Understanding the role of pedagogy in the reproduction of social inequalities within Higher Education: a Bernsteinian analysis

By

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ABSTRACT

This research study examines the role of pedagogy in the reproduction of social inequalities within higher education (HE). This is examined in the context of student employability by focusing on a series of lectures that ran throughout the academic year 2018-19 at a Russell Group university in the United Kingdom, and semi structured one-to-one interviews with six first year undergraduate students studying business and management at that university.

The study draws of Basil Bernstein's theory of pedagogic practice (Bernstein, 2000). Aided by his concepts of classification and framing, and horizontal and hierarchical knowledge structures, I explore the classed nature of pedagogic practices and how these may act as a barrier to student learning. Bernstein's theory of pedagogic practice was drawn upon to systematically analyse the pedagogic practices in relation to social class, and the data from the student interviews was analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Lecture observations and interview data were brought together to bring an understanding of how these practices might re-enforce inequalities through implicit class based assumptions that they carry.

The findings of the study show how during students' transitionary period to university pedagogic practices can restrict students' ability to affirm their position and sense of fit within HE, and re-enforce feelings of anxiety and uncertainty through class based assumptions relating to what they know about HE. The findings also show how pedagogic practices can reproduce social inequalities through class based messages relating to the way that advice and instructions are given to students and also with respect to what they should already know about graduate employment. The findings highlight the need for Higher Education Institutions and the Government more broadly to recognise the classed nature of pedagogy.

Contents

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Glossary of acronyms

BAME:	British, Asian and mixed ethnicity
CV:	Curriculum Vitae
ERA:	Education Reform Act
HE:	Higher Education
HEI:	Higher Education Intuitions
FSM:	Free School Meals
GBCS:	Great British Class Survey
HEFCE:	The Higher Education Funding Council for England
HESA:	Higher Education Statistics Agency
IPA:	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
POLAR:	Participation of Local Areas
SOC:	Standard Occupational Classification
The Code:	The Code of Human Research Ethics
UK:	United Kingdom

Chapter 1- Introduction

1.0 Introduction to the study

This study examines how pedagogic practices might re-enforce social inequalities within the classroom. This is examined in the context of a series of timetabled employability sessions that were held throughout the year. The study focuses on the experiences of six working-class students in their first year studying a business and management degree at a Russell Group[1] university in the United Kingdom (UK), in the academic year 2018-19.

1.1 Research questions

The primary research question asked in the study was:

1. *Does pedagogic practice (purposefully or inadvertently or implicitly) reproduce social inequalities and how might this be happening?*

This question was further supplemented by the following sub questions:

2. *How are the pedagogic practices classified and framed?*
3. *How does the observed classification and framing potentially impact student learning?*
4. *How did the students experience the teaching sessions?*
5. *What are the implications of the findings for the way in which pedagogic practices might contribute to the reproduction of social equalities?*

The questions were explored using a combination of semi-structured interviews with students and through the observation of teaching sessions over the one year period of the research. The methodology of the study is further explored in chapter four.

1 The term Russell Group refers a self-selected group of 24 highly selective research intensive universities in the UK

In the remaining sections of this introduction the rationale for the study is firstly discussed. Following this, an overview of Bernstein's theory of pedagogic practice is given (Bernstein, 2000) and the rationale for drawing on the theory in this study is explained. My positionality as a researcher is then discussed and finally the structure of the thesis is outlined.

1.2 Rationale for the study

My motivation for undertaking this piece of research originated from my experience as a senior lecturer in a Management School at a Russell Group university where careers and employability support is provided outside of the curriculum. There is much debate in the literature about what is meant by the term 'employability' and the subsequent measure of it (Tymon, 2013), for purposes of this study, employability is defined as,

> *a set of achievements, skills, understandings and personal attributes, that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy (Yorke, 2004, p. 410).*

Over a period of six years, I have consistently seen a significant minority of students not engaging with the opportunities available to them to develop their employability credentials beyond their programme of study. This is despite employability being one of the main reasons that students give for attending university (Balloo et al., 2017; Tomlinson, 2012). To establish a need for the study I undertook a preliminary review of the literature and policy documents to understand the current issues in the field, I also drew on the assignments completed in part one of this degree of Doctor of Education .

From this review three issues emerged which influenced the scope and focus of the study. Firstly, the significance of a student's socio-economic background to the way that they experience higher education (HE) (Boliver, 2011); studies show how students from lower socio-economic groups find HE to be a much more difficult environment to thrive and feel

comfortable in when compared to their middle-class peers (Reay, 2021). Secondly, how these differences extend to the relative success of students in securing graduate level employment (Britton et al., 2019) and finally the intersectionality between class and other student characteristics such as ethnicity and gender. Class is used as the primary structural factor for the study as there is enough evidence in the literature to suggest that social class is significant in its own right (HEFCE, 2018; Reay et al., 2005; Sayer, 2005), however the literature also indicates that intersections with these other groupings, might impact the degree to which students are likely to need employability support and engage with its different forms. Findings from qualitative studies show how race can adversely influence student's experience of HE, this includes difficulties that students from minority ethnic backgrounds face identifying with HE and also in establishing relationships with academic and support staff (UUK and NUS, 2019). Studies show how these issues can impact student attainment and also how students are able to realise their aspirations (Stevenson et al., 2019). There is also evidence in the literature that suggests that gender can be significant in determining how successful students will be in securing a graduate job (Cornell et al., 2020). Despite female students consistently outperforming male students with respect to academic attainment at all stages of education (including HE) (Richardson et al., 2020), male students are more likely to gain graduate employment in highly skilled jobs (Atkinson et al., 2018). There is also within the literature there is a well-documented gender pay gap for graduates which is not accounted for by structural factors such as subject studied, institution, prior attainment, social background or ethnicity (Cornell et al. 2020). Qualitative students suggest that male students take a more strategic approach to employability, recognise the importance of building their curriculum vitae (CVs) and are more confident selling

themselves to employers than their female peers, although there is evidence that these differences are tempered once social class is controlled for (Stevenson and Clegg, 2012).

My reading of the literature and also my own experiences in a post-92 institution and at my current institution show how many of the above issues are magnified at Russell Group institutions (Finnegan and Merrill, 2017) and, where careers support is delivered outside of the curriculum (Bennett, 2019). The literature therefore suggested that my own institution would form a suitable critical case for review.

My decision to focus on exclusionary pedagogy in employability practices also reflects my personal experiences and my reading of the literature. There is a significant body of literature which shows how HEIs may contribute to, rather than address issues of inequality, as an educator in HE I have an interest and a responsibility to understand how actions in the classroom are a contributory factor.

HE globally has undergone a period of significant expansion over the last 50 years with many developed countries transitioning from what Trow (1974) refers to as elite to mass systems of education. Government policy has been a key enabler to this expansion and this reflects the importance that countries have placed on building a knowledge based economy for competitive advantage (Becker, 1993), and also the role of HE in addressing issues of social inequality through enabling social mobility (Archer, 2007).

This expansion and the associated results have largely been targeted and measured through student participation rates and the narrative is one of success (Coulson et al., 2017). Most developed countries are trending towards participation rates of 50% and have seen increased participation across all socio-economic groups (Marginson, 2016). However beneath these headline numbers is a large body of evidence which shows the classed nature

of HE, and how students from lower socio-economic groups do not benefit from HE to the same extent as their middle-class counterparts (Reay, 2021; Coulson et al., 2017; Reay, 2012). Studies also show that class can impact the way in which students interact with all aspects of HE. Class influences where students choose to study (Boliver, 2011), the way in which students engage with their studies and broader university life (Greenbank, 2007) and their career prospects on graduation (Britton et al., 2019).

Much of the research to date that has sought to understand why students from different socio-economic backgrounds experience HE differently, largely draws on Bourdieu's concepts and in particular his notions of field, capital and habitus (Webb et al., 2017). Studies show how, when students enter the 'field' of HE, they are entering a field whose institutional habitus is aligned to the habitus of middle-class students and how this is to the exclusion of other student groups. Whilst institutions in the same way as individuals should be capable of change, Bourdieu argues that by virtue of their collective nature they are less fluid than their individual habituses and therefore whilst HE has expanded, it has expanded in a way that has maintained its middle-class origins (Bourdieu, 1998).

What is less well understood is how these inequalities can be eradicated (Reay, 2012). The dominant discourse in this area is based on a deficit model which conceptualises the problem as being that of the students lacking the right type and quantity of capital (O'Shea, 2016) and therefore proposed solutions focus on how students are supported in bridging the gap (Smit, 2012). Critics of such an approach argue that there is an absence of evidence to support deficit thinking as an effective way of addressing inequalities within HE (McKay and Devlin, 2016), they identify the need for higher education institutions (HEIs) to find more suitable responses to the diversity of the student body. This includes responses which recognise class based structural issues that exist within HE and do not just conceptualise the

problem as one belonging to the individual. For example, Reay (2018), in a study examining how a group of high achieving working-class students successfully managed the transition to an elite UK university concluded,

Once we recognise that excluding behaviour is a consequence of the middle class and upper class institutional culture in Russell Group universities in the UK rather than being attributable to deficits or self-exclusion in the individual working-class student, it becomes clear that the institution needs to be the focus for radical change rather than the working-class individual (Reay, 2018, p. 538).

This study contributes to this body of literature by examining how pedagogic practices within a HEI might act to re-enforce inequalities within the classroom.

1.3 Contextualisation of the study

The focus of the study are 1st year students studying a business and management degree at a Russell Group University. My experience of teaching business and management students is that the students tend to be unsure about their future careers, the students know that their degree will be help them secure a graduate job, however exactly how this will translate to the workplace is unclear to many of the students when they enter HE. Employability provision therefore needs to support students in developing their career aspirations in addition to realising them.

The cohort consisted of approximately 300 students, of which approximately 18% were from Black, Asian and mixed ethnicity (BAME) backgrounds, of which 5% were Black, 16% had a declared disability, 4% were mature students and 22% were from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR4, groups one or two). The available cohort data did not report on gender or the intersectionality of these different student characteristics.

1.4 Theoretical framework – Bernstein's theory of pedagogic practice

I have been drawn to the work of the sociologist Basil Bernstein and in particular his theory of pedagogic practice as a lens through which to analyse this problem. His theory offers a way of understanding student learning which considers the complexity of the relations between a student's life and their experiences of teaching-learning environments in HE (McLean et al., 2013). Of particular relevance to this study, is that Bernstein's approach focuses on structures within intellectual fields and how knowledge is transferred within these structures through what Bernstein refers to as the pedagogic device. In Bernstein's words,

> *between power and knowledge and knowledge and consciousness is always the pedagogic device. The uneven production, reproduction and transformation of culture are regulated through three components of the pedagogic device: distribution rules, contextualising rules and evaluating rules (Bernstein, 1990, p. 181).*

The theory enables issues of inequalities to be examined from the perspective of institutional practices and how these impact student learning, rather than positioning the problem as one belonging to the individual (i.e. a deficit model). Whilst Bernstein in his work does not himself specifically refer to deficit approaches and the alignment of his theory to these approaches, he consistently refers to the purpose of his work being to create models to understand how issues of power and control manifest themselves within pedagogy i.e. they relate to issues belonging to an institution or system. Bernstein's theory of pedagogic practice is discussed in more depth in chapter three of this thesis.

1.5 Researcher positionality

Bourke (2014) proposes that to achieve pure objectivism is a naive quest, he suggests that the nature of research means that it is reasonable to expect that the researcher's positionality with respect to their beliefs, values and background are important variables which have a bearing on the research process. Bourke clarifies that as researchers we can strive to remain objective, but as researchers we must be mindful and acknowledge to ourselves and our audience our positionality. My motivation to undertake this study has predominantly been driven by my experiences of teaching within HE. This experience has been a catalyst for me to reflect on my own experiences of education and also on my experiences in employment prior to teaching in HE. I am a qualified accountant and prior to joining HE as a lecturer I worked as an accountant for over 17 years, for the final three years holding a senior position in a large multinational organisation. My first role in HE was as a lecturer at a post 1992[2] university and after three years in this role, in 2012 I joined my current university which is a member of the Russell Group of universities, and based on university rankings would be considered a more prestigious university.

Prior to joining my current institution I would argue that my views on and experiences of education very much aligned to the neo-liberal principals which underlies most government policy. I would describe myself as a white middle-class female, both of my parents went to university and there was always an unstated expectation that I would go to university, and after graduation work in some type of profession. By taking advantage of the opportunities that school and HE provided to me I achieved this with relative ease. I very much believed in meritocracy; good grades at school would lead to being accepted at a good university which

2 The term refers to former polytechnics or colleges which were given university status through the Further and Higher Education Act in 1992.

would lead to a good job. I did not question this destiny at any point during my education, it was simply the path that I followed.

My position has changed significantly since joining my current institution, which reflecting on my experiences, is due to two observations. Firstly, the path that I followed to employment is no longer viable for many students; the growth in participation rates in HE from the 19.3% (Dearing, 1997) when I started my undergraduate studies to the near 50% rates of the current day (DfE, 2019), has not been matched by an equivalent demand for graduate level jobs and therefore students need to and do take, a much more strategic approach to graduate employability. Students cannot just take for granted that a good degree will result in employment in a field of their choice. Secondly, given the need to take this strategic approach and despite significant investment in my department to provide students with support and opportunities to develop their employability credentials, there are a significant minority of students who do not take advantage of these opportunities. I have observed this from a student perspective in my role as a personal supervisor, and also from the perspective of teaching teams in my broader role as Programme Director for undergraduate studies at the Management School. Since joining my current institution, the need to increase engagement with departmental employability initiatives has been a recurring conversation. My observations have led me to want to gain a deeper understanding of the issue.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

The first chapter of the thesis covered the rationale for the study and also my positionality as a researcher. In chapter two the relevant literature is reviewed. Given the frequency with which the term working class will be used within this thesis, the review starts by discussing the challenges of problematising working class within HE and the way in which working class

is defined within the study is explained and justified. Following this, the nature of the expansion of HE within the UK with a focus on structural hierarchies and the associated issues of how students from different socio-economic groups experience HE is discussed. The literature review then focuses more specifically on the role of HE in supplying appropriately skilled students to the graduate labour markets in the context of the expansion of HE and examines how issues of equality extend to graduate employment. In chapter three, Bernstein's theory of pedagogic practice is discussed in more detail. The concepts within his theory that will be drawn upon are discussed in more depth, previous studies which have drawn on Bernstein's theory to understand issues of social inequality are examined and finally the limitations of his theory are considered. In chapter four the methodological approach and the methods for the study are presented and justified. In chapter five the findings from the analysis of the student interviews are discussed (research question four), and in chapter six the findings from the analysis of the teaching sessions through Bernstein's conceptual lens are discussed (research questions two, three and five). Chapter seven brings together the findings from the student interviews and the analysis of the teaching sessions to address the overarching research question. Finally, chapter eight concludes the thesis, a summary of the findings are given, limitations of the study are presented and recommendations for policy and practice are discussed. The chapter concludes with my final thoughts on the study.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.0 Introduction to the literature review

The focus of this study is a group of working-class students and therefore I considered it important in the first section of the literature review to examine the challenges of problematising the construct of working class in the context of HE.

Following this, the next two sections focus on the expansion of HE within the UK. The reasons for this expansion and the approach taken to achieve this growth is examined, with an emphasis on structural hierarchies and issues of social inequality relating to student access and attainment.

The next section focuses more specifically on the teaching of employability. The initial discussion considers the role of HEIs in supplying labour markets with appropriately skilled graduates in the context of the changing HE landscape, and examines how issues of equal access and attainment extend to the graduate labour markets. In this section the intersectionality between class and other student characteristics such as gender and ethnicity is examined. Following this, how causes of inequalities are conceptualised within the literature are discussed, this section focuses on how discourse is dominated by deficit models and the limitations of these approaches. Finally, the different models adopted by HEIs to develop student employability are examined. The discussion considers the influence of Government policy in shaping how employability is defined and measured, and identifies the need to understand how issues of inequality extend beyond the implementation of Government strategy to practices within the classroom.

Exploring these areas of research offers an opportunity to identify gaps in the knowledge base relating to how HE might contribute to the reproduction of social inequalities and therefore provides a rationale for the study.

2.1 Problematising working class in HE

2.1.2 Class analysis within HE

As a researcher whilst I recognise that drawing on class as an analytical tool is problematic and its relevance has been challenged, I am not overly concerned by this for reasons explained below. Much of this criticism relates to issues of theorisation and in particular the validity of Weberian and Marxist theoretical conceptualisations of class, both of which have encountered challenges to their relevance in explaining changes in modern society (Savage, 2002). Marx's main insight into class analysis was to explain class formation and show how exploitation was the main principle structuring social relations (Savage, 2002). The concept of class as exploitation does propose a mechanism of how antagonistic interests emerge and how class conflict is generated however the theory rests on the labour theory of value, a theory that is no longer considered relevant (Sorensen, 2000). Weberian stratification theory introduces the concept of 'status groups' where class is conceived as individuals with common economic 'life chances'; these chances determine their opportunities for income in the market and identified the middle class as those owning the skills and education. From the 1960's the centrality of class within stratification research has been challenged as the significance of other variables such as gender and race have been identified.

More recent proponents of class analysis argue of the continued relevance of class as an analytical tool but argue that the analysis does not need to entail a commitment to any particular theory of class (Marshall, 1997).

One example of this are cultural analysts of class which, influenced by the work of Bourdieu theorise class in a way that encompasses measures of class beyond economic measures to an analysis of class which focus on social processes (Reay, 2006). Cultural theorists explore how class is formed through culture and how social processes can re-enforce attributes specific to a certain class to the detriment of others in particular contexts. Of relevance to this study, there is a growing body of work that shows how this cultural theorisation of class can be used to understand class inequalities within formal education settings. For example Reay (2006) explores class processes within secondary education and how these might marginalise students from working-class backgrounds through the dominance of more middle-class cultures.

The relevance of class analysis has also been challenged operationally on the grounds that the significance of class in modern society has diminished (Smart et al., 2009). Underpinning this argument is the assumption that through political intervention society has become an increasingly 'open' and 'meritocratic' form of society (Goldthorpe, 1996). However despite these challenges, research indicates that class is still important in determining life chances (Lawler, 2005). Whilst the significance of class may have diminished in the way in which individuals define themselves (Bradley, 2015), structurally class appears to be highly pertinent. Reflecting on the findings of the 'Great British Class Survey' (GBCS)[3], Savage et al. (2015) comment,

We have moved well away from the idea that 'class is dead'. In fact, the sociological analysis of class is now central to public debate (Savage et al., 2015 p. 1014).

3 GBCS was a web survey hosted by BBC's Lab UK website which ran from January 2011 to July 2013. The survey generated 325,000 responses.

In the context of HE studies show that class can impact the way in which students interact with HE, from influencing their choice of institution, the way in which students engage with their studies and their involvement with extra circular activities, through to their final grade and their career prospects on graduation (Boliver, 2011).

I therefore agree with Reay (2006) who argues

in a social context of growing inequalities there is a need to reinvigorate class analysis, not bury it (Reay, 2006, p. 289).

2.1.3 Defining Working Class

The term working class will be used throughout this thesis and therefore in this section the way in which working class is defined will be discussed. Whilst the term working class is frequently referred to in everyday language the notion of working class is contested in the literature (Smart et al., 2009).

Many studies in educational research have utilised objective measures of class as a basis of measurement (Rubin et al. 2014). This is consistent with the measures used by HEIs when identifying 'under represented groups' and also with measures used by the Government when evaluating the effectiveness of HE widening participation initiatives. The Department of Education for example, in a recent report evaluating widening participation within HE, used students qualifying for free school meals as an indicator of students from poorer economic backgrounds (DfE, 2016). In the same report when evaluating the types of roles that students went into on graduation, Standard Occupational Classifications (SOC)[4] were used, with SOC one-three being a proxy for graduate level jobs and four-seven being a proxy

[4] The Standard Occupation Classification is a frequently used classification for occupational information by the Office for National Statistics within the UK

for the least advantaged. Similarly the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) performance indicators focus on the proportion of entrants to HE who are from state schools and from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR). Crawford et al. (2016) used a basket of measures such as students receiving free school meals and the index of multiple deprivation score.

Whilst objective measurement approaches are useful as they can limit the influence of subjective biases in self-reports, these approaches do not recognise any broader measures of class that look beyond job titles and look at the complexity of the processes through which class is formed. More recent approaches to class analysis recognise the need to disaggregate attributes of class and have incorporated both objective and subjective measures. Ostrove and Long (2007) in a study looking at the relationship between students' social identities and their college experiences used both subjective and objective measures of class. The objective measures asked about students' family backgrounds and these were complimented by subjective measures of class which asked students to self-identify to which class they belonged when growing up. The students' answers were explored further in semi structured interviews meaning that the focus was on the students rather than their parents. Similarly Jack (2016), in a study looking at how informal university practices exacerbate class differences among undergraduates, moved away from the traditional rigid class structural analysis and rather than treating lower-income undergraduates as a monolithic group, Jack split students from lower income backgrounds between those who had privileges and those who did not. Rubin and Wright (2017) in a study looking at factors impacting students' ability to integrate into HE used subjective measures of class; the researchers asked students to self-identify their social class by giving them a choice of six options that they felt best described their mother, father and themselves individually. In

doing this Rubin and Wright (2017) are recognising the specific social class context of an individual and therefore positioning class as a contextual variable.

As a pragmatist, the approach that I have taken in defining working class is one that aims to capture the complexity of class formation but also balances this with a clear set of criteria that the students will be able to identify with. More detail of this is given in the methodology chapter, section 4.9 of this thesis. When exploring the relevant literature relating to the experiences of working-class students, I have been mindful of these different definitions in my interpretation and use of the findings.

2.2 The UK HE Landscape and social equality

2.2.1 The expansion of HE within the UK

In this section the expansion of HE within the UK from what Trow (1974) would refer to as an elite system of HE within the UK to a mass system of HE is discussed. The section will firstly give an overview of how expansion has been achieved and consider the implications of the resulting HE landscape for widening participation and the provision of equal opportunities. In this section, particular emphasis will be placed on issues of structural hierarchy and the tension that is created between widening participation and the consolidation of social position (Clegg et al., 2010).

The overarching trend for HE within most developed countries is one of expansion with most of these countries trending towards participation rates of 50% (Marginson, 2016). Within the UK, participation rates are consistent with this global trend, in 2015/2016 49% of 17-30 year olds domiciled in the UK had studied or were studying at a HEI (DBIS, 2016), compared to 5% in 1960 (Robbins, 1963). This growth reflects the importance that

successive UK governments have placed on building a knowledge-based work force (DBIS, 2016; Becker, 1993) and also more recently on widening participation in HE (Archer, 2007).

Prior to 1960 the HE landscape within the UK consisted of a small number (24) of established research focused institutions with a student base dominated by students from the higher classes within society. Over 90% of the home students studying at these institutions in the early 1960's were from families whose father's occupation was either at a professional or a managerial level (Robbins, 1963). During the 1960's the UK entered what is referred to in the literature as the binary phase of HE expansion and expansion was pursued mainly through the establishment of a separate system of polytechnic HEIs. During the 1960's 13 new universities and 31 polytechnics were established, facilitating a threefold increase in enrolments from 5% in 1960 to 14% in 1970 (Halsey, 2000). Following this the sector experienced a period of relative stability in terms of student numbers until the late 1980's when as a result of a number of government policy decisions relating to the funding of HEIs (Blanden and Machin, 2004) the sector experienced a second period of growth and transitioned to what is commonly referred to in the literature as 'mass tertiary education'. Participation rates increased from 19.3% in 1990 to 33% in 2000 (Bolton, 2012) and have continued to increase to the present day rate of 49% (DfE, 2017). One of the key enabling policy decisions for this expansion was the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA), this granted polytechnics independence from local authority control and opened up opportunities for funding and expansion by putting them on the same funding basis as universities (Blanden and Machin, 2004). The ERA set the foundation for the dismantling of the binary system and was completed in 1992 when the Further and Higher Education Act legislated for the upgrading of polytechnic institutions to (new) university status. More recently the growth of

HE has been financed through a series of incremental changes that occurred between 1998 and 2012 with funding moved from the state to the individual.

