Qualitative psychology: a practical guide to research methods*. London: Sage.

Smith, J.A., Flowers, P. and Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis*. London: Sage.

Smith, M.J. (1998). *Social science in question*. London: Sage Publications in association with the Open University.

Smyth, R. (2003). Concepts of change: enhancing the practice of academic staff development in higher education. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 8 (1-2), 51-60. Available from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1360144042000277937> [Accessed 8 December 2016].

Solomonides, I. (2013). A relational and multidimensional model of student engagement. In: Dunne, E. and Owen, D. (eds.) *The student engagement handbook: practice in higher education*. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Ltd., 43-58.

Solomonides, I. and Martin, P. (2008). All this talk of engagement is making me itch: an investigation into the conceptions of engagement held by students and tutors. In: Hand, L. and Bryson, C. (eds.) *SEDA Special 22: Aspects of Student Engagement*. London: SEDA.

Thomas, L. (2002). Student retention in higher education: the role of institutional habitus. *Journal of Education Policy*, 17 (4), 423-42.

Thomas, L. (2012). *Building student engagement and belonging in higher education at a time of change: final report from the what works? student retention & success programme*. Available from <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resource/building-student-engagement-and-belonging-higher-education-time-change-final-report-what> [Accessed 15 December 2015].

Tinto, V. (1987). *Leaving college: rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tomlinson, M. (2014). *Exploring the impact of policy changes on students' attitudes and approaches to learning in higher education*. York: HEA. Available from <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/exploring-impacts-policy-changes-student-approaches-and-attitudes-learning-contemporary-higher> [Accessed 10 December 2015].

Trede, F., Macklin, R. and Bridges, D. (2012). Professional identity development: a review of the higher education literature. *Studies in Higher Education*, 37 (3), 365-384.

Trowler, V. (2010). *Student engagement literature review*. York: HEA. Available from https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/studentengagementliteraturereview_1.pdf [Accessed 23 June 2015].

Trowler, V. and Trowler, P. (2010). *Student engagement evidence summary*. York: HEA. Available from https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/studentengagementevidencesummary_1.pdf [Accessed 23 June 2015].

UES (2014). *University experience survey*. Graduate Careers Australia. Available from

<http://www.graduatecareers.com.au/research/surveys/university-experience-survey/> [Accessed 23 June 2015].

Ulster University (2010). *Policy for the governance of research involving human participants and the accompanying procedures*. Ulster University. Available from <http://research.ulster.ac.uk/rg/docs/0711PolicyHumanResearch.pdf> [Accessed 30 November 2013].

Ulster University (2013). *Learning and teaching strategy, 2013/14 -2017-18*. Ulster University. Available from <http://www.ulster.ac.uk/tls/> [Accessed 29 October 2013].

Ulster University (2016). *Five & fifty: five year strategic plan fiftieth year strategic vision (2016-2034)*. Available from <https://www.ulster.ac.uk/fiveandfifty> [Accessed 3 October 2016].

Umbach, P.D. and Wawrzynski, M.R. (2005). Faculty do matter: the role of college faculty in student learning and engagement. *Research in Higher Education*, 46 (2), 153–184.

UNESCO (2009). *Global education digest: comparing education statistics across the world*. Available from <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/global-education-digest.aspx> [Accessed 30 March 2016].

Universities UK (2015). *Patterns and trends in UK higher education 2015*. Available from <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/facts-and-stats/data-and-analysis/Pages/patterns-and-trends-uk-higher-education-2015.aspx> [Accessed 6 September 2016].

van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching the lived experience: human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. New York: State University of New York Press.

van Teijlingen, E. R. and Hundley, V. (2001). *The importance of pilot studies. social research update*. Department of Sociology, University of Surrey. Available from <http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/SRU35.html> [Accessed 24 April 2016].

Waters, J. (2000). *Phenomenological research guidelines*. Capilano University. Available from <https://www.capilanou.ca/programs-courses/psychology/student-resources/research-guidelines/Phenomenological%20Research%20Guidelines/> [Accessed 24 April 2016].

Weller, S. (2016). *Academic practice: developing as a professional in higher education*. London: Sage.

Wenger, E. (1999). *Communities of practice: learning, meaning and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wertz, F.J. (2011). A phenomenological psychological approach to trauma and resiliency. In: Wertz, F.J., Charmaz, K., McMullen, L., Josselson, R., Anderson, R. and McSpadden, E. (eds.) *Five ways of doing qualitative analysis: phenomenological psychology, grounded theory, discourse analysis, narrative research, and intuitive inquiry*. New York: Guilford Press, 124–64.

Williams, C. (1982). *The early experiences of students on Australian university campuses*. Sydney: University of Sydney.

Willis, J., Inman, D. and Valenti, R. (2010). *Completing a professional practice dissertation: a guide for doctoral students and faculty*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Wimpenny, K. and Savin-Baden, M. (2013). Alienation, agency and authenticity: a synthesis of the literature on student engagement. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 18 (3), 311-326. Available from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2012.725223> [Accessed 20 April 2014].

Woods, P. (2006). *Qualitative research*. Plymouth: Faculty of Education, University of Plymouth. Available from <http://www.edu.plymouth.ac.uk/resined/qualitative%20methods%202/qualrsh m.htm> [Accessed 6 December 2014].

Zepke, N. and Leach, L. (2010). Improving student engagement: ten proposals for action. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 11 (3), 67-177.