2.2.2 Widening participation within HE

More recently and in parallel to policies aimed at increasing participation rates through structural and funding changes, government policy has also focused on widening participation in HE. The rationale for this is framed in both economic (expansion) and social terms (Archer, 2007). Whilst making HE accessible to all members of society is not new, indeed the 1963 Robbins argued that,

HE should provide equal opportunities to students from all classes and that this responsibility should extend beyond admissions but to creating an environment where all students could prosper (Robbins, 1963, p.28),

it was not until the 1997 Dearing report that issues of equality and widening participation received the sustained focus of government policy (Greenbank, 2006). The Dearing Report emphasised that increasing participation must be accompanied by the objective of reducing disparities between different groups participating in HE. The report specifically targeted students from socio-economic groups III-V[5] or working-class backgrounds, people with disabilities and some specific ethnic minority groups (Dearing, 1997). This focus on widening participation in HE and in particular the targeting of students from lower socio-economic groups and certain minority ethnic backgrounds, has continued through to the present. For example the 2016 Government White Paper outlining the Government's vision for HE across

5 This refers to the UK Office of National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC), groups III-V relate to groups from non-professional and non-managerial backgrounds.

the UK, set a target of doubling the proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds entering university by 2020 compared to 2009 (DBIS, 2016).

It can be argued that from a legislative perspective the resulting HE landscape is that of a unitary system, however whilst the intention was that the new polytechnics would run parallel to established universities, in practical terms what has emerged is a system where these constitute a second-tier of institution. Expansion has therefore had a limited impact on changing the two-tier system established in the 1960's where the higher tier still consists mainly of the universities which were established prior to, or during the 1960's (Scott, 2016). The universities within this higher tier are commonly referred to in the literature as elite institutions and whilst there is no single way to define elite, such institutions are those that regularly top the national HE league tables. For example studies have defined elite as those who are members of the Russell Group, a self-selected group of 24 highly selective research intensive universities (see for example Boliver, 2013). An alternative approach is to split this higher tier between elite institutions and other Russell Group universities. The Sutton Trust for example identifies the Sutton Trust 13, this consists of the 13 top ranking institutions in the university league tables (De Vries, 2014).

2.2.3 Issues of equal student access and attainment

In this section issues of equality relating to the way that students from different groups experience HE is examined. Prior research indicates that students from under represented socio-economic groups (this includes working-class students) are less likely to study at elite universities (DfE, 2019; Elias and Purcell, 2011) and face more challenges in adapting to university life than their middle-class counterparts (Finnegan and Merrill, 2017; Krause, 2005).

In the initial discussion, the findings from quantitative studies which have examined student enrolment and attainment are drawn upon to examine how students from different socio-economic groups experience HE. From these a relatively clear picture emerges of class-related inequalities. Following this the findings from what are predominantly qualitative studies which examine the reasons for these reported inequalities are discussed. These studies challenge the assumptions which underpin the UK Government's policy with respect to HE that students will make rationale choices and that all students are in a position to exercise the same choices. Rather the studies show how students are socially constrained and stratified with respect to the choices that they make, resulting in social inequalities being both reproduced and legitimised (see for example, Callender and Dougherty (2018)).

2.2.4. Student participation rates and attainment – quantitative studies

Government statistics relating to HE participation rates show how policies have been successful in increasing the participation of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and the discourse relating to participation rates is largely one of success (Coulson et al., 2017). However these statistics mask that the participation of students from more advantaged backgrounds has also increased such that the gap in attendance is still significant, particularly at more elite institutions (DfE, 2017). As HE has expanded then in practice what has resulted is a system of HE where the benefits of participation are unevenly and socially constructed (Marginson, 2016).

This is evident in the data presented in tables one and two below which shows the trends in participation rates of particular groups of students. This analysis uses two approaches to identify students from more disadvantaged backgrounds. Firstly whether students received free school meals (FSM) at the age of 15 and secondly using measures based on the participation of local areas classification (POLAR), these group areas across the UK based on

the proportion of 18 and 19 year olds that participate in HE (DfE, 2019). Local areas are classified into five groups of equal size, group one is the most advantaged group and group five is the most disadvantaged based on the likelihood of them attending HE. POLAR classification has undergone a number of iterations and the data in the report is based on iteration four. The findings using both methods are broadly consistent. Whilst overall participation in HE from disadvantaged groups has increased between the period 2008/09 to 2017/18, there has also been a similar increase in the participation of more advantaged groups and therefore the gap in attendance rates between the two groups has been maintained (table one) and has actually widened for entry to high tariff (elite) institutions (table two). The data shows a system of HE where the benefits of participation are unevenly distributed across different socio-economic groups and where those with positional status have maintained their positions.

Table 1 - University entry rates to all HEIs from state schools within England (source DfE, 2019)

	2008/09		**2017/18**	**Difference**		**Polar Quintile**	**2008/09**	**2017/18**	**Difference**
FSM	18.6%		26.3%	7.7%		Q5	18.0%	26.4%	8.4%
Non- FSM	36.2%		44.9%	8.7%		Q1	51.3%	57.9%	6.6%
Gap	**17.6%**		**18.6%**	**1.0%**		**Gap**	**33.3%**	**31.5%**	**(1.8%)**

Table 2 - Entry rates to high tariff universities from state schools with England (source DfE 2019)

	2008/09	2017/18	Difference		Polar Quintile	2008/09	2017/18	Difference
FSM	2.0%	3.4%	1.4%		Q5	2.7%	3.8%	1.1%
Non- FSM	9.4%	11.2%	1.8%		Q1	17.6%	18.8%	1.2%
Gap	**7.4%**	**7.8%**	**0.4%**		**Gap**	**14.9%**	**15.0%**	**0.1%**

The findings reported above are supported by evidence in the broader literature. For example Boliver (2013) in a quantitative study analysing admissions data relating to home students applying to Russell Group universities in England between 1996 -2006, found that applicants to more prestigious universities from lower social-class origins, from state schools and from certain ethnic minority backgrounds, were less likely to be admitted even after factoring in differences in prior attainment. Similarly Milburn (2012) reported a strong correlation between social class and the likelihood of going to university generally, and top universities in particular.

The statistics relating to student attainment paint a similar overall picture to those relating to admissions (HEFCE, 2018). For example, The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) in a report analysing outcomes and destinations for students graduating in 2016-17 domiciled in the UK shows that 83% of students from POLAR three, quintile one achieved either a first or an upper class second degree compared to 73% from quintile five. Much of this difference is attributable in the report to prior performance but even after this is controlled for, a 2.3% difference was reported. In an earlier study HEFCE show how students from the lowest quintile groups are significantly more likely to leave after their first year of study than the highest group. The findings of study show a 4% difference in attrition

rates (9% versus 5%) (HEFCE, 2013). This might explain why the difference in overall degree performance falls to 2.3% as this will include the impact of these higher attrition rates.

Crawford et al. (2016), in a study of 40,000 first year students across 11 institutions in the UK, five of which were members of the Russell Group, found after controlling for prior qualifications and institution attended, that the performance of students in their first year of study was 10% higher for students in the highest quintile group than for those in the lowest group. The study also found that students from the highest quintile group were 8.4% less likely to drop out in their first year when compared to students in the lowest group.

2.3 Social inequalities within HE

This section will examine the literature relating to the causes of inequalities within HE from enrolment through to final graduate destinations with particular focus given to class-related issues. Much of the research in this area tends to be qualitative which reflects both the complexity of the structures within HE (Callender and Dougherty, 2018) and the complexity of the different dimensions to understanding class inequality (Finnegan and Merrill, 2017). It also largely draws on the work of Bourdieu and his concepts of capital and field and the notion of habitus as a way of theorising how students will interact with HEI (Webb et al, 2017). Bourdieu's concepts have been applied in research as a way of understanding the way in which education may reproduce social inequalities; these recognise that educational choice and attainment is more than just cognitive behaviour but extends to social processes and the way in which they influence the environment and structures within which they are operating.

The section will start with an overview of these concepts and discuss the relevance to examining issues of social inequality. The findings from the studies will then be discussed.

Following this the next section will focus more specifically on student employability and how issues of inequality apply more specifically to student employability.

Bourdieu's concept of field, identifies a field as a structured space that is organised around specific types of capital or combinations of capital in a relationship of mutual exclusion' (Bourdieu, 1996). Bourdieu likens the field to a game with rules and competition where not everybody has equal knowledge of the rules, some have 'trump cards' and therefore various forms of power will exist (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992). Bourdieu conceptualises university education as a field with a high degree of autonomy, generating its own values and expected behaviours. Bourdieu argues that success in the field of HE is dependent upon an individual having the resources to be able to recognise and respond appropriately within the field and in hierarchical structures such as those that exist within HE. Success is relative to how others respond resulting in some holding dominant positions. Bourdieu refers to such resources as capital which he extends beyond economic capital to include both social and cultural capital. Social capital is capital accrued through social networks, the family and wider community interactions and cultural capital is a set of cultural attitudes and tastes (Bourdieu, 1986).

Bourdieu's notion of habitus refers to the norms and values of individuals or particular groups or institutions within society, these are related to the cultural and familial roots from which these groups or institutions have developed. Bourdieu explains that it is the habitus that predominates within an individual or group that influences the way in which they respond to particular settings. Bourdieu argues that an individual's past experiences will play a significant part, albeit subconsciously, in how they respond to a particular situation (Bourdieu et al., 1977). Habitus exists at both an individual level and at an institutional level. Institutional habitus as with individual habitus constitutes a complex amalgam of agency

and structure and can be understood as the impact of a cultural group or social class on an individual's behaviour as it is mediated through an organisation (McDonough, 1997). Institutional habitus in the same way as individual habituses have a history and in most cases have been established over time. They are therefore capable of change but by virtue of their collective nature are less fluid than their individual habituses (Bourdieu, 1998), and where there is a difference between institutional and individual habitus it is the individual that will have to adapt.

In the context of HE, Bourdieu argues that when students enter HE they are entering an established 'field' dominated by middle-class values to which students from lower socio-economic groups have to adapt to (Bourdieu, 2000). Bourdieu sees structures and agency as complementary forces, therefore where the structures within HE align to that of the students then students are positioned to take full advantage of opportunities that HE offers. Bourdieu refers to these students as being like a 'fish in water' (Bourdieu, 2000, p.145). Where alignment differs then Bourdieu refers to the notion of students being like 'fish out of water' (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 145), the significance of this being that students in this position will struggle disproportionately when seeking to take advantage of studying within HE.

Studies which draw on the work of Bourdieu, identify that class is significant in shaping the experiences of students throughout their student life, impacting their choice of where to study (Ball et al., 2002), and also their experiences whilst studying at a particular HEI. Studies show that generally students from lower socio-economic backgrounds face more challenges in adapting to HE (Reay et al., 2009), are less likely to achieve a 'good' degree and secure the most prestigious graduate positions even when prior attainment and institution is controlled for (Crawford et al., 2016).

What emerges from these studies is the complexity of understanding the causes of these challenges which goes beyond students gaining access to HE, to their experiences once they are there. Reay (2018) reflects,

class inequalities are no longer about exclusion from the system, but increasingly about exclusion within it (Reay, 2018, p 531).

Studies identify that causes of these inequalities are a combination of both financial and cultural barriers (Finnegan and Merrill, 2017), some of which are imposed by HEIs and more privileged students and some of which are self imposed on the students (O'Shea, 2016). Archer (2002) drawing on the work of Bourdieu reflects,

any analysis of class inequalities in relation to HE must take into account not only people's shifting class identities but also the role of the educational institution itself in creating and perpetuating class inequalities (Archer, 2002, p 14).

Financial constraints have implications for the choices that students make with respect to their choice of where to study and also on how much time they can dedicate to their studies and broader university activities. Studies suggest that due to financial constraints, working-class students are more likely to select a HEI that they can attend whilst still living at home, reducing opportunities for social mobility (Reay et al., 2005). Additionally, as a result of these greater financial constraints then working-class students are more likely to work during term time again reducing the time available for students to integrate with their peers and for study (Coulson et al., 2017; Bathmaker et al., 2016).

The cultural barriers faced by less privileged students relate to how individuals make decisions or respond to certain situations based on their past experiences, many of which can be class based (Reay, 2001). When making decisions as to where to study, research

shows that students will tend to base their decisions on more than just a rationale cost benefit analysis, rather decisions are based on where they felt most comfortable and where they feel that they fit in (Thomas and Quinn, 2006; Reay et al., 2005). Studies indicate that working-class students face a number of dilemmas and challenges that their counterparts do not have to confront and this is particularly pertinent at more elite universities (Finnegan and Merrill, 2017; Reay et al., 2010). For example studies show that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds face greater challenges with respect to adapting to university life (Mountford-Zimdars et al., 2017) and maintaining connections to their social background (Coulson et al, 2017; Wilkins and Burke, 2015; Archer and Leathwood,2003; Granfield, 1991)). Wilkins and Burke (2015), in a study which sought to identify the challenges that students are faced with when transitioning to HE, concluded that whilst all students need to adjust their behaviour and learn to fit in culturally with implicit norms and pedagogical demands, that this challenge is heightened for working-class students and in particular for those studying at higher ranking institutions. Finnegan and Merrill (2017) in a later study examining how class shapes the student experiences in both Irish and UK universities drew similar conclusions. Myers and Bhopal (2021), in an Anglo-American study which examined the internal and external branding of four elite institutions (two in the United States and two in the UK) in the context of the 'marketised' world of HE, show how the branding strategies adopted by all of the universities did not extend their market beyond traditional cohorts of privileged students. The study shows how the HEI's in the study branded their institutions such that exclusivity could be maintained and how this was to the exclusion of students who were not in possession of the 'right' cultural capital.

In addition to the challenges identified in the previous paragraphs which largely refer to the subconscious reactions of students from lower socio-economic groups to HEIs there is also

some evidence within the literature that the way in which students from different class backgrounds consciously interact with one another can be problematic (Goldthorpe, 2013). Crozier et al (2016), found that the challenges faced by students from lower socio-economic groups to adapt to HE are exacerbated by the actions of their middle-class peers who assert their sense of superiority and achievements in order to defend or secure privileged positions. Soria and Stebleton (2013) identify that working-class students struggle to find people of similar backgrounds particularly at more elite universities and how this impacts their ability to settle in. Soria and Bultmann (2014) identify a less welcoming campus climate and Lehmann (2014) found that working-class students approach university with apprehension and higher levels of uncertainty and can feel like social outsiders. Mcknight (2015) refers to the glass floor that advantaged families construct through taking advantage of their social capital around the opportunities that HE offer. Bathmaker et al. (2013) refer to the feeling of entitlement that white middle-class students expressed during their research and similarly Clayton et al., (2009) identify that middle-class attendance at university is seen as a "rite of passage" (p.165) by students and therefore taken for granted.

2.4 The employability agenda for HE

This section examines how the challenges faced by students from lower socio-economic groups whilst studying at HEI extend to the graduate labour markets. The initial discussion focuses on the role of HE in preparing students for employment and how this role has grown in importance from the perspective of students, employers and the Government as HE has expanded. Following this, the way that the challenges that students from lower socio-economic groups face when studying at HE extend to the graduate labour markets and what is known of the reasons for this is discussed.

Findings show that students from lower socio-economic groups are less likely to secure graduate level employment even if they have the same degree from the same institution (HEFCE 2013, 2014, 2018). Findings also show how these differences have not been reduced despite the expansion of HE (Callender and Dougherty, 2018; Attlewell and Newman, 2010) and in fact the expansion of HE may exacerbate these inequalities (Marginson, 2016). Whilst one of the drivers for the expansion of HE within the UK was to build a knowledge economy, statistics show that the demand for graduate level jobs has not grown by the same rate as participation within HE resulting in heightened competition and the struggle for positional advantage which data suggests privileges students from middle and upper-class backgrounds (Britton et al,. 2019; Brown et al., 2003).

It is also argued in this section that whilst there is significant evidence to show that working-class students are disadvantaged in the graduate labour markets when compared to their middle-class peers, there is also evidence of working-class students having individual agency and therefore that opportunities exist for HEIs to support students further if the reasons for this disparity are better understood.

Finally in this section how the causes of inequalities are conceptualised within the literature is discussed. The discussion focuses on how discourse in this area is dominated by deficit models where it is the students that are considered to 'lack' the right type of capital and how this leads to solutions where the onus is on the individual rather than the institution to conform (Clegg, 2011). The discussion highlights the limitations of such approaches for explaining and addressing the persistency of inequalities in the way in which students from minority backgrounds experience HE, and highlights a need to examine institutional practices which is the focus of this study.

2.4.1 Graduate employability – the role of HE

Discourse on graduate employability and the role of HE in preparing graduates for entry into post-graduate employment is not new, and there is general consensus in the literature that one of the purposes of HE is to provide students with some form of preparation for entry into post-graduate employment (Marginson, 2011; Boden and Nedeva, 2010; Holmes, 2001; Harvey, 2000; Robbins, 1963). For example, in 1963 the Robbins report, which considered the purpose of UK universities, Robbins (1963, p.22) highlighted the *"objectives of providing instruction in skills suitable to play a part in the general division of labour".* What has changed is that employers and policymakers are exerting a much stronger influence on the HE employability agenda (Tomlinson, 2012; Harvey, 2000; Teichler and Kehm, 1995) and this, coupled with the changes to the funding arrangements has resulted in students being increasingly focused on positioning their choices more closely to the labour markets (Balloo et al., 2017; Walker and Zhu, 2010). There is evidence to suggest that whilst students do select their courses based on subjects that they are motivated to study, improving employment prospects is a major factor in that decision (Ball, 2015; Byrne et al., 2012).

The 1997 Dearing report was the first time in a policy document that 'employability' was articulated as more than a broad objective of HE. The report took the step of articulating the skills that graduates need to have developed to meet the changing demands of the labour market; communication skills, numeracy skills, information technology and learning how to learn (Dearing 1997). The report formally recognised the importance of HE to building a knowledge based work force, and ensuring that graduates are "*well equipped for work"* (Dearing, 1997, p. 72).

Following the Dearing report, the integral role of HE in meeting the needs of the labour market and therefore of employer needs, continued to be emphasised in government

reports. The 2002 Roberts report on the supply of science and engineering skills in the UK concluded that HE institutions needed to ensure that science degrees provide the skills that employers need and value (Roberts, 2002). The 2006 Leitch report recommended a strengthening of the employer voice (Leitch, 2006), a view subsequently endorsed by HEFCE. More recently, in May 2016 as part of the Government's white paper on the future of HE entitled 'Success as a knowledge economy: teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice' (DBIS, 2016), the importance of HE in ensuring that employer's needs are met in respect to developing employment-ready graduates was again emphasised (DBIS, 2016) and employability is now a formal performance measure of HE institutions (Boden and Nedeva, 2010; Walker and Zhu, 2010; Willets, 2010).

2.4.2 Inequalities within the graduate labour market

In this section how the greater challenges faced by students from lower socio-economic groups whilst studying at HEI over those of their middle-class peers extends to achieving success in the graduate labour markets is established. The section will initially draw on the available data to show that inequalities exist. The combination of both a stratified system of HE and a supply of graduates that far outstrips demand in the graduate labour market, means that inequalities within the graduate labour markets operate at both institutional level and also at an individual level within a particular institution (Crozier et al., (2016)). The discussion will focus on the experiences of students graduating from similar institutions and causes of reported inequalities will then be examined with a particular focus of how students' experiences of HE may be a factor. Finally the different approaches taken by HEIs to develop student employability are discussed. Whilst the purpose of this study is not to critique a particular model of delivery, it is relevant to frame the findings of the study in the context of these approaches.

2.4.3 Graduate labour market outcomes

There is a considerable body of research that has established a relationship between particular types of institutions, degree subject studied, degree classification and graduate employment destinations (Crawford and Vignoles, 2014). In a two-tier system of HE, studies show how it is the students who graduate from HEIs in the higher tier that are the most successful in securing graduate level employment and also in securing the more prestigious highly competitive graduate roles. As students from a working-class background are less likely to apply to higher ranking institutions even when they have met the required entry criteria (Boliver, 2013), they are putting themselves at a disadvantage in the graduate labour markets before studying actually commences, at the application stage of studying within HE.

The empirical research that considers differential outcomes linked to social status when type of institution is controlled for is more limited as only a small number of studies have been undertaken (Britton, et al, 2016; Crawford and Vignoles, 2014).

Studies which measure student success in the graduate labour markets tend to use economic measures such as parental income or private schooling as a proxy for socio-economic group, and graduate earnings as a measure of relative success in the graduate labour markets. Britton et al. (2019) in a large quantitative study focusing on students graduating from English universities between 1999 and 2005, after controlling for institution attended and subject chosen, concluded that on average students from high income families earned 10% more per year than graduates from low income families. Crawford and Vignoles (2014) in a study comparing graduates from state schools and those who had been privately educated, found that graduates from private school earned on average 7% more than those who had been to state school, even when institution, course and class had been

controlled for. Friedman and Laurison (2017) in a study focusing on earning differentials in higher managerial and professional occupations found that even when students from working-class backgrounds had managed to secure this level of seniority, then they still earned considerably less than their middle-class colleagues in some occupations. Studies which have focused on student destinations rather than salaries reach similar conclusions with respect to the impact of state versus private schooling. For example, HEFCE (2015) in a study examining student destinations, identified that students from private schools are more likely to secure graduate level outcomes than those from state schools (60% compared to 47%). Macmillan et al., (2015) in study looking at student destinations three and a half years after graduation reported similar findings. There is also evidence to suggest that this salary premium is still evident but is less significant when attendance at private schools is controlled for, for example, Ramsey (2008) in study of male graduates found a salary differential of 3% and concluded that this was significant but small.

The available data therefore does provide enough evidence of differential outcomes linked to social status, although there is also some evidence of working-class students being successful in the graduate labour markets ((HEFCE, 2015; Wakeling and Savage, 2015). However what also emerges in studies which show these successful outcomes is a picture of the increased struggle that working-class students face to achieve that success (Bathmaker et al. 2016) and the unpredictability of their outcomes. Rather than working-class students being able to rely on the processes and systems within HE, what emerges is a picture of diverse pathways to success facilitated by a combination of serendipity and strategy (Reay, 2018). For example Wong (2018) in a qualitative study shows how Mala, a high achieving working-class student, narrowly avoided late penalties through a chance encounter with a member of office staff who provided advice on the process to apply for a waiver of these

penalties. Mala explained how she had no idea that such a process existed prior to that chance conversation. Wong (2018), in the study which focused on 30 non-traditional students, in his final discussion noted how there are a number of reasons as to why working-class students are successful but how most of these are through various unintended events or encounters. Bathmaker et al. (2016), show how attending a Russell Group university can heighten the chances for working-class students of upward mobility in securing professional employment and also support middle-class students in maintaining their position. The results show no significance difference in the career trajectories of the 21 middle-class and 19 working-class students studying at an elite institution in the UK, however the researchers noted the heightened determination and ambition of the working-class students that was needed in order to achieve this parity. In their conclusion Bathmaker at al. (2016) comment,

> *[the findings are] not endorsing the policy rhetoric around the need to develop personal qualities to mitigate against inequalities, rather we show that these [working class] students are faced with greater challenges due to structural inequalities (p. 146).*

2.4.4 Causes of inequalities *within* the graduate labour market

Studies which seek to establish the causes of these reported inequalities once students are at university, show how students from middle and upper-class backgrounds are more likely to take advantage of opportunities available to them to develop their employability credentials (Power and Whitty, 2006). A key theme that emerges from the literature is the need for pro-active career management and what Holmes (2001) refers to as identity work, where students need to *"act in ways that lead others to ascribe to them the identity of being*

a person of being worthy of being employed" (p. 549). However there is a large body of literature that shows that students are not equally positioned to do this (Bathmaker, 2021). Studies show how working-class students are less likely than their middle or upper class peers to get involved in extra curricular activities (Harvey et al., 2017; Lehmann, 2012; Stuart et al., 2009), undertake a placement year (Brooks and Youngson, 2016) and gain work experience through internships (Wright and Mulvey, 2021; Greenbank, 2014). These are all cited in the literature as important mechanisms through which students can enhance their employability.

Again what emerges in the literature are that the reasons for this are a combination of financial and cultural factors. Financial factors tend to relate to the pressure that is placed on student's time, which impacts their ability to focus on activities beyond their core studies (Greenbank, 2014; Bathmaker et al., 2013). Cultural factors relate to a number of factors including, issues of recognising what is required to secure highly sought after graduate jobs (Coulson et al., 2017; Reay, 2006), difficulties navigating structures within HE to draw on support that is available (Wong, 2018) and that students from middle and upper-class families enter HE with a positional advantage with respect to established networks and connections (Bathmaker, 2021; O'Shea et al., 2021; Abrahams, 2017). Studies show how middle-class students leverage these networks and connections to secure internships and also how this social capital is converted into cultural capital in the sense of confidence and entitlement in relation to the graduate labour market.

Bathmaker et al, (2013) in a qualitative study looking at how students responded to an increasingly competitive environment, identified that a disproportionate number of the middle-class students interviewed recognised the importance of building social and cultural capital. The study found that students from working-class backgrounds tended to focus on

securing a good degree rather than on securing a placement or developing broader skills. Coulson et al., (2017), in a qualitative study involving final year students studying at a Russell Group university, shows that whilst all of the students in the study from working-class backgrounds had looked forward to joining clubs and societies when they started university, the reasons that students gave for this related more to this involvement being a distraction from their studies, or as a way of making friends. The study shows how the students were unaware of the way that certain activities were particularly effective in enhancing their CV.

Wright and Mulvey (2021) in a study across two universities, one a post 92 university and one a Russell Group university, shows the classed nature of internships. The study shows how students from upper-middle class backgrounds are able to exploit their positional advantage over their peers to achieve what Wright and Mulvery (2021, p. 340) refer to as 'opportunity stacking'. The study shows how across both institutions, the students used family connections to secure multiple internships at high profile employers which meant that students were better able to differentiate themselves from their peers within the graduate labour markets. Similarly, Allen et al., (2013) in a study focused on students studying arts and creative disciplines at an English university, shows that whilst the working-class students in the study recognised the importance of developing broader skills and in particular the significance of undertaking a work place placement to do this, the process of securing a placement was positioned by the students as a burden. In contrast the middle-class students referred to placements as an opportunity. The study shows the classed nature of placements where students from middle-class backgrounds were able to draw on family connections to secure opportunities, in contrast the working-class students were disheartened by how difficult they found it to source opportunities. Greenbank (2007) in a

study examining the factors that influence students' decisions of whether to participate in placement opportunities within a new university found that there was a lack of appreciation of the value of taking a placement. In addition the study found that the influence of social and peer norms were a factor. The students in the study considered going on placement to be 'different' to the norm and therefore students were reluctant to undertake one.

2.5 Inequalities - Beyond a deficit approach?

Overall the findings of the literature review shows a HE landscape within the UK which continues to privilege a particular section of society. The review shows that the reasons for this are well understood, what is less well understood is how these inequalities can be eradicated (Reay, 2021).

What also emerges from the literature review is the dominance of deficit discourse (Reay, 2018), where causes of social inequalities within education are framed in a way that it is the students who are lacking the right kind of capital rather than the responsibility being that of HE institutions to make efforts to change to accommodate the diversity of students (O'Shea, 2016). This has led to solutions being focused on how students are essentially given remedial support to bridge the gap (Davis and Museus, 2019). Davis and Museus (2019, p.1) refer to this as a "blame the victim orientation".

Critics of such an approach argue that there is an absence of evidence for the success of deficit approaches in addressing issues of social equality within HE (McKay and Devlin, 2016). For example, Smit (2012) shows how by conceptualising students in this way then HEIs will take action which forces students into taking an independent position as they transition to university. This exacerbates any negative feelings that students associate with being different to their peers and increases the struggles that they experience. Thomas

argues that by simply referring to students as 'non-traditional' then this suggests that there is an ideal type of student for the HE environment (Thomas, 2002). These views are supported in this literature review which demonstrates the persistency of such issues.

There is a growing body of discourse which calls for approaches aimed at addressing systemic issues of inequality to positively recognise that students bring a wealth of different experiences and different types of capital with them when they enter HE (Reay 2018). Proponents argue that by taking this approach then issues of inequality are repositioned from one that belongs to the individual to one that belongs to HEIs, where HEIs need to consider ways in which they need to adapt if social inequalities are to be addressed (Wyn, 2009).

Clegg (2011) for example argues,

> *in describing and analysing models of reproduction it becomes all too easy to conceptualise the capitals minority students bring with them as lacking and thus to lay the blame for continued inequalities at the door of poor schools and families (Clegg, 2011, p. 94).*

This study therefore builds on this body of research which moves away from this deficit discourse and focuses on institutional factors to understand issues of social inequalities. One area that has had little focus is how pedagogic practices within the classroom might cause such inequalities, and therefore this study contributes to this gap.

In the next section, the different approaches taken by HEIs to develop student employability and what is known about the effectiveness of these different approaches in addressing the issues is discussed. In the context of the persistent nature of inequalities, the discussion shows the value of framing issues of inequality beyond these approaches to delivery, and identifies a gap in the research with respect to understanding how pedagogic practices

within the classroom might be a contributory factors. These may be specific to a particular approach to delivery, or transcend different models of delivery.

2.6 Employability – models of delivery within HEI

This section explores the different approaches taken by HEIs to develop student employability and what is known about the effectiveness of these different approaches with respect to addressing issues of inequality, is discussed. Whilst the focus of the study is not to critique a particular model of delivery, it is relevant to frame the findings of the study in the context of these approaches. What emerges from the review of the literature are two issues that are of particular relevance to this study.

Firstly there is a tension in the literature between studies which identify the importance of more integrated models of delivery if HEIs are to maximise the benefits of employability teaching for all students (Bennett, 2019; Tinto, 2012; Thomas and Jones, 2007) and, in particular students from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Doyle, 2011), and the willingness or ability of HEIs to adopt such models. I am not advocating the decision of institutions not to move towards fully integrated approaches of delivery, rather I am acknowledging that less integrated models or 'bolt-on' approaches (such as the one adopted in this study) do exist and will exist for the foreseeable future. It is therefore appropriate for a study to examine this type of approach.

Secondly, irrespective of what model of delivery is adopted then issues of inequality relating to structural hierarchies within HEIs and how these impact experiences within the classroom, need to be understood and these transcend any model of delivery. Studies show the persistency of social inequalities within the graduate labour markets and that these exist irrespective of the model of delivery that is adopted (Burke at al. 2017).

2.6.1 Models of delivery

Much of the current understanding of graduate employability, particularly in relation to the role of HE has been framed around the enhancement of graduate employability skills (Tomlinson, 2017). There is a significant body of research which has sought to establish and evaluate the different approaches taken by HEIs to develop these skills, which Farenga and Quinlan (2016) categorise into three strategies. Firstly a hands off approach, where employability is implicit within the curriculum and the onus is on the students to self-navigate through the opportunities that are available. Secondly the portfolio model, where students are offered the opportunity to participate in a range of opportunities most of which are co-curricular, and finally an 'award' model where students are given credit in their degree for the development of employability credentials. Within the award model two models of delivery typically exist, firstly where employability modules run parallel and separate to subject specific modules or secondly, where the approach to the development of student employability is to explicitly embed skills within discipline specific moduless, within this second model, skills are taught, made overt and assessed (Cranmer, 2006).

Studies show a HE landscape where there is no single agreed model for delivery across institutions (Pegg at al., 2012). Contemporary discussion is dominated by discourse that advocates models of delivery where employability is embedded within the curriculum (Bennett, 2019) and integrated overtly within discipline specific modules (Green and Blaszczynski, 2012; Cranmer, 2006). Bennett (2019) for example states,

employability development is most effective when it is aligned with disciplinary knowledge, skills and practices so that it forms a core part of the student experience and leverages the interests that prompted students to enrol in the first place (Bennett, 2019, p.47)

However despite calls for a more integrated approach, there is a reluctance for institutions to adopt these approaches and the most common approach adopted by HEIs remains a portfolio or 'bolt-on' approach, where most employability activities are co-curricular (Bennett, 2020). This reluctance reflects a resistance amongst academic staff to move away from their academic discipline (Yorke, 2010) and also difficulties to implement these strategies which require a top down institutional approaches and often requires significant investment in staff training (Bennett, 2020).

The evaluation of these models with respect to how effective they are in meeting the needs of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds largely evaluates the different models of delivery in the context of the greater financial and cultural challenges faced by students when they enter HE, both with respect to developing their employability and transitioning to HE more generally. Harvey et al. (2017), in a report evaluating the effectiveness of practices across HEIs in America, the UK and Australia in meeting the needs of students from 'non-traditional' backgrounds concludes,

the integration of employability activities within mainstream curricula is essential to the promotion of both retention and graduate success among all students (Harvey et al,. 2017, p.7).

The report highlights the need for approaches to teaching which ensure that those students who might be limited with respect to how much time they can spend studying are not disadvantaged (Harvey et al, 2017). In the context of extra-curricular activities, which in the increasingly competitive employment markets means that what were once 'optional' activities are now mandatory, then a new front of inequality emerges. This can be addressed in part by integrating these activities within the curriculum.

Doyle (2011) also argues how embedding career development activities within the curriculum is particularly beneficial to students from lower socio-economic groups who can have greater difficulty understanding the link between their programme of study and their future careers.

2.6.2 Issues of inequality with respect to structural hierarchies

Irrespective of which model of delivery is adopted, studies show the persistent nature of inequalities within the graduate labour markets (Harvey et al. 2017). The previous section highlights the benefits of HEIs in adopting more integrated models of delivery, however beyond implementing different models of delivery then arguments which relate to the need for institutions to adopt more inclusive practices for all students can be extended to the teaching of employability. Rather than asking how students can acquire the missing skills needed for success, institutions should be asking what they can do to make themselves more inclusive for all students. Studies show how employability is not a neutral concept as some student groups benefit more than others from traditional institutional strategies with the result of inequalities being re-enforced rather than alleviated. For example, studies show students from higher socio-economic groups are more likely to engage in extra-curricular activities (Stuart et al., 2011).

2.7 The intersection of class with other student characteristics in the context student employability

In this section of the literature review, the way in which reported difficulties faced by students from lower socio-economic groups might extend and interact with other structuring factors, in particular ethnicity and gender are discussed in the context of student employability. The earlier sections of this literature review shows the significance of class in shaping student's experiences of HE and to their relative success in the graduate labour

markets. There is enough evidence in the literature to show that it is important and appropriate to draw on class as the primary focus of a study (HEFCE, 2018; Sayer, 2005; Reay et al, 2005) however, it is also important to consider how other structuring factors might make barriers more or less likely.

The initial section draws on the findings of quantitative studies to examine how inequalities experienced by students from lower socio-economic backgrounds with respect to attainment and their relative success in the graduate labour markets extend to ethnicity and gender. Following this, findings from qualitative studies are examined to identify potential reasons for any reported issues. The focus of both is to identify points of intersectionality of these factors with class.

Data from quantitative studies shows how BAME students are all less likely to achieve a good degree than their white peers even when prior qualification, course studied and institution are controlled for (HEFCE, 2018; Office for Students, 2018)). HEFCE (2018) for example reports an unexplained performance gap of 17.3%, 9.5% and 6.2% for Black, Asian and mixed race student's respectively. Similarly, studies examining the relative success of students in the graduate labour markets show differences in employment outcomes between white and BAME graduates exist on graduation and after graduation. The data shows students from all backgrounds are less likely to be in employment or further study three years after graduation than white students, although the difference is not the same for all minority groups. Data shows how the largest difference of 5.9% is for African students and the lowest is 1.3% for Caribbean students (HFCE, 2018).

The picture with respect to gender is less consistent. Evidence shows how in recent years women outperform men at all stages of the education (Richardson et al., 2020). In the

context of HE, data since 2013/14 shows a persistent gap of 4-5% in the proportion of women and men achieving a first class of upper second degree. For example in 2018/19, 79% of women achieved a first class or upper second degree versus 75% of men (HESA, 2020). More specifically in the context of working-class students much is written about the relative 'under-performance of' working-class male students (see for The House of Commons, 2021), and it is this group of students who are the most under represented within HE (UCAS, 2021).

However, evidence also shows that this academic success experienced by female students is not translated into the same relative success within the graduate labour markets and therefore suggests that gender can be a significant factor in determining how successful students will be in securing a graduate job (Cornell et al., 2020). Studies show that men are more likely than women to gain graduate employment in highly skilled jobs (Atkinson, 2018) and within the literature there is also a well documented gender pay gap for graduates which is not accounted for by structural factors such subject studied, institution, prior attainment or social background or ethnicity (Cornell et al, 2020).

Qualitative studies which have sort to understand reasons for the differences in attainment between students from minority ethnic backgrounds and their white peers illuminate multiple ways in which race can adversely influence student's experience of HE. Studies identify issues of representation, both within the curriculum and also with respect to role models with which students can identify with (Stevenson et al., 2019; UUK and NUS, 2019). For example, Papafilippou and Bathmaker (2018) show how Carly, a black female middle-class student studying at an elite institution recognised what was needed to 'successfully play the game' but struggled to find her own career identify within her university or the graduate job market which were predominately white.

Of particular relevance to this study is that BAME students are more likely to come from deprived areas, areas of low participation and low socio-economic background and are also more likely to be the first in family to access HE. It is therefore likely that there will be overlap between the challenges faced by students from working-class backgrounds and issues relating ethnicity (Stevenson et al.,2019). Studies show how the impact of class works alongside these other factors however there is also evidence to show how class is significant in its own right. For example, Reay et al (2005) in a study examining how students from ethnic minority backgrounds make choices of which HEI to study at, found that class differences were more apparent than ethnic or cultural similarities. Reay et al, (2005) concluded that class is the most significant factor in 'these' relations though tempered by ethnicity and gender. Madood (2012), in a study which focused on students of Pakistani origin shows how for middle-class families, ethnic capital encourages successful participation in HE, however the study also shows how ethnic capital does not compensate for social class disadvantage. Bathmaker et al, (2016), shows how for the seven BAME students who participated in their Paired Peers study, (four of who were working class and three middle class) the intersections of class and ethnicity played out in different ways and for all of the students establishing their ethnic identity within HE was an issue. However of equal significance to the working-class students was the challenge of developing the right social capital to navigate the graduate labour markets, the study shows how this group of student did not have the economic capital and time to do this. One exception to this are the findings of Bhopal and Pitkin (2020) who found ethnicity over-rides the experiences of BAME students, the study also shows that class is important to students as well as ethnicity.

Qualitative studies examining the impact of gender on the way in which students' experience HE and more specifically their relative success in the graduate labour markets

show how whilst both groups of students face similar difficulties in how they experience HEthe causes of these differences can be different. For example, Leathwood (2006) shows how there are gender differences with respect to how students adapt to having more autonomy over their approach to study. The study shows how the male respondents found the responsibility of independent learning difficult and how they missed having somebody reminding them what to do. The women in the study did not report the same difficulties, in contrast the women were more concerned with the risk of feeling isolated. Studies also provide evidence that whilst these differences exist they are less prominent than issues associated with social class. For example (Reay 2021) in a study examining the challenges faced by nine working-class students at an elite institution reported no gender differences, both the men and women in the study reported that they felt as isolated as one another. The responses between genders suggested that '*the range of emotions was of similar intensity' (Reay, 2012. p.56)*. Similarly, Leachwood and Read (2009) show how both male and female students found it difficult asking for help. In the context of employability then this could be problematic for students from traditionally underrepresented groups who might not have access to the 'right' resources and capitals.

In the context of employability, studies show how the systems and processes within HE and those adopted by employers favour male white middle-class students, however evidence shows how these benefits are not realised by their male working-class peers. Studies show how this group of students face similar struggles to their female working-class peers. For example, Stevenson and Clegg (2012) in a study examining the gendered nature of extra-curricular activities, found that the women in the study tended to undervalue their participation in extra-curricular activities and were more likely to be dismissive of how these might contribute to their future employment. In contrast, the male participants in the study

recognised more readily the value in all forms of participation, although it was the male middle-class students where this was more prominent. The study also shows how it was this group of students who had the greatest awareness of the need to build their CV's, they also show how it was the working-class females in the study who were least likely to see the value in these activities, however working-class males were a close second in this ranking. The same study shows how it was the male participants in the study who were much more comfortable selling themselves to employers although again this difference was tempered as social class was controlled for.

2.8 Summary of the chapter

Overall the arguments in this chapter show the durability of social inequalities with respect to the way that students from lower socio-economic groups experience HE and how this extends from admissions through to final destinations. The way in which HE has expanded within the UK and other Anglo-American countries has led to a more heterogeneous composition of students, however studies show how students who are traditionally under-represented in the field of HE struggle to achieve the same benefits as their more established and usually wealthier peer groups (Bunn et al. 2020).

Drawing largely on the work of Bourdieu (Webb et al, 2017), studies show a HE landscape made up of HEIs dominated by established traditional middle-class cultures within which students from different backgrounds struggle to adjust and fit in. This is despite issues of social equality being a priority for Government and HEIs, studies even show that it the HEIs themselves that are contributing to these entrenched inequalities. Bunn et al. (2020) argue for example that,

universities, rather than ameliorating class difference are a poorly understood site of it's generation. (Bunn et al., 2020, p. 422).

Increasingly within the literature are calls for the need to move from discourse that conceptualises the problem as one belonging to the individual student to one which positions the problem as one belonging to the HEIs, and focuses on policy and practices within institutions (Reay, 2018). This study contributes to this emerging body of literature by examining how pedagogic practices can re-enforce inequalities. The study draws on the sociologist Basil Bernstein's theory of pedagogic practice and in the next chapter the rationale for drawing on this theory is discussed. The key concepts within his theory that are used in the study are explained and justified, and the chapter finishes with examples of relevant studies which have utilised Bernstein's theory.

Chapter 3 – Bernstein's theory of pedagogic practice

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter the rationale for drawing on Bernstein's theory of pedagogic practice as the theoretical framework to examine issues of social inequalities within HE is given.

In the previous chapter the persistence of class-related inequalities within HE is established. Studies which largely draw on the work of Bourdieu raise questions of the effectiveness of social mobility initiatives within HE and identify the need to adapt institutional cultures and practices to meet the needs of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Where the work of Bourdieu is less useful, is understanding the ways in which institutional habitus might be disordered. Critiques of the work of Bourdieu tend to follow two main themes: firstly, the extent to which Bourdieu's theory is deterministic or a theory of reproduction that displays no faith in the ability of subordinate classes to re-invent or re-construct the conditions under which they learn; and secondly that the notions of capital, habitus and field are defined with fluidity and with insufficient depth to enable the design of appropriate pedagogic interventions which will reduce inequalities and lead to improvements in engagement (Gaddis, 2013; Naidoo, 2004). Naidoo (2004) reflects that such shortcomings do not undermine the relevance of the work of Bourdieu, rather it means that his work needs to be complemented by other perspectives in order for these limitations to be addressed.

The work of sociologist Basil Bernstein offers such a perspective. Where Bernstein's work differs from that of other social theorists (for example Bourdieu), and why it is of relevance to this thesis is that his theory of pedagogic practice provides a way of modelling practice at a level of detail so that not only the reproductive characteristics of the learning process can

be understood, but also potential opportunities for change or transformation can be identified (Moore, 2013a; Bernstein, 1990).

Bernstein's work shows how curriculum and pedagogy are implicated in social reproduction by shaping consciousness, identity and aspiration (Ashwin et al., 2012). As Bernstein noted,

Curriculum defines what counts as valid knowledge, pedagogy defines what counts as a valid transmission of knowledge, and evaluation defines what counts as valid realisation of this knowledge as part of the taught (Bernstein, p. 157 (2003)).

The initial discussion in this chapter focuses on the key concepts within his theory that have been drawn upon in this study. Bernstein designed concepts to understand how issues of power and control operate at different levels, for example in the classroom, institution or society, and whilst some concepts transcend the context some concepts are more relevant to a specific context (Moore, 2013a). The concepts used in this study are those aligned to understanding interactions in the classroom between learners and teacher and consist of; the pedagogic device and pedagogic discourse; codes; classification and framing; horizontal and vertical discourse; and hierarchical and horizontal knowledge structures.

This study largely draws on Bernstein's later work. He spent his entire career developing his theory (Moore and Muller, 2002), and in an interview with Solomon late in his career he notes the importance of drawing on his later papers. In the interview Bernstein explains that the way in which his theory was developed means that his earlier work whilst important in understanding context, is subsumed into the final publications (Bernstein 2000, p. 211). For example Bernstein in a chapter on Codes and Research, introduces the chapter by reflecting that in it is only in the third volume of Class, Codes and Control that his theory of pedagogic discourse and modalities of symbolic control come together (Bernstein, 2000, p. 89).

Following this initial discussion, the way that Bernstein's theory of pedagogic practice has been drawn upon to understand issues of inequality is then discussed, particular focus given to how his concepts have been applied in a HE context. Finally criticisms of Bernstein's work are considered.

3.2 Key concepts

3.2.1 Pedagogic device and pedagogic discourse

Bernstein uses the term pedagogic device to refer to the principles or rules which transform knowledge into pedagogic communication; his theory is one of pedagogy rather than knowledge (Moore and Maton, 2001). In Bernstein's words,

> *The pedagogic device is an attempt to describe the general principles which underlie the transformation of knowledge into pedagogic communication (Bernstein, 1990, p.27).*

Rather than pedagogic communication being a neutral relay of messages from teacher to student, pedagogic communication is seen as being separate from the substantive knowledge that it transmits, influenced by both external factors (such as government policy, and organisational structures) and the preferences and values of individual educators which will be context dependent.

Pedagogic discourse refers to the specialised form of communication that a particular relay of pedagogy takes. Essentially it is the 'pedagogic discourse' that potentially becomes the obstacle for learning and not the nature of knowledge. To be successful students need to be able to recognise and work with the rules through which pedagogy has been constructed, a challenge which Bernstein argues favours certain groups of students from particular social backgrounds (Bernstein, 2000).

3.2.2 Key concepts - Codes

Bernstein's notion of code is central and overarching to his theory and is concerned with the transmission of meaning. Codes are embedded in everything in the world and in Bernstein's words,

> *code regulates the what and how of meanings: what meanings may legitimately be put together and how those meanings may legitimately be realised (Bernstein, 1990, p.30).*

Bernstein refers to 'the what' as the recognition rules and 'the how' as the realisation rules (Bernstein, 1990). Code is similar in many respects to Bourdieu's concept of habitus in that they are both concerned with ways of being and how this might relate to social class reproduction. However a key difference and what makes Bernstein's theory relevant to this study, is that Bernstein's notion of code provides a way of modelling how meanings are relayed at a level of detail which allows the process of reproduction to be disrupted.

Bernstein distinguishes between restricted and elaborated codes, where restricted codes are those used in more informal settings which are reliant upon context for meaning, elaborated codes are those used in more formal educational settings and rely more on conceptual and abstract language where context is less important for meaning. Bernstein argues that working-class families will largely be orientated towards restricted codes whilst middle-class families have exposure to both (Bernstein, 1990).

Without necessarily being aware, an individual's code will condition the way in which they approach, and also the way in which they respond (or not) to particular situations.

In the context of education and more specifically student and teacher classroom interactions, code is embedded within the curricula, pedagogy and individual consciousness (of the teacher and students) and will therefore impact both the approach to teaching that

individual teachers take and the way in which a student responds to that particular learning experience. For students to be successful they need to be able to recognise and respond appropriately to the rules that underpin the learning process. If students are unable to recognise that situations require a particular response and a particular and different behaviour, then there is a danger of inappropriate action (Bernstein, 1990).

Bernstein argues that this risk of inappropriate action and therefore of students being marginalised is more acute for students from under-represented groups. He argues that the nature of education means that codes within education consist of elaborated orientations which marginalised students may not be able to relate or respond to (Bernstein, 2000).

3.2.3 Key concepts - Classification and Framing

Bernstein provides a language for description of how orientations to meaning (code) are structured through his concepts of classification and framing. Classification specifically considers the power relations within society which may be formed by establishing boundaries between contexts (Bernstein, 2000). The clearer the boundaries the more scope there is for specialised identities to develop. In the context of education, the concept of classification determines what knowledge, skills and discourses are transmitted and acquired. Where classification is strong then there are strong boundaries between categories and contexts. For example in the context of HE there may be strong boundaries between educational and everyday knowledge. In Bernstein's words,

> *Where we have strong classification, the rule is: things must be kept apart. Where we have weak classification, the rule is things must be brought together. But we have to ask, in whose interest is the apartness of things and in whose interest is the new togetherness of the new integration (Bernstein, 2000, p.11).*

Bernstein argues that where classification is strong then the ability of marginalised classes to access learning opportunities may be restricted (Bernstein, 2000) as they may not be able to contextualise the subject content, making it more challenging to understand.

Framing regulates how knowledge, skills and dispositions are to be transmitted and acquired (Bernstein, 2000). In education, framing has to do particularly with four elements of pedagogic practice: the selection, the sequencing, the pacing of the acquisition of knowledge, and the method of assessment (evaluation). Where framing is strong then control is with the teacher, where framing is weak then control is with the student. Bernstein argues that where the framing is strong it often means that the images, voices and practices the school reflects, make it difficult for children of marginalised classes to recognise themselves in the school (Bernstein, 2000, p. 14).

For student learning to be effective then Bernstein's theory of pedagogic practice posits that students need to be able to recognise and be able to respond appropriately to the discursive practices of both the university and of their degree course, and teachers need to design pedagogy in a way that will assist that recognition. Bernstein's notions of framing and classification provide a way of conceptualising a particular learning experience such that the impact on student learning can then be explored. He argues that the way in which a student understands the framing of pedagogy and curriculum will impact the success students have in recognising the way in which they need to respond in order to be effective, and also the extent to which they are willing or able to respond to the challenge. Bernstein refers to these as the recognition and realisation rules. Students need to understand both such that they can produce 'texts' and discourses appropriate to the context (Bernstein, 2000). Some students may be able to recognise the rules, for example they are able to recognise the power relations in which they are involved and their position in them, but they do not

possess the realisation rules, and therefore they are unable to respond appropriately to the circumstances. In this situation an experience of education is essentially an experience of the student's class system and their place in it (Bernstein, 2000).

3.2 4 Key concepts - Horizontal and vertical discourse and hierarchical and horizontal knowledge structures

In his later work, Bernstein refined his theory to enable an analysis of different discourse subjects by distinguishing between horizontal and vertical discourse, and within vertical discourse, distinguishing between hierarchical and horizontal knowledge structures. Bernstein defines horizontal discourse as,

> *a set of local strategies, segmentally organised, context specific and dependent, for maximising encounters with persons and habits (Bernstein, 2000, p.157).*

In contrast Bernstein explains that ,

> *vertical discourse consists not of culturally specialised segments but of specialised symbolic structures of explicit knowledge (Bernstein, 2000, p.160).*

Horizontal discourse relates to informal learning environments and vertical discourse to structured educational settings.

Bernstein further extends his analysis of vertical discourse by differentiating between two forms of knowledge: hierarchal knowledge, which integrates knowledge starting from lower levels and horizontal knowledge structures, these are segmentally organised into what Bernstein refers to as different languages. By doing this, Bernstein is extending his analysis to acknowledge that horizontal knowledge structures will exist within formal educational settings but crucially, as these knowledge structures are segmented and non-transferable, then this highlights the challenge of how everyday knowledge might be taught in formal education settings. Bernstein argues that the recontextualization of segments of horizontal

discourse in the content of school subjects does not necessarily lead to more effective acquisition and is usually confined to "*less able*" students, reducing vertical discourses to "*a set of strategies*" to improve functioning in the everyday world of work and home (Bernstein,2000, p.169). As the teaching of employability consists of a combination of both vertical and horizontal knowledge, these concepts of knowledge are drawn upon to explore if the nature of what is being communicated or taught has an impact on the way teaching is received.

I am mindful that when compared to his other concepts this later work is less complete; Muller reflects that it "*merely starts the ball rolling* " (Muller 2006, p.14) . In this comment Muller is referring to there being detailed discussion of the different knowledge structures but a lack of any detail of what falls in the middle ground (Muller, 2006). This is evident when researchers have applied these concepts in practice. Breier (2004), in a study examining how everyday knowledge can be drawn upon when teaching law, found it very difficult in practise to distinguish between 'horizontal' and 'vertical' knowledge, as by its nature the structure of law is based on both.

However despite these criticisms, Bernstein's concepts of knowledge have been operationalised by scholars although the number of studies is limited. Breier (2004) drew on Bernstein's concept of horizontal knowledge to develop an understanding of the challenges faced by lecturers in the recontextualisation of everyday knowledge in the curriculum when teaching law. The study illuminates how the lecturers in the study needed to understand their role as transmitters of knowledge and how they are perceived by their students. The study shows how lecturer two (a white male and an established solicitor), when drawing examples from his practice both alienated and frustrated his students who were all part-time students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The study shows how the examples

used highlighted to the students the differences between themselves and the lecturer and that the students could not see beyond this and relate what was discussed to their own context. Breier is not arguing that the lecturer in the study should not draw from their own experiences, but is drawing on Bernstein's concepts to illuminate the need for a carefully thought through pedagogic strategy for doing this which recognises the positionality of the students. Similarly, Hordern (2014) in a study examining how vocational knowledge is incorporated into adult learning, draws on Bernstein's concepts to show how the recontextualisation of this knowledge is influenced by social processes.

3.3 Relevant empirical studies

In this section the way that Bernstein's theoretical framework has been used in empirical studies to explore issues of inequality relating to student learning is discussed. The research to date is mainly focused on learning within schools, although there is a growing body of research relating to HE (Donnelly and Abbas, 2018). The focus of the section is on studies which have drawn on the concepts that will be used in this thesis to examine complex social messages within pedagogic discourses and practice within the classroom. The objective of this section is to give the reader a deeper understanding of how Bernstein's concepts have been used in research, and therefore to further justify their use within this study. Donnelly and Abbas (2018) in a paper which draws on their own work and that of other researchers, argue that one of the benefits of Bernstein's framework is,

It provides a unique approach that leads researchers to pose formerly unthinkable questions and encourages the development of new knowledge to address them. (Donnelly and Abbas, 2018, p.1)

The section starts by drawing on relevant research studies within schools and then within HE. The review shows how Bernstein's theory has been used to explore issues which are specific to particular context and demonstrates the importance of interpreting findings within that context rather than there being a single ideal combination of classification and framing rules. My decision to incorporate school studies is based on there being a larger body of classroom-based research in this area, and it is this element of Bernstein's framework which is the focus of this study.

3.3.1 School focused studies

Arnot and Reay (2004) used framing to examine the impact of increasing government regulation on students from different social backgrounds. The study examined the experiences of year eight students in two schools; one of the schools consisted predominately of working-class students and the other of middle-class students. The study shows how the strong framing of educational knowledge was experienced differently by the different groups of students. The study found that in an environment of strong framing, students felt that whilst they could not control the content or the pace of their learning, it was the pacing rules that had a detrimental impact on the students learning experience and in particular the working-class male students. The study shows how strong pacing rules were interpreted by the working-class male students as a form of overt control which generated a negative response towards their learning. Generally all the students were reluctant to make the teachers listen to their needs when the pace was too fast, however it was the middle-class students who were better positioned to work with, rather than against this strong framing and discuss any problems with their teacher.

Lubienski (2004) used framing and classification to examine the impact of reforms introduced in the US aimed at improving the teaching of mathematics by introducing more

problem based learning. By contextualising problems with real-life scenarios the changes were designed to improve students' critical thinking skills. The analysis identified that the weaker framing of activities within the classroom introduced by the changes, meant that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds struggled to engage with the activities, as the nature of their classroom experience conflicted with their expectations. Where Bernstein's framework is particularly powerful is illuminating which particular element of a learning process is the barrier to student learning. This study shows the importance that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds place on the authority of the teacher particularly to lead discussions and be clear about what is expected of them. Where this authority is downplayed, then students from lower socio-economic backgrounds found it more difficult than students from more privileged middle-class backgrounds to make sense of what is expected of them, and this detrimentally impacted their learning experience. The solution proposed within the study was not to revert back to traditional methods, but rather to advocate for a 'mixed pedagogy' where the influence of the authority of the teacher could be used to make the evaluation criteria explicit but the hierarchical nature of the student-teaching relationship on a day to day basis could be weakened.

Donnelly (2014), used Bernstein's concepts of classification and framing to examine how pedagogic processes might carry class based messages in the context of how students were supported in their Oxbridge[6] applications. The study illuminates how through weak framing, the messages communicated to the students carried implicit assumptions that students were aware of the attributes that the universities were looking for, and that they were able to benchmark their own ability with that of peers. From the schools' perspective, a student

[6] Oxbridge is a term used to refer to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge as a unit or a group

led approach where students were invited to 'make themselves known if they were interested in applying' (Donnelly, 2014, p. 67), was designed to empower and give the students autonomy. The findings of the study however, show how as the application process evolved some students were unclear as to how they fitted into the process which resulted in students losing confidence in their ability.

In the study Malika, a potential Oxbridge student was put off applying despite being predicted three 'A' grades in her final examinations and also expressing an interest in going, this was due to here receiving a grade 'B' in one examination in her first year of study. The study highlights how Malika had little awareness of what a potential 'Oxbridge' student looked like and she expressed that she felt that she received little support from the school in determining this. As a result of achieving a grade 'B' Malika withdrew her application as her confidence as to whether she had the right academic ability had dropped. The study also shows how Louise, despite having the grades for Oxbridge did not get to the application stage, she had ruled herself out on the grounds that she was not as good as her peers.

3.3.2 HE focused studies

In the context of HE, Bernstein's framework although arguably underutilised, has been drawn upon by numerous researchers in different contexts.

In the UK, McLean et al. (2019) drew on Bernstein's pedagogic framework to evaluate the quality of university education by illuminating how HE can contribute (or not) to overcoming inequalities through the curriculum and pedagogy. The longitudinal study, from which there have been many publications as the research progressed through the different stages of the student's life cycle (see for example, Ashwin et al. 2012, 2014; McLean et al. 2013, 2019), focused on the teaching of social sciences with a sociological basis in four universities each

with a different hierarchical status in the UK, and compares the way in which the same courses were run. Bernstein's model of pedagogic discourse provided a framework to develop descriptions and explanations of how the different approaches to teaching across the universities gave students access (or not) to 'powerful knowledge', where powerful knowledge is defined by McLean et al. (2019) *"as knowledge which opens up possibilities of thought and action"* (p.83) that both contributes to and interrupts social inequalities. Bernstein's concepts of classification and framing were drawn upon to extend the evaluation of good quality teaching beyond traditional measures, such as university league tables or student evaluations to include issues of social inequalities which may not be reflected in these measures. For example, the analysis through the analytical lens of framing illuminates shows how the weak framing of how students are expected to behave in class and how hard they are expected to work at one institution were obstacles to learning, although this flexibility might be considered a positive by students in their feedback. In the context of employability, Mclean at al. (2019) show how strong disciplinary knowledge might be code-disrupting (or not) by enabling students to imagine 'unimaginable' futures. The study shows how at one institution (Selective) the theoretically based curriculum offered the knowledge base, however the weak pedagogical framing presented barriers to disadvantaged students who needed more support in relating the knowledge to their own backgrounds which in turn would give them access to the knowledge.

Crozier and Reay (2011) drew on Bernstein's concepts of classification and framing to examine how learning frameworks support students' progression. The study focused on 27 working-class students studying at two institutions, Southern, an elite selective university which struggled to meet its quota for working-class admissions and the other, Northern, a post-92 university with a strong orientation towards widening participation. The study

shows how through tight control over the students learning experience (strong framing) of where they needed to be and what they needed to be doing, the students at Southern were helped in overcoming their uncertainty and apprehension of their position within HE. In contrast the students at Northern where framing was weaker, were left floundering at times to understand what they needed to do.

Gibbons research examines how the identity of the legal profession is represented in the field of HE legal education (Gibbons, 2018) and Morrison examines student's perceptions of the barriers between different degrees and shows how what are considered to be transferable skills may not be transferable from the perspective of students (Morrison, 2014).

Outside of the UK, Shay (2011) has drawn on Bernstein's framework to examine curriculum reforms within South Africa and how these may privilege certain student groups.

3.4 Criticisms of Bernstein and his work

Like most scholars Bernstein's work is not without criticism received both during and after his lifetime. In Prings' (2015, p. 129) words, "to examine practice [teaching practices] requires articulating those beliefs and understandings and exposing them to criticism". In this section the main criticisms of Bernstein's work that are relevant to this study are discussed, these being: the lack of emphasis on human agency due to his work being underpinned by structuralism (Moore, 2013a); the idea that his theories are deterministic (Moore, 2013a); the difficulty with the application of his theory due to the impenetrability of his writing and that his theories produced white middle-class narratives in the narrow context of primary education (Singh, 2002).

In adopting a Bernsteinian approach, whilst accepting that all theories are not without criticism in their own right, I have been mindful of the importance of understanding this criticism to deepen my own understanding (Adams et al, 2011). As a researcher working with Bernstein's theory for the first time, I can relate to the criticism of the accessibility of his writing but I was most mindful of this in the context of criticisms that his work is deterministic. Having read and re-read Bernstein's work and critiques of his work over a prolonged period of time I can resonate with Sriprakash (2011), who reflecting on the contributions of Bernstein warned against the simplistic application of his framework stated,

just as 'child-centred education' can be reduced to the presence or absence of easily measured indicators in the classrooms, so too can it be reduced to a checklist of weak or strong classification and framing (Sriprakash, 2011, p.537).

My experience of working with Bernstein's theory is that it is complex and at times frustrating, and whilst this is not a reason for not adopting the framework I have been mindful that impenetrability can be undermining. Bernstein himself acknowledged the complexity of his work, in the introduction to his final book, 'Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity. Theory, research, critique', Bernstein reflects,

in much research and textbook discussion, classification and framing are used only as the means of distinguishing and describing forms of classroom practice or curricula ….this is a good example of the use many researcher's requirement rather than of the authors intention (Bernstein, 2000, p. xvii).

My reading of Bernstein's work is that Bernstein is not critical of these different applications of his theory, rather this was welcomed. Bernstein himself never believed that he himself was producing one great theory, in Bernstein's words (2000, p. 56) "it is the problem that

come first and theoretical mobilised around the problem" , but it was important to him not to lose sight of the purpose of the theory. In undertaking my research I agree with Moore who states,

it is the idea of a potentially discretionary space' that must be placed at the centre of Bernstein's problematic and which defines him most distinctively as theorist of disruption and interruption rather than reproduction (Moore, 2013a, p.56).

Criticisms that Bernstein's work lacks focus on human agency due to his work being underpinned by structuralism and that it is deterministic, and his theories produced white middle-class narratives in the narrow context of primary education have been less of a concern. My reading of much of the criticism or debate relating to Bernstein's work being underpinned by structuralism is more a result of the timing of his work which coincided with wider debates relating to the establishment of sociology as an academic subject, and also a resurgence of the work of Durkheim which was recontextualised in an American context as a conservative positivist. In contrast, Durkheim's earlier work, which Bernstein drew upon, focused on the space between structures rather than the structures themselves (Moore, 2013a). With respect to criticism relating to the narrow focus of Bernstein's work, having worked with his theory and concepts myself and studied the work of other researchers I can resonate with Edwards who in the introduction to a special edition of a journal focused on Bernstein's work, reflecting on both the complexity and application of his work comments,

such misuse [of Bernstein's theories and concepts] was made more likely by his highly abstract and descriptive language, open to varied interpretations and requiring considerable effort to bring it down to earth …. his ideas have nevertheless proved remarkably good to think with about a range of practical topics (Edwards 2002, p. 527).

Whilst the focus of Bernstein's work was primary education settings within the UK, his theory has been used and is increasingly being used within other settings. For example in the context of feminism, Arnot (2002) comments that Bernstein would be the first to admit that feminist theory did not have much direct or conscious effect on his work but also argues that the framework can be developed to the context.

In the next chapter the methodological approach and methods used in the study are explained and justified. Within this chapter more detail of how Bernstein's theory was operationalised within the study is given.

Chapter 4 – Methodology and Methods

4.0 Introduction

This chapter explains and justifies the methodological approach and methods adopted for the study. My research takes a critical realist paradigm; Bernstein's theory of pedagogic practice has taken the primary role of knowledge generation and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is used as a methodology for the study. In this chapter I explain how these elements are brought together to answer the research questions and how they have informed the methods utilised in the study.

The chapter starts with a reminder of the research questions of my study, and following this I introduce the critical realist paradigm and how this has influenced my methodological choices and the role of theory in the study. The methods used in the study are then discussed in turn, these consist of semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. Following this I discuss the approach to data analysis and how the methods of data collection are drawn together to answer the research questions. The ethical considerations of the research are then discussed and finally I give an account on my approach to writing up my findings. In this final section I discuss the challenges of writing up the results in a way that readers can make sense of the long and complex process of analysis which has multiple layers of data (Smith et al., 2009).

4.1 Research questions

The primary research question asked in the study was:

1. *Does pedagogic practice (purposefully or inadvertently or implicitly) reproduce social inequalities and how might this be happening?*

This question was further supplemented by the following sub questions:

2. *How are the pedagogic practices classified and framed?*

3. *How does the observed classification and framing potentially impact student learning?*

4. *How did the students' experience the teaching sessions?*

5. *What are the implications of the findings for the way in which pedagogic practices might contribute to the reproduction of social equalities?*

The questions were explored using a combination of semi-structured interviews with students and through the observation of teaching sessions over the one year period of the research.

4.2 Ontology – a critical realist approach

4.2.1 The critical realist paradigm

Ontology concerns assumptions about the nature of the natural and social world (Williams and May,1996). Critical realism argues that the world (both the natural and social world) exists independently of our perceptions and conceptions of it (Sayer, 2000). Sayer (2000) refers to critical realism as a stratified ontology which falls between positivism and constructivism. The belief that the world exists independently of individual perceptions and conceptions of it and that we can seek to understand causal relationships, is consistent with the positive paradigm. However in contrast to the positivist paradigm, critical realists argue that the cause of any phenomenon is not a constant; rather whatever is 'real' has certain structures and causal powers which will interact in particular ways depending on the body or group with which this interaction takes place (Bhaskar, 1998). Critical realism allows both for a consideration of the context and also an understanding of agency, epistemologically

critical realism forms an understanding of a particular phenomenon through an analysis of the experiences of individuals and as a result there is a hermeneutic aspect to studies. To understand a particular event then the analysis needs to be able to identify and explain the elements of reality that must exist for the events and experiences to have taken place (Wynn and Williams, 2012). The epistemological objective of critical realism is to explain the relationship between observed experiences, events, and causal mechanisms with the main objective being to develop knowledge of causal mechanism to understand why a particular event occurs (Lawani, 2020). To understand how knowledge is formed it is therefore important to consider how knowledge is constructed, and not just how it works in a particular context (Moore, 2013b). In the context of this particular study, in order to develop an understanding of the impact of a particular teaching practice, the study has been designed to develop an understanding of the teaching practices independently of how such teaching practices are perceived, and to use the findings as a lens through which the students' perceptions will be analysed (Maton and Moore, 2010).

External factors (such as class) may introduce bias into the way in which individuals construct knowledge. In the context of this particular study, working-class students may receive learning processes in a particular way however it is not assumed that the final outcome is inevitable, rather the way in which knowledge is constructed (the way in which it is taught) will impact the final outcome.

Within critical reality three different domains of reality exist. Firstly the empirical, this is a domain of experience which refers to events that have been experienced or objects that can be measured empirically. Second is the actual, which relates events or objects that exist regardless of whether they have been observed or experienced, and thirdly the real, within which causal mechanisms exists. The separation of these domains makes explicit within the

ontological framework that reality exists beyond what is observable and that reality is mediated through causal mechanisms within objects and structures. Therefore to understand events it is these causal mechanism that need to be understood and social class is an example of one of these mechanisms *(Wheelahan, 2007).*

In the context of my research study which focuses on how pedagogic practices might reproduce class based inequalities, Bernstein's framework is drawn upon to develop an understanding of the teaching practices within the classroom (the real), and also as an analytical lens through which the analysis can go beyond underlying appearances or events to develop an understanding of students' perceptions of reality and to illuminate the relevance of social class as a causal mechanism. Bernstein himself did explicitly align his theories to critical realism however, Moore (2004, p.142) shows how through his insistence that the purpose of theories is that they generate languages of description about their objects of study, Bernstein was insisting on '*an external ontological imperative'*.

4.2.2 Implications of critical realism on social science research

In critical realism the term 'realism' originates from the term 'transcendental' which Bhasker[7] used in earlier work before settling on the more general term realism (Danermark et al., 2002). In this earlier work, transcendental signified an ontology that transcends the empirical to focus on causes and mechanisms which can only be understood by means of concepts and theories. Bhasker (2008) states,

> *To ascribe a law one needs a theory. For it is only if it asked by a theory containing a model or conception of a putative causal or exploratory link that a law can be distinguished from a purely accidental (Bhasker, 2008, p.1).*

7 Bhaskar is widely credited as the founder of critical realism (see for example Sayer, 2000)

The practical implications of this for research is the need for methods which enable abduction and retroduction; critical realism does not advocate specific research methods of data analysis, methods are context dependent and guided by these priorities.

In the context of my research, my choice of IPA as a methodology for the study fits with the research paradigm which calls for a methodology that enabled an understanding of the research problem that went beyond the students' own explanations of their experiences and understand their subjective realities in the context of social class as a causal mechanism. IPA has a philosophical grounding in both phenomenology and hermeneutics, the hermeneutic emphasis within IPA relates to the importance placed on the double act of interpretation, Smith and Osborn (2003) describe this as a duel process in which *'participants are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world' (p.51).* Consistent with critical realism this process of interpretation places a participants' account in a broader, social and theoretical context (Larkin et al., 2006). On a more practical level the methodological procedures of IPA, which are described in detail by Smith et al (2009) provided a structured approach to the research process and in particular an approach to data analysis which gave voice to the individuals experiences and enabled an understanding of these experiences to be developed through Bernstein's theoretical lens.

Bernstein's theory of pedagogic practice guided and provided a framework for the analysis. Bernstein himself, consistent with the ontological underpinnings of critical realism, reflecting on his approach to the research and the role of theory stated,

> *The pattern of the research …. throughout the 35 years has always being the same: the theory, however primitive, has always come before the research (Bernstein, 2000, p. 93).*

4.2.3 Challenges to critical realism

As with all ontological paradigms critical realism is subject to criticism and challenge, particularly with respect to its practical application relating to the identification of the structures to be investigated. Reed (2009) for example challenges whether structures can be broken down or should the whole system be investigated? He argues that by considering individual systems then this might omit systems that operate at the macro level and therefore it is difficult to know where you draw the boundaries (Reed, 2009)? Brown (2014, p. 112) reflecting on the applicability of critical realism as an approach to employment research advises to 'approach with caution', and challenges the validity of drawing meaning from local specific case studies as these ignore the broader capitalist structures which will impact how findings are interpreted.

For me these challenges reflect what Dubois and Gadde (2002) refer to as the messy reality of research. Critical realism is consistent with my positionality as a teacher; teachers are social agents operating within a particular set of circumstances who act as agents within those circumstances and don't just reflect back those conditions. Whilst there are challenges with the application of critical realism it does not mean that it is not an appropriate approach, rather as a researcher I need to be aware of these complexities and challenges particularly when interpreting the findings.

4.3 Overview of the research design

The study is an exploratory study; whilst it is well established in the literature that inequalities exist within HE, much less is known about the impact that approaches to teaching have on these inequalities particularly in the context of student employability. The focus of the study is a series of employability lectures open to all first year students studying at a Management School at a UK Russell Group university. The lectures were designed

specifically for first year students to consolidate existing knowledge and develop the foundations for students to build upon in future years. The objectives of the sessions were as follows:-

- provide guidance on how students can develop their CV whilst at university in order to maximise their chances of pursuing their choice of career once they graduate. This includes both general advice on the types of things that they should be doing in order to develop their CV's and addressing specific training needs, for example, how to use LinkedIn
- providing support and advice to students in deciding what they want to do once they graduate
- supporting and advising students in the application process for work placements and internships
- providing guidance on how to write a CV

The university year is split into three terms of 10 weeks. The lectures ran approximately every two weeks through terms one and two. All sessions were shown on the student's personal timetable although attendance at the lectures was voluntary. A summary of the lectures (11 in total) is given in table three below.

Table 3 - Schedule of the observed lectures

	Topic	Content	Observed
8/10/18	Making the most of University – how to get ahead	Career Planning, opportunities for the development of skills. An overview of careers opportunities and what employers are looking for.	Y
15/10/18	Writing Effective CVs and Cover Letters	Approaches to CV writing - creating and developing a CV and a cover Letter	Y
5/11/18	Sharing experiences, presentation from 2nd and final year student	Hints and tips for applying for placements and internships and giving an insight into how they have developed their CV's since being at university	Y
12/11/18	Placements	Placement year info - why take a placement, benefits, types of placements, transferring onto the programme, stories from placement students	Y
26/11/18	Making successful applications	Overview of a different recruitment processes What a good application would look like – what are different employers looking for	Y
15/1/19	Career Planning	Overview of the different ways to approach career planning and why it is important Sources of information	Y
29/1/19	PwC – employer presentation, advice on the PwC application process	Overview of the company Overview of the recruitment process and the skills and attributes that PwC are looking for. Tips for success in the graduate recruitment market	Y
20/2/19	Understanding your strengths	Overview of what employers mean by skills and strengths Overview of different models that can be drawn on to evaluate personal strengths and skills	Y
4/3/19	Internships	Overview of the different internships that are available and why they are important Overview of sources of information	Y
12/3/19	Applications for internships	Overview of the application process	Y
29/4/19	Let's talk placements, the application process	Overview of what placements are and the type of placements that are available. Overview of the different application processes	Y

4.4 Methodology

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is used as a methodology for the study. My rationale for the selection of IPA was based on the need to use a methodology that would be able to deal with the complexity of the research problem. This complexity is caused by the multifaceted nature of inequalities within education and also the contested nature of what constitutes working class.

Consideration was also given to how these issues could be explored at a level of granularity so the impact of specific teaching approaches could be understood. Given the complexity of the issue and the potential number of factors that could impact the experience of students (even when from an 'homogenous' group) the methodology selected needed to enable individual voices to be heard, and also provide a way of analysing data such that both individual and shared experiences can be captured (Larkin and Thompson, 2011).

IPA is a phenomenological approach which explores in detail participants' experiences of a particular event, it seeks to explore their individual perceptions and it is especially useful when researching complex problems (Smith and Osborn, 2007). The analytical processes in IPA follow what Smith (2008) refers to as a double hermeneutic or dual interpretation process. This involves firstly allowing participants to talk about how they perceive a particular phenomenon, and then the researcher trying to make their own critical interpretations of the data drawing on relevant literature or broader theoretical perspectives (Reid, et al, 2005). During this interpretation the researcher will ask questions such as, do I have a sense of something that is happening that the participants themselves may not be aware (Smith and Osborn, 2007)? Larkin and Thompson (2011, p.4) refer to the outcomes of IPA studies as both "giving voice" and "making sense", that is IPA captures and

reflects upon the claims of participants but also offers an interpretation of this material which is grounded in their accounts but may draw upon other theories and concepts. An understanding of what is happening to the participants is developed by building different layers of understanding, some of which perhaps take different stances and require deep probing and do not solely rely on students perceptions of reality (Smith et al, 2009). IPA is concerned in the first instance with developing individual accounts of a particular event but moves on to look for patterns of convergence and divergence across cases (Eatough and Smith, 2008). It emphasises that the research exercise is a dynamic process where the researcher takes an active role in the research process, and whilst the research is trying to understand the participant's perspective, the researchers own conceptions are required to make sense of these perspectives (Smith and Osborn, 2007).

4.5 Data Collection

In line with social realism the data collection was designed to develop an understanding of the teaching practices independently of how such teaching practices are perceived.

The data for the study was collected through two main sources, through semi-structured interviews with students and through lectures observations. This also included reviewing the teaching material presented during lectures.

Similar studies which draw on Bernstein's' theoretical framework have also collected data through multiple sources. Morias and Neves (2010) and McLean et al., (2013) both argue that the complexity of the pedagogic processes means that they cannot necessarily be understood from a single perspective.

The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to gain an understanding of how the students experienced the sessions, and the observation of the lectures and review of the

teaching material informed an understanding of the teaching practices underpinning the sessions. The semi-structured interviews were held before any analysis of the teaching sessions was undertaken to reduce the risk of leading questions within the interviews.

4.6 Semi Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are the most common way of collecting data in an IPA study (Smith and Osborn, 2007), reflecting the need for a flexible data collection method as it may need to be adapted in light of participant responses.

Smith et al, (2009) refer to IPA studies as coming to the research questions sideways; the research questions that studies are aiming to answer tend to be abstract and therefore cannot be answered effectively through asking the direct question. The purpose of the interviews in an IPA study, is to facilitate a conversation around topics that are relevant to the research questions such that the research questions can be subsequently answered through analysis of the data. The objective of the interviews in this study was to explore from the perspective of the students their experiences of the teaching sessions. The semi-structured interviews therefore address research question three directly and contribute to answering research question one.

To support data collection an interview schedule for the initial interview and a combined schedule for interviews two and three were developed. Whilst developing the schedule I was mindful of balancing the objective of getting as close as possible to what the respondent thinks about an issue and allowing the respondents to determine what should be discussed, whilst also ensuring the collection of enough data in enough breadth and depth to enable the research questions to be answered (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). The schedule was used as a guide as to how to move logically through the students' experiences

of the employability lectures and also as a prompt to ensure all areas which might be relevant to answering the research questions were explored. The schedule contained open questions which asked participants, 'to tell me about' or 'how did you feel' about your experiences. The relevant areas to be explored as part of the interview were informed by the literature, this identifies that a student's background and past experiences can impact the way in which particular learning experiences are received. Therefore the questions were designed to explore these factors in addition to asking specifically about how they felt about a particular teaching session. To ease the participant into the interview the initial questions focused specifically on the most recent lectures that they had attended and asked them to describe how they felt about the experience. Hard copies of the lecture slides from each of the sessions were given to the students at the start of the interview as a reminder of what was covered, and also so that they could comment on particular elements of the lectures. Smith et al, (2009) identify the importance of giving participants time to settle into the interview before asking more personal or sensitive questions that they might find more difficult to answer. A copy of the interview schedules are included in appendix five and six.

4.7 Pilot Interviews

Two pilot interviews were held to test the interview schedules with first year students. As a result of the pilot interviews no changes were made to the interview schedules but changes were made to how quickly prompts were used. In addition the pilot interviews also provided useful insight into how to explore the participants' background and previous experiences. Initially during the pilot interviews at a point of silence, prompts were used relatively quickly to ask the question in an alternative way or to give a further prompt. As the interview progressed it was clear that the participants needed more time to think about their answers rather than being presented with an alternative question or a prompt and therefore my

interview style was adjusted as a result of this. Both participants fed back at the end of the interview that they appreciated being given more time to think through their answers, both commented that when asked too quickly my interruptions (prompts) were a distraction. In both interviews the participants referred to their background and previous experiences when asked about specific lectures and these factors were explored in depth throughout the interview. The specific questions about background and previous experiences were left on the schedule to ensure that these factors were explored but it was noted that these particular questions may not be required.

4.8 Participants

IPA studies typically use small sample sizes with samples being selected using purposeful sampling (Smith et al., 2009). This reflects the objective of IPA which is to develop a deep and rich understanding of a particular situation and the importance of retaining an idiographic focus. This is generally only achievable with a small number of participants drawn from a fairly homogenous sample (Smith, 2015). Published IPA studies have sample sizes of up to fifteen, some studies have been based on a sample size of one, substituting breadth for depth (Larkin and Thompson, 2011). Smith (2015) notes that a sample size of five or six interviews is identified as a reasonable sample size in the literature although he recommends a sample size of three for novice researchers given the complexity of the analysis process. He also identifies that the richness of individual cases and the constraints that researchers are under are key factors which will influence the sample size. Given the potential multifaceted nature of factors driving different student experiences and also the contested nature of working class as a construct, a sample size of six participants was considered more appropriate than three, as this would allow a breadth of the problems to be explored.

4.9 Selection of the participants and defining working class

The approach taken to define working class was one that aimed to capture the complexity of class formation but also balance this with a clear set of criteria that the students would be able to identify with.

To identify students for the study, a questionnaire was developed incorporating both objective and subjective measures of class identity (see appendix two). The objective measures incorporated measures typically used by HEIs to identify students from lower socio - economic groups (DBIS, 2016). The subjective measure asked students for their views of how they perceive themselves and also members of their families and therefore followed a similar approach to that adopted by Rubin and Wright (2017).

Students were selected for the study based on both the objective and subjective measures. For students to be selected they had to fall within one of the objective measures of working class or have identified themselves as working class. By using both objective and subjective measures then the individuality of class formation was incorporated into the study.

The students for the study were identified through the distribution of a paper based descriptive questionnaire, distributed to first year students during two lectures at which it was expected that all students would attend. The questionnaires were distributed by a member of staff who was not part of the study, the individual was given a script to read as the questionnaire was distributed explaining the purpose of the study, that participation was voluntary and that by even by completing the questionnaire students were not obliged to take part if approached to be interviewed.

Twenty-five students met the criteria for the study (10 male and 15 female), to avoid the sample being over-represented by a particular group, three male and three female participants were selected for the study, these were selected at random.

Table 4 below gives a summary of the participants. All of the students were the first in their family to go to university, all attended state secondary schools, four of the students self-identified as working-class and two as middle-class. Whilst class was the primary structuring factor for the study, the sample allowed for the intersection between gender and class to be explored and also, although in a more limited way the intersection between ethnicity and class. All of the students were under the age of 21 and no students had a disability and therefore it was not possible to draw any comparisons relating to these factors.

Table 4 - Summary of the participants

Interviewee	**Gender**	**1st Generation HE?**	**State/Independent School**	**Class 'self-assessment'**	**Occupation of highest income earner in the family**
Amanda	F	Y	State	Middle Class	Owns an independent bicycle store
Adam	M	Y	State	Middle Class	Hairdresser
Linda	F	Y	State	Working Class	Assistant at a company supplying plant and equipment to the building trade
Steven	M	Y	State	Working Class	Dog Walker
Tara	F	Y	State	Working Class	Security Guard
Tim	M	Y	State	Working Class	Pest Controller

4.10 Frequency of interviews

Students had the opportunity to attend 11 employability lectures over two terms. Each student was interviewed three times in total across the two terms. To reduce the risk of

students forgetting what had been discussed in the lectures but also to practically manage the number of interviews that had to be held, interviews were timed such that each interview focused on the lectures attended in the previous two weeks, this meant that two lectures could be discussed at a time. The findings from the pilot study gave reassurances that students were able to recall what had been discussed in the lectures two weeks previously, particularly when prompted by the lecture slides.

Which lectures to focus the interviews on was determined by which lectures the students had attended. In the original research plan, six lectures had been identified as the focus for the three interviews. These were selected with the objective of seeking confirmatory or non-confirmatory views. This approach as the research progressed through term one was problematic from a practical perspective, attendance at the sessions was not compulsory and therefore students were very inconsistent in the sessions that they attended. Approaching sample selection in this way resulted in a risk that there would be very poor attendance at the lectures selected and therefore insufficient data relating to approaches to teaching. The preliminary analysis of the student interviews relating to the first two lectures suggested that non-attendance at sessions did not relate to the specific content of each session or how it was taught; non-attendance related more to the sessions not being compulsory. Whilst non-attendance and the reasons for this are an important part of the study, the initial analysis of the interview data suggested non-attendance could be explored with participants during interviews which were planned around lectures that they did attend. Therefore the approach to sample selection changed half way through term one and into term two. The revised approach was to interview students three times but to hold the interviews with students at a time when it was known that they had attended a session to ensure that impact of the approaches to teaching could be explored. Attendance registers

were taken at each of the sessions so it was known who had attended, this strategy of when to hold the interviews was not communicated to the students as the aim was to minimise the influence that the study had on their attendance at these lectures.

4.11 Interview protocol

Oral consent to participate in the study was obtained from students at the start of each interview, the interviews were recorded with the student's permission and all students gave consent for this.

At the start of each interview students were informed of the purpose of the study and how the data generated from their interview would be used. It was made clear to the students that all of their responses in the final write up of the results would be anonymised.

Students were made aware at the start of each interview that their participation was voluntary and that they could stop the interview at any time. As the interviews progressed, at the interviewer's discretion the students were reminded that they did not have to answer if they did not feel comfortable answering. Students were reminded at the end of the interview that they had the right to withdraw within three months of the interview without giving a reason.

4.12 Data collection - lecture observations and the review of the teaching material

The purpose of the classroom observations and the review of the teaching material was to develop a systematic understanding of the content of the teaching material and the pedagogic practices underpinning the delivery of the material, and therefore address research questions one and two. All of the lectures were observed as the student interviews could have potentially been focused on any of the lectures and it was not possible to

ascertain this in advance of the lecture taking place. The purpose of the initial observations were so that I could familiarise myself with the sessions in advance of the interviews. The lectures were recorded and transcribed and the transcriptions were used for the analysis of the sessions through Bernstein's analytical lens. All of the lectures were recorded but only the lectures which were to be the focus of an interview were transcribed. This analysis took place after the interviews to reduce the risk of leading questions during the interviews.

4.13 Approach to the data analysis

I found this stage of the research process the most challenging in part reflecting the amount of data that needed to be brought together but mainly reflecting the complexity that I experienced in applying Bernstein's concepts. Bernstein himself acknowledges that there is a risk that researchers can lose sight of the purpose of applying his concepts such that they are reduced to tools which describe classroom practices at a superficial level (Bernstein, 2000). I was mindful of the words of Sriprakash (2011) in a paper evaluating the contribution of Bernstein to educational research, Sriprakash states,

> *A Bernsteinian research approach is not immune from producing the kinds of reductionist accounts of pedagogy of which the analysis is wary (Sriprakash,2011, p.521).*

Sriprakash (2011, p.537) in her final remarks comments,

> *Bernstein's theories have been most sensitively used in empirical studies which have been committed to reflexive processes of ordering data.*

The approach to the analysis and interpretation was guided by Bernstein's conceptualisation of the research process (Bernstein, 2000) and follows a similar approach to that adopted by both McLean et al. (2013) and Morias and Neves (2010). Bernstein makes a distinction between internal and external languages of description, where internal languages of

description are languages of theory or concepts and external languages of description go beyond a theory and its derived model and relate to actual experiences (Bernstein, 2000). External languages of description for Bernstein open up what he refers to as the 'discursive gap' between these theoretical descriptions and reality, and it is through this discursive gap that opportunities to disrupt are identified.

In applying Bernstein's analytical framework the analysis consisted of three elements. The analysis of the student interviews, the analysis of the teaching sessions through Bernstein's conceptual lens and finally these two analysed data sets were analysed in relation to one another to examine issues of inequality and pedagogic practice.

The analysis section below explains the approach taken for each element of the analysis in more detail. The discussion starts with the approach to the analysis of the student interviews, following this the approach to the analysis of the teaching sessions is discussed and finally how the two data sets were brought together is explained.

4.14 Analysing student interviews

As a novice to IPA, I elected to follow an established and frequently used analysis framework developed by Smith et al., (2009). This follows a six step approach to analysis and provides some structure, although it is it is expected that the route through the steps will be multi-dimensional and may involve revisiting each step multiple times as the researcher develops their interpretation of the data (Smith et al., 2009). Where studies involve more than one case then it is recommended that the analysis starts with implementing the six steps for a single case and then moving on to examine the others on a case by case basis. This follows the idiographic approach to analysis, beginning with particular examples and only slowly working up more general categorisation of claims.

The first step involves close reading of an interview transcript often multiple times to identify points of interest. This can focus on content, language use, context, and initial interpretative comments (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014). At this stage I needed to be careful not to examine the transcripts at a deeper level and I needed to avoid being overly interpretive. The objective of this first step was to start to familiarise myself with the data and to start to make the participant the focus of the analysis. At this stage no notes were made on the script as the focus was to enter the participants' world. Smith et al., (2009) acknowledges that at this stage the researcher may be overwhelmed by ideas and possible connections, to try to minimise the effect of this I read the scripts in an environment away from where I would normally undertake my research and at the start of the day.

The second step involves multiple levels of initial note taking with the objective of examining semantic content and language use on a very exploratory level. Smith et al., (2009) likens this first stage of note taking to a free text analysis, the purpose of the exercise is to identify specific ways in which a participant refers to an understanding of an issue and to develop a comprehensive set of notes on the data. At this stage I was mindful of the importance of keeping an open mind and being guided by the text as the initial notes needed to have phenomenological focus and stay close to the participant's explicit meaning (Smith et al., 2009). This initial set of notes were descriptive in nature and identified things that were important to the participant and described key events and dates. As this analysis progressed, in addition to descriptive notes more interpretive notes are taken which provided meaning to what the participant is describing. This involves thinking about the language they use, the concept and identifying more abstract concepts which can be used to make sense of their account.

Practically this involved using a hard copy of each transcript with wide margins and using one margin for documenting initial descriptive comments and then the other margin to capture interpretative comments. To reduce the risk of researcher bias then all descriptive comments were linked to student quotes and these were revisited and the interpretation checked.

In the third step I identified emergent themes, the objective being to formulate a concise phrase at a higher level of abstraction with the challenge at this stage being to identify phrases which are at a level high enough to allow theoretical connections within and across cases, but are still grounded in the comments made by the participant.

The fourth step involved connecting and clustering the themes to develop a table of themes ordered coherently. Again as with the third step whilst I was drawing on interpretative resources to make sense of what the person was saying this was constantly checked against what was actually said.

It is in this forth step that the findings from the analysis of the teaching sessions through Bernstein's theoretical lens were drawn upon to understand the relationship between these emergent themes and pedagogic practices within the classroom.

The analysis of the teaching sessions through Bernstein's analytical lens were a pre-requisite for this stage in the analysis of the student interviews. The approach taken for this is discussed below in 4.15.

Step five of the analysis is to move onto the next case and essentially consists of repeating steps one through to four one by one for each case. Smith et al., (2009, p. 100), note the importance at this stage of treating each case on its own terms to keep with IPA's idiographic commitment but note the *"inevitability"* of researchers being influenced by

what has already been found. To reduce this risk then at least a two day gap was made between the analyses of each of the cases and also the steps were systematically applied.

The final step in the analysis process involves looking for patterns across cases. The table of themes which was developed for each interviewee was compared to identify connections or contradictions to develop a deeper understanding of findings. An example of this is shown below in tables five, six and seven. Table five presents to key to the analysis, this explains the meaning of the annotation on the transcripts. Table six shows an example of the analysis of a student transcript, and table seven gives a summary of the emergent themes from the students' first interviews.

Table 5 - Example of the analysis of a student transcript, analysis key

Step in the analysis	**Notes**	**Step in the analysis**	**Notes**
Step one – familiarisation	No notes	Step Two – initial note taking	Left hand column – black font, initial descriptive comments Centre column – blue highlight linguistic comments Right hand column – red font, conceptual comments
Step three – emergent themes	Left hand column – blue font	Step four – clustered themes and analysis through the theoretical lens	Cluster themes – see table 'x' Right hand column – green font, Bernsteinian lens

Table 6 - Example of an analysed interview transcript – Amanda interview one

	30th October	

INTERVIEWEE SEE THEMSELVES AS DIFFERENT FROM THE REST OF THE COHORT Refers to employability sessions as being more general at school – expectation is that the sessions at university will be more specific, but still expecting 'general subject matter' SEES EMPLOYABILITY AS A PROCESS NEGATIVE ATTITUDE – RESISTENCE? EMPLOYABILITY IS NOT AN OPPORTUNITY IT'S IMPORTANT BUT NOT FOR ME Repeat of emails Refers to depth of information being too general, no depth to the information Information is very high level/impersonal therefore I can/will ignore it How to make it real for students? QUESTIONS RELEVANCE TO SELF? NEEDS CLARITY ON WHAT TO DO? NOT SURE WHERE TO START	Int: There have been 2 sessions that Joss has run – have you attended both? Amanda: I went to the CV writing session and yes I went to the other, Int: I'll focus on the first one first When you were going to the session can you remember how you felt when you entered the session? Amanda: I was thinking – well we didn't get to go to a lot of employability things during school so I didn't know exactly what to expect, but I was kind of, well the general university welcoming stuff is more specific to the subject I guess as it's in department but I was still expecting a general employability thing, like what can you do to make people like me get work experience, well your CV because we I had a session coming up I knew it wouldn't be about that but it's all about getting people to know you, so like building your connections Int: Did you feel comfortable when you entered the room Amanda : Yes it just felt like the rest of the things that we'd done at the beginning of the course like being in a lecture, it was a new thing but similar to everything else. Int: Thinking about what was discussed – is there anything in the sessions that you found useful?	Expectation that that the teacher will lead on content Negative experience at school? (or uninspiring) No clear focus Employability 'thing' No reference to outcomes, just a general thing. Instructional Refers to concepts/terms. Assumptions that they all know what they are Seems to be resistance? I've never done it? Not me/never met anybody. Not an OPPORTUNITY Language of resistance Described sessions focusing on outcomes, but importance to the student is the process Important but not me? Not clear how to put into practice – needs small steps

	Amanda: I wouldn't say anything different – not in a bad way. I think most of it was what we get told through emails anyway. Like with the volunteering and internships, it's stuff that I have never done in depth, so this consolidated it. So like internships, I hear them talked about but I have never really gone into any depth about how I would go about doing it or I had never met anybody who has done one. So it is valuable stuff but it doesn't feel very personal, so I don't see myself doing anything with this at the moment because I've not had any actual, met somebody who's done it and explained exactly how do you do that, what do you start doing, who do you talk to although they did mention names of people who would help.	

Table 7 - Emerging themes from the first student interviews

Interview 1 (1st 4 weeks of term 1)	**1 - Amanda**	**2 - Adam**	**3 - Linda**	**4 – Steven**	**5 - Tara**	**6 – Tim**
Sequential approach to education	Y	Y	Y	Y	NA	Y
Feelings of being different	Y	Y	NA	Y	NA	Y
No vision of their future	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Priority is settling in	Y	Y	NA	Y	Y	Y
Reluctant to seek help - they have	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	NA

more to do for themselves						
Tell me what to do	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	NA
University is more than a degree	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	NA
Happy with the content of the sessions	NA	Y	Y	NA	Y	Y

4.15 Analysing the teaching sessions

To guide this analysis process a research instrument was developed informed by the work of Morais et al., (2004). The research instrument articulated for each of the sessions what the pedagogic approaches might look like based on the strength of framing and classification. An example of the instrument is included in appendix seven.

The research instrument provided a way of operationalising the theoretical features of pedagogic discourse in the specific context of what was being studied. Morais et al., (2004) refer to this two stage process as deriving an external language of description from an internal language of description, whereby the theoretical and the empirical are viewed dialectically.

Bernstein's notions of framing (F) and classification (C) can vary along a continuum, and can vary independently of each other. Pedagogic discourse can therefore be classified into four basic forms C+/F+, C+/F-, C-/ F+ and C-/ F- (Bernstein, 2000), where '+' represents strong classification and framing and '-' represents weak classification and framing.

In addition to classification and framing working independently of one another, they can also differ for different areas of knowledge and different elements of the learning process. Therefore a research instrument which covered classification and framing was developed

for each of the knowledge areas that were a focus of the student's first year studies. These are as follows:-

1. Career choices. Throughout their first year students the students were given the opportunity to consider different career opportunities.

2. Building and developing key employability skills. Students were given the opportunity to undertake a skills audit against key employability skills and to develop specific skills throughout the year.

3. Personal development planning. Students were required to develop a personal development plan which identified key employability skills to be developed, a plan for the development of these skills, and also any actions to be taken to start narrowing down where they saw their future careers.

4. The development of capability with respect to application processes.

5. Writing a CV

4.16 Authenticity and trustworthiness of the research

It is generally acknowledged in the literature that no educational research can be value free on the basis that all aspects of education are subject to debate, from content through to method of delivery and to what constitutes a good outcome and quality (Scott and Usher, 2010; Boyd, 2000; Carr, 2000; Wellington, 2000).

To evaluate the authenticity and trustworthiness of the research design and also as a reference point whilst the research was being undertaken, I used Yardley's criteria for evaluating qualitative research (Yardley, 2000). Yardley sets out four key areas that all

qualitative research should adhere to, these relate to sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence and impact.

There is debate in the literature as to whether a framework can be used to evaluate the quality of qualitative research. There are concerns in the literature that these types of approaches become too simplistic and prescriptive which undermines the quality of the research, as the complexity and subtlety of the research is ignored (Sin, 2010). Despite this criticism there is support for Yardley's framework which addresses some of these concerns. Robinson (2014, p. 34) refers to Yardley's criteria for evaluating qualitative research as "respected benchmarks" for assessing the validity of a study. Similarly, Smith et al., (2008) advocate Yardley's criteria on the basis that they are broad ranging and offer a variety of ways to establish quality and therefore recognise the complexity and subtleties of the research. Table eight (below) presents each of Yardley's four criteria and demonstrates how these have been met to ensure the authenticity and trustworthiness of the findings.

Table 8 - Application of Yardley's four quality criteria

Essential Qualities	**Examples of the form that each can take (Yardley, 2000)**	**How they have been met**
Sensitivity to context	Theoretical; relevant literature; empirical data; sociocultural settings; participants' perspectives; ethical issues	• Context has been central to the choice of drawing on Bernstein's theory of pedagogic practice through which to analyse the data • IPA as a methodology is centred around the need for sensitivity to context • Relevant literature is drawn upon to establish the need for the study and as a reference point to understand the findings.
Commitment and rigour	In-depth engagement with topic; methodological competence/skill; thorough data collection; depth/breadth of analysis	• Six step approach to data analysis has been applied systematically without compromise
Transparency and coherence	Clarity and power of description/argument; transparent methods and data presentation; fit between theory and methods; reflexivity	• My positionality and the rationality for the study has been given • Care has been taken in to write up to give a full narrative account which is systematic and comprehensible
Impact and Importance	Theoretical (enriching understanding); social-cultural; practical (for community, policy makers, health workers)	• The policy and practical implications are discussed in chapter seven

4.17 Ethics

The Code of Human Research Ethics (The Code) (BPS, 2014) was used as guidance for the research study. To ensure that requirements of the code were met and to ensure that participants did not come to any harm, the following issues were considered for this research.

4.17.1 Valid Consent

Student consent

Overall I would argue that the subject content of the research was relatively uncontroversial and the participants would not be classified as vulnerable within The Code (BPS, 2014). However I was conscious of the power relations between myself and the students and the potential for the participants feeling that they could not say no. Langsten et al., (2004) refer to the importance of the researcher being vigilant to this, similarly Alderson (2004) highlights that it is not always clear to participants that they can say no. I was also conscious of Iphofen's (2009, p. 74) comments that "consent should be gained in the most convenient manner for both researcher and the researched".

I was not part of the teaching team delivering the teaching sessions but I did teach the students on a different first year module. I was also Director of Undergraduate Programmes within the Management School and had an oversight role of all the undergraduate programmes. Whilst I could not change my role within the school the following approach was taken to mitigate the risk that my role might qualify the students' freedom of consent (Gillham, 2005).

The recruitment of students to take part in the study was via a questionnaire; this detailed the objectives of the study, their role in the study and their expected time commitment, it

also made it clear that participation was voluntary. The questionnaire did make it clear that I would be the researcher but it was distributed by a member of staff who was independent of the study. The member of staff was given a script to read when introducing the study which re-iterated that participation was voluntary.

All participants selected for the study were sent a 'Participant Information Sheet' in advance of their first interview. This explained again the purpose of the study and what would be expected from them. Again it was made clear that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any point during the study, and within three months of their final interview without having to give a reason. The time limit of three months was to balance assurances to students that they could withdraw at any time with the practical implications of needing data for the research (Wiles, 2012). Where students did withdraw during the study they were asked if the data collected up to this point could be used. One student did withdraw and they did give their consent for the data to be used. When the student withdrew from the study, unprompted they gave their reasons and these were not related to the research process, therefore it did seem appropriate to ask if the data could be used. A copy of the 'Participant Information Sheet' is included in appendix four.

At the start of the participant's first interview they were given another copy of the 'Participant Information Sheet' and were asked to read this again before signing a consent form. Signed rather than verbal consent was considered important to increase the likelihood that the participants would know what was involved (Silverman, 2013).

At the start of each interview I verbally reminded the students that participation was voluntary and that the research was separate to their programme of study. As an experienced academic supervisor I was vigilant throughout the data collection period for

any changes in participant's willingness to take in part in the study. I ensured that I was vigilant to both verbal and non-verbal cues that they might be uncomfortable with taking part in the research. It was also made clear to students that if they were uncomfortable with any questions that were asked they did not need to answer and that they could take a break at any time during an interview.

When arranging interviews participants were sent an initial email asking them whether they were happy for an interview to be arranged. If participants did not respond to this email a reminder was sent. If at this point participants had still not responded, then an email asking the students if they would like to withdraw was sent with reassurance that this was perfectly acceptable.

Teacher Consent

As an insider researcher I was conscious of my responsibility of providing a reasonable account of the rationale and purpose of the study (Platt, 1981), whilst avoiding contaminating the study by informing the teacher presenting the employability sessions about the research questions to be studied (Silverman, 2013).

The teacher presenting the sessions was informed through a participant information sheet that if they felt uncomfortable about the study they could have chosen not to participate. The information made it clear that they could withdraw at any time without giving a reason and that up to three months after the data collection period that they could withdraw and request that the data collected should not be used.

The information sheet gave the high level objectives of the study (see, appendix three), and during the process of obtaining consent I did not reveal my opinions or give examples of how the sessions would be analysed. The information sheet gave details of where the

information would be published, verbally I made it clear that the report was not a report to 'management', and that the way that the study would be written up was not about the effectiveness of a particular teacher. Instead it was about developing an understanding of the class implications of approaches to teaching.

4.17.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

It was made clear to the students that all data collected would be treated in strictest confidence and that anonymity maintained throughout the research by using pseudonyms.

Interview transcripts were coded and the key to the identity of participants stored in separate locations. All data was stored on a shared secured drive which only the researcher could access.

4.17.3 Risk of distress to the participants

Throughout the research process I was vigilant to the participants becoming distressed or anxious by what was discussed during the interviews. Whilst the topic of conversation might not be considered particularly controversial or sensitive, there was a risk that the conversation might alert the students to things that they were not doing or bring to their conscience anxieties about their university experience. There was also a risk that the students might become distressed if they made derogatory comments about their department.

As an experienced personal supervisor I was vigilant for signs of distress or discomfort. The students were reassured of the confidential nature of their responses and where appropriate, students were given advice as to where they might get additional support across the university. For example advice was given to one of the students about the process of applying for internships, this was prompted by the student expressing concern in

one of their interviews that they felt that this was an area where they had limited knowledge.

4.17.4 Students not selected for the study

Students who completed the questionnaire but were not selected for the study were emailed and thanked for their willingness to support the research. The email explained why they were not selected, which was largely because the focus of the research meant that there was only space for a small number of volunteers. In the email the students were reminded of the mechanism that were in place and were encouraged to use these, if they had questions or feedback relating to their programme of study.

4.18 The approach to the write up of the analysis

Throughout the analysis stage I was very conscious of Smith et al's. (2009) words of both encouragement and warning relating to complexity of undertaking an IPA analysis and this extends to the write up stage. Like any other stage in IPA there is not a single way of writing up the results, what is important is that the results are presented in a way whereby readers can make sense of the long and complex process of analysis which has multiple layers of data. The decisions relating to how the results would be presented was guided by Smith et al. (2009) who argue that the purpose of the write up is twofold,

firstly to give an account of your data, and secondly to offer an interpretation of your data to make a sense of what they mean (Smith et al, 2009, p. 108).

To achieve this I took the decision to write up the results in a way that broadly reflected the stages of analysis. I use the term 'broadly' as the process was not and should not have been a linear process. In the next chapter the themes that emerged from the analysis of the student interviews are discussed, this excludes the findings that emerged from the analysis

of the interviews through Bernstein's analytical lens. The reason for this is that at this stage in the analysis the objective was to understand how the students experienced the sessions and not to consider how the pedagogic practices might have impacted their experiences. In chapter six, the analysis of the teaching sessions through Bernstein's theoretical lens are discussed and the theoretical implications on student learning are considered. It is at this point that the findings from the analysis of the student interviews through Bernstein's analytical lens are drawn upon to look for confirmatory evidence (or not) with Bernstein's framework in the context of employability. For example, the analysis of the teaching sessions shows how classification was strongly framed and the student interviews were analysed to understand the implications of this in the context of the sessions. Chapter seven then brings together the findings from the two data sets in relation to one another.

Chapter 5 - The findings from the analysis of the student interviews

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter the six themes that emerged from the thematic analysis of the student interviews are discussed and in the final section (5.7) the intersectionality of class, gender and ethnicity is discussed. The purpose of the analysis at this stage was to develop an understanding of how the students experienced the sessions (research question four). In chapter six the findings from the analysis of the teaching sessions through Bernstein's theoretical lens are discussed. The discussion in chapter six also draws on the findings from the student interviews through Bernstein's analytical lens to develop deeper and more specific understanding of the issues that were identified. Chapter seven brings together these two sets of data together and considers the classed nature of pedagogy and the implications of this for working-class students through the lens of employability.

5.1 The students awareness of being the first in their family to study at university

What emerged from the interviews was the significance to the students of being the first in their family to attend university and all of the students were very conscious of this. Without being prompted all of the students volunteered this information and made reference to this, particularly during their first interview. Being the first in their family to attend university impacted the way all of the students experienced HE albeit in different ways and to varying degrees.

The analysis of the student interviews identifies three areas where being the first in their family to attend university had an impact. Firstly, with the exception of Steven, all of the students gave this as a reason for feeling that they needed to give priority to settling in and getting used to university life, rather than thinking about their future careers and how they

were going to develop them. Secondly, Amanda, Tim and Adam more specifically gave this as the reason for the feelings that they were experiencing of being different to their peers, and they attributed this as the reason for why they felt that they needed to spend more time than their peers adapting and settling in to university, or in Bernstein's words *"understanding the rules of the game" (Bernstein, 2000, p. 45)*. Finally, Amanda and Adam, gave this as a reason for feeling that some of the content of the sessions did not relate to them.

In her first interview Amanda likened starting university to "*entering a different world*" *(Amanda, interview one)*, a world in which she felt that other students already belonged. When asked in her first interview about what actions she had taken as a result of the first two sessions, Amanda responded,

> *It's only the third week, I need to adjust first, being here is enough at the moment, it's so bizarre, none of my family have been to university, I had no idea what it would be like (Amanda, interview one).*

Similarly, when Tim was asked the same question he responded,

> *I need to settle in first before I can think about careers, university is a lot different to how I thought it would be because of all of the independent learning, that's a bit of a shock. My mum asks if I have a lot of independent learning, she wasn't sure either what it was going to be like, I'm the first person in my family that's been to university (Tim, interview 1).*

Throughout her first interview Amanda acknowledged that the information presented in the sessions was important, but tended to follow this up with a caveat that it was important to other students. For example when asked about a presentation made by a second year student where they shared their experiences, Amanda stated,

it's kind of inspiring in a way to hear from somebody who has done it but it's not that relevant to me (Amanda, interview 1).

When asked why she felt that this was the case, Amanda replied,

it all sounded wonderful but didn't sound like me. Like going on internships, doing all these things and getting these wonderful benefits, it didn't feel like that it was something that would happen to me…. I don't have any background to it (Amanda interview 1).

Similarly Adam reflecting on the same student presentation commented that for him, hearing from students from different cohorts was of limited use as he needed *"to work things out for himself*" (Adam, interview 1). When asked why he felt this way, Adam positioned himself as being different to his peers due to his background, and this seemed to be a barrier for Adam to accept the advice from the students. For example, in the part of the session when the student presenter talked about the benefits of using LinkedIn, Adam stated,

where I'm from we don't really use LinkedIn, why would I? (Adam, interview one).

Adam reflecting more generally on the student led part of the session stated,

I couldn't relate to what she was saying, I can't put my finger on exactly why but it didn't feel like it related to me (Adam, interview one).

The one exception to the above observations is with respect to Steven. The analysis of the interviews shows how Steven, like the other students, was conscious of being the first in his family to go to university. He did not however make any reference to how being the first in his family impacted how he was experiencing HE and the employability sessions, rather this was mentioned in the context of him explaining the influences on his decision to study at university. Steven in this context explained how his family, whilst supportive, had been very

"'hands off" (Steven, first interview) in this decision. This he attributed to his family not knowing anything about university and what it would be like. Steven in his first interview explained how he had spent a lot of time researching apprenticeships and how this meant that what had been discussed in the sessions was familiar to him. This perhaps might have meant that he did not feel the need to "park" what was being discussed in the same way as the other students did, as the content was already familiar to him?

In subsequent interviews, any negative feelings associated with being the first in their family to study at university were not as apparent. The students all seemed to have found a way of settling into university life and this was no longer given as a reason for any issues relating to the way in which the students' experienced the sessions.

5.2 Students rely on credit bearing modules to decide what is important

The analysis of the student interviews shows how throughout the year the students felt that they needed to make decisions about how they prioritised their time. With the exception of the students' transitionary period to HE, when all of the students expressed that their priority was settling in, the analysis shows how their reasons for prioritising their time differed and how these changed for each of the students throughout the year as their circumstances changed.

Steven for example in his first interview like all of the other students expressed how his priority was settling into university. In his second interview Steven explained how he was balancing his studies with supporting his partner through a bereavement and that this involved a significant amount of travel. In his final interview what emerged was that Steven was balancing his studies with the process of applying for a part time job to support him through the Summer months. Amanda in her second interview explained how she was

prioritising building new relationships, and this theme continued into her final interview in addition to her spending as many hours as she could working to contribute to her living expenses.

What emerged from the analysis was with the exception of the period when the students were settling into university, that the students relied on modules being credit bearing to signal to them what was important with respect to their academic studies and therefore how to prioritise their time. The students looked to have made this link for themselves as broader course and departmental messages emphasised the importance of participation beyond students' 'core' academic studies. There was no evidence in the interviews that the students gave priority to developing their employability or attending the sessions. This is despite all of the students acknowledging; that employability was important (they all indicated that their aim was to secure a graduate job), that the content of the sessions was relevant and that they all appreciated the importance of getting involved in activities beyond their core programme of study to develop their employability credentials.

During the students' transitionary period, all had attended at least one of the employability sessions and most had attended both, despite the sessions being marked as optional. The students' reasons for attending these first sessions were explored in their first interviews and their responses show how these primarily related to the process of settling in, rather than a focus on employability. The findings show in the period when the students were finding their feet how they were very reliant on their timetable or other students when making decisions of which classes to attend, rather than these being a result of a conscious decision. Adam for example when asked for his reason for attending the first session stated,

I wasn't too sure what the session might be, I didn't want to miss out on anything at the time ……. I try to follow what everybody is doing, to try and get a general idea and then I'll move off (Adam, interview one).

Tim attended the second session on CV writing, he missed the first session. When asked why he had missed the first session, the reasons that Tim stated did not relate to a conscious decision that he had made, Tim stated,

I'm not entirely sure to be honest, I think it kind of passed me by as I get used to studying (Tim, interview one).

In response to why he attended the second session Tim stated,

it was on my timetable, everyone was going so I went (Tim interview 1).

When asked in her first interview whether she was going to take action as a result of the sessions, Amanda replied,

I don't know anybody on my course and I don't know the people who are teaching it. So it all hits you at once, so the last thing that you want to think about is getting something else new at the moment (Amanda, interview 1).

Similarly Tim replied,

I'm trying to settle in and get into a routine of studying, that's what I'm here for and maybe I can think about careers later on in the year (Tim, interview 1).

Once the students had settled in and found their feet they were more selective of how they spent their time and therefore which classes they attended. All of the students indicated that attendance at classes relating to credit bearing modules was a given. In contrast, the students' decision whether or not to attend the employability sessions was part of a broader decision relating to how to prioritise their remaining time. This process of prioritisation was

influenced by the following; whether they felt that they were on top of their academic studies, other personal commitments, their peers, or simply how they felt on the day. For example when asked why he had missed a session at the start of term two, Steven replied,

Due to a family issue, I've had to prioritise lectures and seminars as opposed to the additional events, that was the only reason (Steven, interview 2).

When asked why he had missed an additional session that was run by an employer that Steven had previously indicated that he would like to work for, Steven replied,

I did a lecture and then a seminar just before so I actually didn't go. It did cross my mind to go and I saw that it was there, I just thought after a lecture and a seminar it was too much (Steven, interview 2).

Amanda in her second interview reflecting on why she had missed a session stated,

I know they are helpful I should be taking advantage of the fact that we have got them, but it's difficult when you've got other stuff, you think I could do that or I could do that or I could do more work on that so I can go out tonight (Amanda interview 2).

When asked if she felt the same way about credit bearing modules Amanda replied,

Oh god no, I feel like that's the bit I'm paying for.. my conscience won't let me. It's stupid really, I know that they are important but I have lots of stuff to do (Amanda, interview 2).

Similarly, when asked the same question Tara replied,

The employability ones are more optional, modules such as accounting and all the other modules (credit bearing) I'm obliged to go. It's not like I don't want to go but when I miss employability stuff I don't feel as bad (Tara interview 2).

The analysis shows how the students placed reliance on their credit bearing modules to signal what is important in the context of their studies. All teaching sessions that the

students saw on their timetable were optional by virtue of attendance not being monitored, however the findings from the student interviews show how priority was given to credit bearing modules.

5.3 Sequential short-term approach to education (one step at a time) – university was never a 'given'

In their first interviews the students were asked about their reasons for deciding to study at university. What emerged as a common theme for all of the students was that their decision had been heavily influenced by the success that they had experienced in post 16 education, and the advice that they received from their teachers. The students all noted that up to that point, going to university was not something that they had particularly given much thought to, and there was no evidence in the interviews that there was an underlying expectation that going to university was something that they were always going to do. The students explained that as they experienced success at a particular stage of their education, they would then move on to the next phase. When asked about his decision to apply to university Steven replied,

when I was younger it wasn't anything that I thought about, nobody in my family has ever been to university so I'd never seen the benefits. When I went to college I started to achieve grades that I never thought I could achieve and then my college tutors pushed me in the direction of university (Steven, interview one).

Similarly in answer to the same question Amanda replied,

I did well at my GCSE's so I thought I may as well go to sixth form, I was doing well at sixth form so I thought I might as well carry on to university and see where that gets me (Amanda, interview one).

5.4 No vision of their future and this acted as a barrier

Of the six students, five indicated in their first interview that they had given no serious thought as to what they would like to do when they graduate. They all indicated that they would like to secure a graduate level job however the students had no vision for what that would look like. For example the students gave no indication that they had thought about the type of job that they would like to do, or the industry that they would like to work in. Of particular importance to this study is that not having a vision for their future employment, emerged in the interviews as a barrier to the students feeling able to act on the advice and suggestions given by the teacher in the sessions, and as a barrier to the students asking for advice from the careers team. The impact of this absence of a vision on the students' actions became increasingly evident as the year progressed. This perhaps reflects that as the year progressed there was an increasing expectation in the sessions that the students had engaged at some level in planning their careers, and the content of the sessions became increasingly focused on specific career opportunities.

This can be exampled with respect to Tara. In her initial interview when asked about her career aspirations Tara stated,

> *to be honest I hadn't thought about it because I still don't know what I want to do. I knew get a degree, get a job but I never thought about it that much just because I'm still undecided about what I actually wanted to do (Tara, interview one).*

In the interview Tara indicated that she had found the content of the first two employability sessions; how to make the most of university and effective CV writing, particularly helpful. However in her second interview Tara reflected that she had started to find the sessions less and less helpful with the result that her attendance had reduced. The reasons for this were

explored and Tara expressed that she found the initial sessions helpful as they provided generic information about the labour markets (for example recruitment cycles), and the particular skills that employers were looking for. As the later sessions started to focus on potential career opportunities and future plans, then Tara felt that they were less valuable. Tara indicated that the reason for this related to her not knowing herself what she wanted to do; this she felt she would need to find out for herself rather than being told. Reflecting on the first two sessions that she attended Tara stated,

> *these sessions are helping me in terms of employability but not what I actually want to pursue in the real world, that's my decision, I have to decide that on my own*, (*Tara interview one).*

In her final interview Tara again stated that her lack of a vision for her future was having a negative impact on her attendance at sessions. Additionally Tara expressed concern that this might also be impacting the extent to which she was making the most of the opportunities that are available to her. Tara stated,

> *I'm very conscious that you just don't know what you don't know, I'm conscious that I'm probably missing out on things. I don't have a picture of where I'm going and what is available. I just seem to stumble across things (Tara, interview three).*

In contrast to the other students who had not thought about an alternative to entering HE, Steven prior to coming to university had considered taking an apprenticeship and as a result had spent time exploring different career options. Whilst Steven expressed the same absence of a vision for his future, this lack of vision was not a barrier to him taking action as a result of the sessions. The research that Steven had undertaken whilst looking at different apprenticeship opportunities provided a point of reference for Steven from which he could

then build. For example in his first interview reflecting on the first session that he attended, during which the teacher explained the different skills and attributes that employers were looking for, Steven stated,

When I was looking at jobs (apprenticeships) I looked at the likes of PwC and EY to look at what was needed to go to a company like that. It was interesting at the sessions to relate the job adverts that I had seen to the information on the slides and think about how I could build my CV (Steven, interview one).

Where not having a vision for the future acted as a barrier for all of the students was in seeking help from the departmental careers team despite this being widely publicised and encouraged. In all of their interviews the students recognised that there would be value to them in speaking to the careers team and in each interview they expressed their intention to do this in the near future. However even in their final interviews none of the students had sought out their advice. Without a clear picture of their futures the students seemed reluctant to seek help. For example, in her first interview Linda indicated her intention to go to the careers team to ask for help. When asked in her second interview whether this was something that she had done, Linda replied,

I want to but I just don't know what I would say. I don't know myself so I don't see how they can help me if I don't even have a basis (Linda, interview two).

Again in her final interview when asked the same question Linda replied,

I can see it would be helpful but where do you start.... I want to make sure I do everything for myself first and then ask for help from careers. I don't know what I would say, I don't know what I want to do (Linda, interview three).

A similar pattern of responses emerged in the interviews for all the students. In her first interview, reflecting on the first session where opportunities that HE offers to develop your CV were discussed, Amanda stated,

It's your responsibility to get to where you want to be but if you don't know where you want to be it's overwhelming to be presented with so many options…. Which one is for me, I can't do it all so I'll end up doing none of it (Amanda, interview one).

Without a reference point of where she would like to be or an idea of the different possibilities, Amanda seemed be struggle to filter the different opportunities and identify which ones would be beneficial to her. In her final interview Amanda seemed much more aware of the different opportunities that being at university offered in terms of developing her employability credentials, but again not having a vision for her future seemed to act as a barrier to her taking action. Reflecting on the opportunities that have been made available to her in the year, Amanda stated,

Well you know the types of the things that you need to be doing, but I don't know exactly where I want to be so I don't do any of it, I just carry on as I am (Amanda, interview three).

5.5 Previous experiences or in the moment decisions rather than future aspirations, influenced the students' decision making

All of the students indicated in their second and final interviews that they had taken some action in the year to develop their employability. The reasons for their actions were explored and what emerged is that these tended to be influenced by previous experiences rather than future aspirations, or they were made as a result of in the moment, spontaneous decisions. This approach to decision making related to both their decisions about which employability sessions to attend (see 5.2) and their actions taken to develop

their employability. The students indicated that they were taking their employability at their own pace, that they were taking action, but this did not always fit neatly with the timetabled classes and was not part of an overarching strategy.

Linda, in her second interview when reflecting on the approach that she was taking to develop her employability stated,

> *I'm building from the bottom, I'm developing skills that employers need when the opportunities arise and seeing where that takes me. I feel it will take me forwards (Linda, interview two).*

Tara in her interviews indicated that she was taking a similar approach. In the year Tara had joined both the football and the music society and had been successful in her application to be treasurer of the football club. Tara had also entered and been successful in a sales competition that was run by a large blue chip employer and had applied for two internships. At the point of her final interview the outcome of her internship applications was not known.

Tara joined the music and football societies to continue the activities that she had enjoyed in high school. Her decision to enter the competitions and apply for an internship were as a result of a spontaneous decision to attend a session that one of her friends from an unrelated course was going to. The two friends were having lunch and the session ran immediately after lunch when Tara by chance was free. In Tara's own words,

> *my friend was going and she said it would be useful so I decided to go along, I didn't need to* search for the event, really my friend decided for me (*Tara interview three).*

Of the students interviewed those who had been part of a club or society prior to joining university continued with those activities. For example Steven joined the football team and

Adam joined the gaming society. Tim, Amanda and Linda had not previously been members of clubs or societies and had not become members of any of the university's clubs or societies.

5.6 Need for specific instructions: 'tell me what to do'

Across all three interviews the students expressed a preference for the sessions or the elements of the sessions where they were given, either specific instructions of what to do or a specific task to work on. Where sessions were more outcome focused, for example when students were presented with future career options, what emerged in the interviews was a sense of frustration and limited action being taken. The students all acknowledged that what was being talked about was important and relevant to them. The frustration related to the students not always being able to identify the steps that they needed to take to realise the opportunities. For example, in the first session, the teacher presented the different placement and internship opportunities. Reflecting on this Amanda in her first interview commented,

I'm kind of confused as to where most people would fit in. And like where do you go, is it in York? Do you find internships in York or would you go abroad? How much money is that? Do you go on your own?.. It's kind of the detail. I guess they don't know the detail as it applies to everybody and it's not just about you (Amanda interview one).

Tara expressed feelings of being overwhelmed in her second interview by both the breadth of the career options available to her, and by the number of opportunities to develop her employability that she was presented with which led her to state that she was "*unsure where to start*" (Tara, interview two). Similarly in her final interview, reflecting on a session where alumni shared their personal employment journeys, Tara commented,

This was quite inspiring, the problem is, is that I'm still not sure where to start (Tara, interview three).

Tara commented more generally about the development of her employability,

there's lots to do at university and it's not clear where to start, which opportunities do I take? I do what I'm interested in and see what happens. I know what employers want and I am kind of aware of areas that I could develop, but I have no idea how to address the gaps, there's too much, where do I start, what can I do about it? It's very over whelming (Tara interview three).

In contrast when reflecting on an employer led presentation which resulted in her applying for an internship, Tara stated,

It was really clear what I needed to do as a next step, following the session I just needed to apply, it was clear what to write on the forms and how to do this (Tara, interview three).

Similarly reflecting on her progress in the year and the sessions that she had attended, Tara commented,

I am pleased with my CV. It was good to be told what to do (Tara, interview three).

All of the students commented that the CV writing session (session two) was particularly helpful, the students felt that they had left the sessions feeling clear on what they were expected to do.

In his first interview Adam commented,

what makes a difference for me is rather than trying to sell me something, give me the information and the tools to build and let me work through the steps (Adam, interview one).

5.7 The intersection of class, gender and ethnicity

Gender

Overall the analysis shows little difference between the experiences of the male and female participants, the students themselves made no reference to their gender in any of the interviews. Both the male and female participants expressed the same feelings of the need to prioritise settling in and establishing themselves before they could think about their employability. In contrast to gender, issues relating to social class were much more prominent, although the students did not frame their points with direct reference to their class. The analysis shows how all of the students were very conscious of being the first in their family to go to university, both the male and female participants attributed this as the reason for feelings of being different to their peers or not being able to relate for what was being discussed in the sessions.

The one notable exception where gender difference were apparent was with respect to the way the students drew on their friends for support. All of the students expressed a reluctance to draw on academic or careers staff for support, however the analysis shows how the female participants drew more on friendships in ways that developed their social capital when compared to their male peers. The male participants had all developed friendship groups however there was no evidence of them drawing on them in this way. For example, the analysis shows how Amanda's friendship group influenced her to think beyond home as a location for work and introduced her to the benefits of going on placement or undertaking an internship.

Ethnicity

All of the participants with the exception of Tara who was Black, were white British. In a similar way to gender the analysis showed no significant differences between the

experiences of Tara and her peers. There was little evidence of Tara being overtly conscious of being from a minority ethnic background, Tara was more conscious of being the first in her family to attend university and it was this that she gave as the reason for prioritising the need to settle in over developing her employability credentials.

One exception notable exception to this, where ethnicity appeared to have a significant influence, was when was when Tara in her final interview talked about meeting somebody who she considered to be a role. When asked what it was about the female presenter who was a member of the university's alumni Tara stated,

She was there to encourage people from minority backgrounds into business, it felt like she was there for me. It felt very personal I guess. (Tara, interview three).

5.8 Summary of the chapter

Overall the findings in this chapter provide insight into how the students experienced the sessions in two broad areas. Firstly, with respect to how the students felt about HE and graduate employability when they first entered HE and how these feelings impacted their experiences of the sessions. Secondly, with respect to the way that students approached their studies. The findings show how all of the students in their first interviews expressed how conscious they were of being the first in their family to go to university, and most linked this to feelings of being different to their peers and to feelings that some of the content of the sessions did not relate to them, particularly in the initial interviews. The findings also show how the students started university with limited knowledge of what studying at HE would involve and how that they had given little or no thought to their future careers. Both of these factors acted as a barrier to the students being able to benefit from

the sessions in the way that the teacher intended. As time progressed and as the students settled into their own routines, then these feelings of being different to their peers were less apparent. However, the students not having an overall vision for their future careers continued as a theme throughout the year and continued to be a barrier for the students being able to relate to the sessions.

In the context of how the students approached their studies, then the findings show the significance to the students of having clarity of what they are expected to do but highlights the complexity and difficultly in achieving this. For example the findings highlight the importance from the students' perspective of credit bearing modules in helping them make decisions of how to prioritise their time. However, the intended message was not that non-credit bearing modules are not important but that they do not contribute to a student's final grade.

In the next chapter the findings from the analysis of the teaching sessions are discussed. The analysis draws on Bernstein's concepts of classification and framing to elicit detailed descriptions of the pedagogic processes underpinning the sessions such that the impact of these processes on the students' experiences can be considered (research question two).

Bernstein argues that pedagogic processes are not inert carriers of messages from the teacher to the student, rather whenever discourse takes place then there are opportunities for what is being relayed to be transformed as there are spaces in which ideologies can have an influence (Bernstein, 2000).

Chapter 6 – Findings from the analysis of the employability teaching sessions

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter the findings from the analysis of the observations of the teaching sessions are discussed (see table three in section 4.3 for a summary of the teaching sessions). The analysis draws on Bernstein's concepts of classification and framing to elicit detailed descriptions of the pedagogic processes underpinning the sessions such that the impact of these processes on the students' experiences can be considered (research question two). The theoretical implications of the findings with respect to how they might impact student learning are discussed, and the findings from the student interviews through Bernstein's conceptual lens are drawn upon to develop a deeper understanding of any issues identified.

Classification refers to what discourse is to be transmitted and its relation to other discourses in a given area, and can be split between internal and external classification (Bernstein, 2000). In the context of education, internal classification refers to the way in which specific subjects are taught in relation to other areas of the syllabus or, other activities that are available to students within the context of their experiences at university. External classification considers the relationship between what is being studied, and the way in which experiences beyond HE are acknowledged and drawn upon. Classification is strong where boundaries are explicit and categories are insulated from one another or weak when boundaries are not clear or when there is integration (Bernstein, 2000). Previous studies which draw upon Bernstein's concept of classification have focused both exclusively on external or internal classification or a combination of the two, this is determined by the nature of the individual studies. In this study both internal and external classification have been used as a lens of analysis, internal classification is drawn upon to understand how

employability is positioned in the context of the students' broader university experience, this is important as this carries assumptions about what students are expected to know about university life beyond their departments and the chosen programmes. External classification is drawn upon to understand how students are supported in contextualising what is taught with their experiences beyond university.

Framing is used as a way thinking about how knowledge is converted or pedagogised to constitute knowledge within HE (Singh, 2002), and is split between selection, sequencing, pacing and evaluation. Bernstein refers to privileging texts, where the way in which knowledge is converted may favour some groups and marginalise others, in Bernstein's words, framing is a way of "*illuminating the distinctive features of these privileging texts*" (Bernstein, 1990, p.392).

The discussion in this chapter focuses on classification and framing independently of one another. A rating for the strength of the framing for each of these concepts with respect to the teaching sessions is determined, and the theoretical implications of each of these rating for working-class students are discussed. Following this, the findings from the analysis of the student interviews through Bernstein's' theoretical lens are discussed, consideration is given to whether there is evidence to support these theoretical implications and to the development of a deeper understanding of these issues where applicable.

I was mindful that analysing and drawing conclusions from the concepts independently of one another is empirically problematic because they are dialectically linked (Hoadley, 2008). However for these linkages to be meaningfully considered, and to develop a more holistic understanding of the pedagogic processes and of the student's experiences, I was also mindful that the analysis first needed to establish how the different concepts have been

categorised. Proponents of Bernstein's framework do not suggest that the framework can be applied in a formulaic way and therefore that there are wholesale solutions to issues of equality, rather they call for a mixed pedagogic approach which will be context dependent (Morais, et al., 2001).

6.2 Classification – observations and theoretical implications

6.2.1 Classification - observations

A consistent picture of strong external classification and weak internal classification emerged across all of the sessions observed. The teacher through weak internal classification contextualised the content of the sessions by relating points to the students' whole university experience, and through strong external classification focused the students on their university life. This can be exampled with respect to the first session that the students attended, entitled 'Making the most of your university experience'. The session ran in the second week of the students' first term and was the first of the scheduled employability sessions.

The session started with the teacher introducing themselves and the broader careers and employability team to which they were a part. As part of the introduction the teacher explained the role of the careers and employability team, stating,

> *we run employability sessions to help compliment your academic studies and to show you how what you are developing at university translates into how you become more employable* (*Teacher, session one).*

The analysis shows how the teacher used weak internal classification to situate employability within the students' whole university experience, and strong external classification to position employability as something that is developed whilst at university,

little reference was made to prior or broader experiences. Following the introduction, an overview of the type of support that students can expect from the careers and employability team was given. Strong external classificatory messages were sent out by the teacher making explicit the distinction between being a university student and the students' past experiences, and through opportunities being presented in the context of what students can do in the future. For example, when explaining the importance of developing a 'CV', the teacher stated,

It's really important that you start to design and create your CV and think about how you will develop it over the next three or four years (Teacher, session one).

During the session a second year student shared their experiences of their first year of study and offered advice as to the types of activities the students could be getting involved in to develop their employability credentials. Following this the teacher gave an overview of internships and placement opportunities that graduate employers offer, and provided advice on when the students should be thinking about applying for such opportunities. Again a strong external classificatory message was given, internships and placements were presented as 'university' placements, no reference was made to previous work placements that the students might have undertaken, or any other work experience that they might have had.

Some weaker external classification was observed during the session. For example when the teacher gave an overview of the opportunities available to students to develop their employability skills, to encourage the students to think about the skills that they need to develop, the teacher stated,

you might not realise how different experiences that you have already been involved with are going to help you develop your skills and therefore your employability (Teacher, session one).

This statement however was not developed further and was positioned in a section of the session that was predominantly focused on forward planning (strong external classification). This positioning was representative of the majority of instances where weaker external classification was observed in this and other sessions.

Further examples of strong external classification observed in the other sessions included, in session four (career planning), the starting point for student plans was the start of university. Through strong external classification the teacher again emphasised the distinctiveness of university. The class took place in the third week of the students' second term. In the introduction to the session, the teacher positioned the session in the context of the student's first year of study by stating,

some of you may have of thought about careers, and employability last term (Teacher, session four).

During the same session, in the context of encouraging students to get involved in extracurricular activities, the teacher stated,

you're going to be applying (for an internship and placement) potentially in six-months time with the experience that you have developed whilst studying here, so bear that in mind. Especially those of you that want to do an internship, want to do a placement, the more that you can do to start to develop and evidence your skills then the stronger your application will be (Teacher, session four).

In the session focused on writing effective cover letters and writing an effective CV (session 2), in the introduction the teacher commented,

some of you might have already created a CV that you have used at school for part-time work, the expectations are quite different in terms of what employers are looking for from a graduate market (Teacher, session two).

On first reading this may be considered to be weaker external classification, past experiences are being referred to. The differences however that the teacher refers to, were used as a justification for the session starting from a zero knowledge base and hence emphasised the distinctiveness of HE.

6.2.2 Implications of strong external classification and weak internal classification

Stronger external boundaries (represented by strong classification) offer greater opportunities to develop specialist identities (Bernstein, 2000). Applying this notion to the teaching sessions observed, then the unique identify being developed, was one of a student studying at a particular HEI.

In the context of employability then such an approach might be considered important because of the highly competitive nature of the graduate labour market. Graduates are not only expected to demonstrate attributes and experiences that can be achieved outside of their programme of study these also need to be the right attributes and the right experiences (Roulin and Bangerter, 2013). Research suggests that early engagement with career planning has a positive impact on graduate outcomes (Bennett, 2019), and that students studying at Russell Group universities can gain an advantage within the graduate employment market from the reputation of their institution (Tomlinson, 2012).

Bernstein however argues that within educational settings there is a risk that strong external classification may marginalise students from working-class backgrounds. Through strong external classification then pedagogic practices will carry assumptions relating to this unique identity which Bernstein argues, carries the risk that students from working-class backgrounds may not be able to relate to, and therefore they will not be able to respond in way that that will result in a successful outcome (Bernstein, 2000).

The analysis illuminates how through strong external classification and weak internal classification then the pedagogic practices carried assumptions made by the teacher

(consciously or subconsciously) that the students understood what it is to be a student in HE, or in Bernstein's words that they understood the "*rules of the game*" (Bernstein, 2000, p. 45). Examples of such assumptions carried within the pedagogic practices can be drawn from all of the sessions observed. For example in the student led session (session three), when introducing students to the benefits of networking whilst studying, it was assumed that students have an established network to draw upon to open up opportunities within the graduate labour market, and also that the students understand what it means to network. In the session, one of the areas discussed related to the opportunities that being part of the university community offers (weak internal classification), and how these can be used to the students advantage, the student presenting at the session stated,

There's a great opportunity to expand your network within the university, in terms of meeting other current students who will have had many different experiences and also meeting past students. The university is relatively small and you have a great opportunity to build helpful relationships (Teacher, session one).

Similarly when the importance of participation in extra-circular activities was discussed (session one), that students know what academic success looks like and know how to achieve success was presented as a given. In the session the teacher stated,

Everyone will be able to get a good degree here if they want to. So, that's something that you will gain naturally (Teacher, session one).

In the session which focused on applications (session four), it was assumed that the students' understand university rankings. The teacher stated,

Certain employers will target XX students based on the prestige of the university (Teacher, session four).

In this section Bernstein's concept of classification has been drawn upon to show how pedagogic processes can carry assumptions relating to what students know about being a student at a particular HEI, and the findings from the analysis of the teaching sessions through the lens of classification have been drawn upon to understand more specifically the nature of these assumptions in the context of the sessions observed. By illuminating the assumptions carried within the pedagogic practices there is an opportunity to develop practices that can better support students in relating to this identity, it is not necessarily a matter of changing the approach to classification.

In the next section of this chapter the analysis of the teaching sessions through Bernstein's analytical lens of framing is discussed. Following this in chapter seven the implications of this observed strong external and weak internal classification will be discussed in more detail in the context of this broader holistic analysis.

6.3 Framing

The analysis of the teaching sessions sought to establish the strength of framing across Bernstein's four criteria of instructional discourse, these being, selection, sequencing, pacing and evaluation criteria. In the discussion that follows, the finding for each of these four criteria and the potential implications on the students' learning are discussed independently of one another.

6.3.1 Selection observations

Selection relates to what is communicated. In the sessions the strong framing of selection was observed, the teacher determined the overall structure of the sessions, they selected which topic areas to focus on and what content would be covered.

Bernstein (2000) refers to the struggles that different groups encounter to control the production of different knowledge forms, one element of this struggle is the selection of what knowledge is to be distributed. In the context of the employability sessions observed, the analysis shows how through the strong framing of selection the teacher exerted control over, what success looks like in the graduate labour markets, what students needed to know, and the actions that they need to take in order to be successful.

A representative example of the strong framing of selection observed can be given with reference to session five. The session focused on career planning and had a particular focus on highlighting to the students the opportunities that were still available to them in their first year of study to develop their employability credentials.

The session started with the teacher identifying the importance of securing a placement or an internship, the teacher reminded the students that they would be applying for both of these in the current calendar year. In the introduction to the session the teacher stated,

I'll highlight some of the things that you can do to make the most of the rest of your first year, this is particularly important if you want to do an internship in the summer or for those of you who are thinking about a placement (Teacher, session five).

In this example the analysis illuminates how the teacher is selecting what they believe is an appropriate incentive for the students to engage in the session, that being the incentive of securing a placement or an internship. Following this the teacher presented a schematic highlighting the skills and experiences that employers expect from graduates and then discussed ways in which these could be developed in the context of their experiences at HE.

Throughout the session the teacher selected examples to illustrate points being made, these examples were generally positioned as being representative of the student body and were drawn from either the teachers' own personal experiences or from their experiences of working with students in previous years.

In addition to selecting appropriate examples for illustrative purposes the teacher drew from their own experiences to offer reassurance to the students. For example, in the introduction to the session the teacher offered reassurance to the students by stating,

Don't worry if you don't know what you want to do. Most people don't come to university with a set plan, or go through life with a set plan about what they want to do, there isn't a wrong decision you can make. I see a lot of students that are really worried that if they go down a certain path, they're closing themselves off to something, or that if they choose a certain path they will make the wrong decision and that there isn't anything they can do about it. What I would say is that sometimes it's a bit trial and error (Teacher, session five).

In the above example, the teacher is offering reassurance to the students about making the wrong choices. Through the strong framing of selection the teacher uses their own

experiences to offer reassurance to the students. Implicit within this is the assumption that the students are confident in their ability to make a choice and are able to navigate through the jobs market.

In the context of getting students to start thinking about potential career choices, the teacher stated,

Everyone is unique and different and that's a good thing, so please don't think that you have to go down a certain route due to perceived expectations (Teacher session five).

As in the previous example, in offering this re-assurance to students the teacher is assuming that the students are aware of the traditional employment routes that graduates are expected to follow.

A further example of the strong framing of selection can be drawn from session three, in the session, two students, one in their second year of study and another in their final year of study shared their experiences as a way of giving advice to the students. For example, in the session one piece of advice offered to the students, was not to dismiss opportunities that come their way just because an opportunity may on first sight be in an area that does not interest them. One of the students presenting commented,

a company that I have spoken to, Teach First, they run some really interesting workshops. I wasn't interested in Teach First at all at first to be honest, I have no interest in becoming a teacher but I didn't realise that there are opportunities from there that you can go and work for, say, I don't know, Goldman Sachs or J.P. Morgan or other sort of finance-based firms (Student presenter, session three).

A further piece of advice offered by the presenting students was the importance of showing employers your personal side and demonstrating that you have interests beyond your

academic studies. Getting involved in some of the extra-curricular activities offered by the university was given as an example of something that students could draw upon to demonstrate this. One of the students stated,

last year I was really involved with the University of York Ski and Snowboard Society and I was the freestyle captain, so it essentially involved, like, running sessions, I took people's money, organised sessions, sort of did coaching and mentoring……. When I had a final partner interview for a whole hour at 'XX', we spent 15 minutes talking about skiing because the partner that interviewed me was going there next week with their son. You know ultimately employers are looking to hire someone who will do the work but also, you know, someone who they can get a coffee with as that's the reality of work (Student presenter, session three).

The students presenting were selected by the teacher and therefore reflected what the teacher considered to be role models of good practice. Throughout the session the students re-enforced points which had been made previously by the teacher, whilst the sessions were advertised as student led sessions, through the strong framing of selection Bernstein would argue that what is being transmitted are the values and ideologies of the teacher (Bernstein, 2000).

6.3.2 Selection – implications

In Bernstein's words

all education is intrinsically a moral activity which articulates the dominant ideology(ies) of dominant group(s) (Bernstein, 2003, p.64).

Where there is strong framing of selection it is the teacher that determines the content of teaching sessions. In educational setting this means that what is discussed will reflect the

norms and values of the teacher and the broader institution. These Bernstein argues, will typically mirror those of the middle classes which are dominant within the sector and individual institutions (Bernstein, 2003). Bernstein argues that the strong framing of selection carries the risk that students who do not have a middle-class background will be marginalised by not having the opportunity to what Bernstein refers to as "voice themselves" (Bernstein, 2003, p. 35). Students may understand the importance of a particular topic or subject but may not have a way of relating to it and therefore accessing what is being discussed. Bernstein refers to the importance of students not only being able to recognise that something is important, they also need to understand the realisation rules. The strong framing of selection can potentially be a barrier to this (Bernstein, 2000).

The analysis of the interviews through Bernstein's analytical lens of selection indicated that all of the students recognised the importance of the topics covered in the sessions that they had attended, however there was less evidence of the students acting on the advice and suggestions made by the teacher. This was particularly evident in the sessions where the focus was on making the students aware of the opportunities available to them. In these instances there was evidence that the students felt unable to pursue these opportunities and the analysis shows how this was attributable in part to the students not knowing what actions to take to realise those opportunities. That the students needed to be told what to do emerged as a theme from the student interviews (see, section 5.6).

Bernstein's notion of selection is helpful in analysing the approach taken in the sessions to support the students in realising opportunities. In the sessions, guidance and support was predominantly given by the teacher selecting examples to illustrate the points being made. Examples made by the teacher were either drawn from their own experiences or by the teacher selecting students from previous cohorts to present.

The findings from the interviews show that in some instances, rather than inspiring the students to take action the examples had more of the effect of bringing to the students' conscience that they were in some way different from their peers. Rather than acting on the advice given, the overall message from the students was that they felt that they would need to find their own way and this need for a personalised approach increased through the year as the student settled into a routine.

In her first interview Linda commented that she felt that the session on CV writing (session two) had been much more helpful to her when compared to the first session which focused on opportunities to develop your employability whilst at university. Linda stated,

The first session was about university life and how you deal with it, but for me I kind of just see how it goes and you go with it, you have to work it out for yourself rather than learn from others as everyone is different (Linda, interview one).

In the session a student from an earlier cohort had been invited by the teacher to share their experiences of their first year and offer advice to students. The presentation mainly focused on the different opportunities that the student had been involved in and how these had helped her when she had come to apply for a placement year. Linda commented that whilst it was interesting to hear about the experiences of students she felt that they were of limited value to her,

rather than hearing the overall outcome, what I needed was a list of specifically what she had done, what steps she had taken. For example she could have explained what problems she encountered and how she fixed them, rather than explaining her experiences (Linda, interview one).

In her second interview this sense of feeling different to other students when they shared their experience continued. Reflecting on a student presentation Linda commented,

I was kind of bored, they gave examples that related to certain students, particularly for people in private education. It disheartened me because I thought I was doing well but other people are here with all these contacts and past experiences that I haven't got (Linda, interview two).

When asked more generally about why she felt that she could not learn from other students, Linda replied,

it can be different from person to person. For instance the student got his internship from somebody he knows, are you saying that's how it should be done, I can't do that? But if you say there are these skills that you need, there are these types of people you need to look out for, that's a lot easier for me to relate to, rather than, I'm doing really well, you can do really well too (Linda, interview two).

Similarly Adam in his second interview commented that being told what to do by other students was not particularly helpful to him. Adam was asked in the interview why he felt this way, *Adam replied,*

Giving me examples doesn't work as I can't relate to them (Adam, interview two).

The comments from the students do not necessarily indicate that teachers should not use examples to support points, rather it suggests that some examples may have social biases that may limit the extent that students can relate to them. The analysis also suggests that this will not be the same in all instances. For example, in contrast to the students' reaction to student presentations, all of the students responded positively to the examples given in the CV writing session which provided detailed instructions on how to complete a CV. In this

session the points were supported by example CVs and the focus tended to be on the structure of the CV rather than the attributes of individual candidates. Also in her second interview Tara reflected on how helpful an employability session which was run by a different department which she had attended by chance. When asked why it was helpful Tara referred to a presentation that an alumni student had given on their career,

She was there to encourage people from minority backgrounds into business, it felt like she was there for me (Tara, interview two).

Through strong selection the analysis demonstrates how what is discussed often reflects the teachers own interpretation of what is important, and the most appropriate way in which these challenges should be addressed. In taking this approach then the analysis shows how there is a risk that the students may not be able relate to these discussions, and situate what is being taught within their own experiences.

6.3.3 Sequencing observations

Sequencing relates to the order in which knowledge is acquired. The strong framing of sequencing was observed; the teacher determined when sessions were to be run and in what order, and within each teaching session the teacher also determined the order in which content would be delivered.

All of the sessions observed started with the teacher presenting an agenda of what would be covered and this agenda was then rigidly adhered to. The timing of the content of the sessions was determined at the start of the academic year and this timetable was again adhered to.

An example of the strongly framed sequencing observed within the sessions themselves can be shown with reference to the introduction to session four, (Making successful applications). The teacher introduced the sessions by stating,

So we're going to go through today what to expect when making an application. We'll cover the different types of applications depending on what you're applying for, what to include in an application and how to make your application stand out. We'll also talk about speculative applications, what those are and how you make them, and also what to expect after you have made an application (Teacher, session four).

6.3.4 Sequencing – implications

In the Structure of Pedagogic Discourse (1990), Bernstein discusses the impact of sequencing on student learning and links the scale of the impact to the extent to which what is being taught is either context dependent or context independent. Context independent learning experiences relate to developing an understanding of principles and their application to new situations. Context dependent knowledge relates to early stages of the pedagogic processes, these need to be understood before moving onto developing an understanding of the principles and their application to new situations (Bernstein, 1990). Bernstein argues that context independent learning usually follows and builds upon context dependent learning experiences. Bernstein, refers to these approaches as 'visible pedagogies' and argues that for visible pedagogies to be most effective then students need access to two sites of knowledge to succeed: the home and their place of study. The home is important in providing support to students by providing context or broader meaning to what is taught in the classroom (Bernstein, 2000). Where students do not have access to this support, Bernstein's work shows there is a risk students may not progress successfully

through the learning sequence if this shortfall is not recognised and compensated for some way in the their place of study. In these instances Bernstein argues that students will fall into a repair system to help them catch up. In the context of Bernstein's research which was predominantly focused on schools, the repair system was largely one of special classes (Bernstein, 2000). In the context of HE, and more specifically in the context of student employability, these repair systems might be less formalised forms of support of which there is no single method. For example support might come in the form of support from friends or through discussions between the student and their academic supervisor, these may not be available to students particularly during their transitionary period.

The strong classificationary messages within the sessions observed shows how much of the content of the sessions was context dependent, that being the context of a student within HE. This highlights a risk to student learning if they are not supported in acquiring this knowledge within the classroom.

The thematic analysis of the interviews suggests in some instances the students felt unable to progress through what Bernstein refers to as the learning continuum and therefore act on the suggestions made in the sessions. For example, the previous section shows how the students felt unable to relate to and therefore act on the suggestions made by students from previous cohorts. In addition, the analysis of the student interviews shows how the students felt that their lack of a vision for their future careers had prevented them from acting on advice given within some of the sessions. Bernstein argues that these are only barriers to learning if the teacher does not sequence a particular learning experience in a way that appropriately takes into account the previous experiences of the students (Bernstein, 2000).

What emerged in the thematic analysis of the interviews was with the exception of Steven who had considered applying for an apprenticeship, how little thought the students had given the their future careers prior to starting university, and also how the students received limited advice from their families and broader networks on their decision to come to university. All of the students indicated that their decision to come to university was mainly influenced by the advice offered by their school or college and with the exception of Steven, the students had not considered an alternative to university (see 5.3).

The analysis of the student interviews through the lens of sequencing shows that whilst the students interviewed did not overtly express any concerns or surprises at the order (sequencing) or the purpose of any of the sessions, the students did express that they felt unclear in what their next steps should be. There was evidence in the interviews that the students struggled to relate what was discussed in the sessions to their own circumstances. This was not just with respect to specific examples (see selection above) but more broadly with respect to orientating themselves in the graduate labour market. In Bernstein's words the students were not in a position to keep pace with the sequence of learning expected by the teacher (Bernstein, 1990). The analysis suggests that one of the reasons for this was that the students' understanding of the graduate labour markets and the different career opportunities that these offer were different to where the teacher expected them to be.

As time progressed the students became more aware of the different opportunities available to them. However this happened to different degrees and seemed to be dependent on serendipitous encounters rather than as part of their structured learning.

For example, Tara attended a presentation on careers run by a different department because she bumped into friend who was on her way to the sessions. As a result of the

session she met somebody who offered her help on how to apply for an internship. Amanda was heavily influenced by the friends that she had made since starting university. In her first interview, she reflected on the first session which focused on opportunities to develop employability whilst at university, and specifically the part of the session which covered the importance of internships and securing work experience. She stated,

They would be good (internships), if I was looking for advice on how to apply, like if I had already decided that I wanted to do one, getting me to want to do one is a missing stage (Amanda, interview one).

Amanda's reasons for not wanting to undertake an internship were explored in the interview and the reasons that emerged related more to her not being aware of the opportunities that undertaking an internship offered rather than a conscious decision that she had made not to undertake one. Amanda stated,

I've not actually met somebody who has done one. How do you know what to do, where do you start? (Amanda, interview one).

Amanda in the interview commented on the limited careers advice that she had received whilst at school and from her family. Amanda stated,

They (school) didn't do an awful lot. Basically the advice was go to university, get where you want to be, best time of your life (Amanda, interview one).

Mum and dad are completely behind me, but not an awful lot of help (Amanda, interview one).

In her first interview Amanda was very conscious about being the first in her family to go to university and she positioned herself as an 'outsider' entering a new world. In her second and final interview it was evident that Amanda felt much more settled at university, she no

longer positioned herself as an 'outsider' and her language changed from one of referring to her fellow students as 'them and I' to 'we'.

In the context of employability, what emerged in the interviews was the influence Amanda's friendship group had on widening Amanda's outlook of the opportunities available to her. This was particularly with respect to thinking beyond home as a location for work and, also in regard to the benefits of undertaking a placement year. In the context of sequencing, Amanda's friendships had acted as an informal repair system, providing support to Amanda to orientate her through the labour markets. Reflecting on the impact that her friends had had on her, Amanda stated,

Maybe you don't have to work locally, my friends have helped me realise that I can actually go a bit further away. They're slowly influencing me as I get to know people and learn from them (Amanda, interview two).

Both Adam and Tim in their first interviews expressed similar feelings to Amanda about how they felt about the support that they had received from their families and the influence of school on their decisions. However in contrast to Amanda, their sense of feeling different to their peers was present in all of their interviews. Both had established new friendship groups however, there was no evidence that the group had influenced their thinking neither was there any evidence of other repair systems existing.

One exception to these findings was the experience of Steven in the sessions. Prior to starting university Steven had considered applying for different apprenticeship schemes and, as a result he had researched different career opportunities. What emerged in his first interview was that the prior research that Steven had undertaken provided him with the

context of what was being discussed in the initial two sessions. Reflecting on the sessions Steven stated,

it was interesting to see that I had already touched on the things that had been mentioned in the session and I was quite happy with that. It was nice to see that there were things that I have already done and also to learn new things (Steven, interview one).

6.3.5 Pacing - observations

Pacing relates to the rate at which students are expected to acquire knowledge. Where pacing is strongly framed then the rate at which students are expected to learn is high and is determined by the teacher (Bernstein, 2000). Strong pacing was observed in the teaching sessions, in all of the sessions a lecture style delivery was adopted. The sessions took place in a lecture theatre where the teacher was positioned at the front and the students were seated in a theatre style format. The teaching material was delivered using PowerPoint slides and the speed of delivery was predominantly determined by the teacher.

An example of the strong pacing observed can be shown with reference to session four (Making successful applications). The teacher started the session by presenting an agenda of what was going to be covered. This was presented via a PowerPoint slide which explained both the content of the session and the order to be followed. Once the session started, the material was delivered at a pace determined by the teacher, the teacher talked and students took notes. During the session students were given advice on the most effective ways of communicating to employers what their skills and attributes were. The importance of evidencing skills in a job application was emphasised by the teacher and the students were encouraged to use the acronym STAR (situation, task, action, result) to keep them on track when evidencing skills. After explaining the acronym the teacher stated,

So if you can use that acronym and think about using that to structure the questions that you need to address in your application, it's going to make sure that your application is as strong as possible and that you can use that as well in any kind of interview situation in order to keep you on track (Teacher, session four).

The teacher then moved onto the topic of interview tips with the teacher covering 'dos and do nots' and also covering the different types of interviews that the students may come across.

The session closed with the teacher inviting questions from individuals on a one-to-one basis. This could be considered to be weaker framing as the students in theory have control over the conversations, however in practice, that the format was one of a large lecture meant that students were unlikely to ask questions in front of their peers. Time was also constrained as the scheduling of the classes held in the lecture theatre meant that there was a quick turnaround between classes. When closing the session the teacher stated,

so if anyone has any questions I'll be here for the next few minutes, otherwise I hope that you have a really good break (Teacher, session four).

6.3.6 Pacing - implications

Bernstein argues repeatedly that for students from working-class backgrounds, successful learning depends to a great extent on the weak pacing of learning (Moore, 2013a). Bernstein's work suggests that where pacing is strong there is risk that students from working-class backgrounds will be doubly disadvantaged. Firstly where classroom time is limited then acquisition of knowledge will be subsidised by family knowledge. This disadvantages working-class students, as in the context of formal educational settings they may not have access to the right type of family knowledge. Secondly on a practical level, the

strong framing of pacing assumes that learning takes place outside of the classroom and this requires space and resources that may not be available to working-class students (Bernstein, 2000). Through the weak framing of pacing a students' ability to learn is not driven by cognitive ability, it becomes more about how quickly students recognise and can relate to the realisation rules (Bernstein, 2000). Bernstein argues that students from working-class backgrounds will recognise these realisation rules but it may be over a longer period of time than for middle-class students. Therefore time needs to be given within the classroom for these rules to be understood and an appropriate response made. Where time is not given, Bernstein argues that the response from students may be the reproduction of their previous knowledge (Bernstein, 2000).

In the context of HE, through previously acquired social and cultural capital, students from middle-class backgrounds will be more familiar and comfortable with the HE environment than their working-class peers when they enter HE (Crozier and Reay, 2011). In the context of employability, middle-class students have greater awareness of the diverse opportunities of the graduate labour markets and have the networks to draw upon to contextualise and make sense of what is being discussed. Middle-class students will therefore not be constrained to the same extent by strong pacing. Bernstein's work suggests that working-class students without access to the necessary social capital outside of the classroom may be constrained in their thinking which ultimately may restrict their knowledge.

What emerged from the analysis of the findings of the interviews through Bernstein's analytical lens of pacing, was that whilst the students did take action in the year to develop their employability credentials there was much less evidence of the students taking immediate action as a result of the sessions. The students did not appear to keep pace with the sessions. There was some evidence from the interviews that the students felt that some

of the opportunities, ideas and concepts presented in the sessions were beyond their reach. This was particularly the case when the teacher was referring to ideas and concepts that were new to them, for example internship and placement opportunities.

The interviews show how the impetus to apply for internships or consider a placement came from influences beyond the sessions. The students expressed that the sessions were helpful in making them aware of opportunities but did not necessarily help in identifying what actions needed to be taken in order to realise these opportunities, or give them the belief to apply.

This can be exampled with respect to Tara. Tara in her first interview, reflecting on her experiences of attending the first two employability sessions at which the importance of internships and placements were discussed, commented that it was helpful to hear of these opportunities stating,

A lot of the things that were being said were really helpful … I hadn't thought about internships so it was nice to know about that. I'd never have thought that when I get to university I would need to look for an internship (Tara, interview one).

Tara reflected that the session made her feel that she needed to do more research into internship opportunities however at the time of the interview, Tara had not yet done this research. When asked why Tara replied,

There was nothing wrong with the sessions, but for me there was a lot of information and I was unsure as where to start (Tara, interview one).

In the interview Tara gave the impression of being overwhelmed by how much was expected of her over and above her core studies. Whilst Tara indicated that she felt the information presented in the sessions was important, she expressed feelings of being

unclear as to what her next steps were and this theme continued as the year progressed. In her second interview reflecting on term one, Tara stated,

We can ask for help if we want it but I just kind of feel on my own. I know who the people are, their emails and stuff, but because it's a big university I just feel where will I go? (Tara, interview two).

Tara continued,

I wanted to stay on top on everything but it's hard because there are so many different aspects of university, it's hard to keep up, it's overwhelming (Tara, interview two).

In her final interview, reflecting back on the year and despite feeling overwhelmed in the year and of being unsure as to where to get help, Tara had developed her employability in a number of ways (see 5.1.5 for the detail). However this was not directly as result of what was discussed in the sessions.

In the previous section (sequencing), an example is given of how Amanda in a similar way to Tara expressed that she felt that she was not yet in a position to apply for an internship as she had limited experience of what they involved and how to apply for one. The analysis shows how Amanda struggled to relate what was discussed to her previous experiences, and how this acted as a barrier to Amanda feeling that she was in a position to engage. The discussion in the previous section focuses on the significance of recognising where students are in the learning continuum and the analysis illuminates how class can be a factor in determining this. Through the lens of pacing, then Amanda's comments shows the need for the students to be able to contextualise what is being discussed and why the pedagogic practices in the sessions did not give Amanda the time to do this. In this instance the

analysis shows how Amanda was reliant on her friends outside of the classroom to contextualise what was discussed.

6.3.7 Evaluation - observations

Evaluative rules are concerned with enabling the acquirer to understand what counts as a legitimate or illegitimate communication, social relations or position (Bernstein, 2000).

The weak framing of evaluative rules was observed in all of the sessions with exception of the session relating to CV writing (session two) where semi-strong framing was observed. The topics that were covered in the sessions tended to be positioned by the teacher as suggestions as to what the students could do in their first year to develop their employability (weak framing). The students were given the freedom to determine for themselves what would constitute a successful learning outcome for the year.

This weak framing of evaluative criteria can be exampled with reference to the session on career planning (session five). The purpose of the session was to offer advice to the students in identifying the type of career that they would like to follow and to encourage the students to start developing a plan as to what they need to do in order to pursue their chosen career. The teacher did acknowledge that the students may not know what they wanted to do. The session therefore gave equal focus to providing advice on researching careers and advice on how to objectively evaluate their skills and interests in order that they could identify particular paths, and also to identify development needs.

The weak framing of evaluative criteria was observed in the introduction to the sessions during which the teacher stated,

I'm just here to highlight the things that you might want to consider (Teacher, session five).

This was re-enforced at the end of the introduction by the teacher stating,

this session will get you thinking about what type of experience you might want to get and how you can develop specific skills (Teacher, session five).

Throughout the session the teacher offered encouragement to students to seek help and advice if they were unsure on what actions to take but it was at the students' discretion whether to act on this encouragement. In the section of the session where the approaches to evaluating different career options were being discussed the teacher stated,

If you're not sure, then think about booking a 1-1 with me, we can help you identify what your strengths and skills might be (Teacher, session five).

By using the word 'think' the quote shows how the teacher is placing the decision as to whether to engage with the careers teams onto the students.

In contrast, more strongly framed evaluation criteria was observed in the session which provided advice on CV writing. Rather than offering advice on the types of things that the students should be doing, the teacher used strong evaluative criteria to articulate to the students the criteria for what makes a good CV. The teacher walked through an example of exactly what a good CV looks like and gave specific advice as to what the students should and should not be including within their CV's. For example the teacher gave specific advice on what font to use, stating,

so use Ariel or Calibri, do not use Time New Roman as it's not appropriate anymore (Teacher, session two).

When discussing the content of CV's, the teacher stated,

so as I said, don't include the words curriculum vitae as the title, don't include a photo, nothing like date of birth, your age, nationality, your gender……..So personal profile, it's

optional, it's not something that is expected, but if you want to use it, it's important that you use it right, so it's no more than seven lines … (Teacher, session two).

6.3.8 Evaluation – implications

Bernstein argues that through weaker evaluative criteria then opportunities for more unique responses will be created. These will reveal the uniqueness of the students but this also assumes that students are in a position to access these opportunities (Bernstein, 1990). Bernstein refers to weaker evaluative criteria as providing "*apparently minimum external constraints*" (Bernstein, 1990, p. 71), emphasising that whilst the intention of the teacher may be to allow students greater freedom, all students may not be in a position to exploit the opportunities that the teacher perceives are being offered. This will be dependent upon whether students understand the evaluative criteria and can apply these to their own practice and respond in a way that the teacher considers appropriate. Bernstein refers to evaluative criteria as being specific to the field to which they relate; to be able to understand particular evaluative criteria then students need to be able to relate to that field (Bernstein, 1990). In the context of HE and employability then Bernstein would argue that this is a 'field' dominated by middle-class values which working-class students will find it challenging to navigate, and therefore more challenging than their middle-class peers to identify the actions required to be successful.

The research findings from the analysis of the interviews suggest that in some instances the students felt that opportunities presented in the sessions were in some way out of their reach. What emerged in the interviews is that the students expressed their preference for the session on CV writing. Here the semi-strong framing of evaluation was observed (see 5.2.6), there was evidence that the students felt more able to take action as a direct result of the instructions given in the session. In contrast, where the weak framing of evaluation

was observed then the students' tended to recognise the relevance and importance of what was discussed (i.e. recognition rules), however they expressed they felt in some way that the opportunities did not relate to them or they were unclear as to how to access the opportunities (i.e. realisation rules).

As time progressed there was evidence that all of the students had taken some action to develop their employability and this was done at their own pace. Where the activity related to an area that the students were unfamiliar with, then the students throughout the year were generally more comfortable taking action when they felt that they were given clear instructions. The students seemed reluctant to 'have a go' and explore the possibilities, and one of the reasons that the students gave for this was that were unsure as to where to start.

This can be exampled with respect to Tara. In all three interviews Tara had been positive about the content of what was discussed in the sessions that she had attended. Whilst Tara had taken steps to develop her employability in the year, there was very little evidence that Tara had taken any action as a direct result of the sessions that she had attended. What emerged from this discussion was how challenging Tara found it to identify the actions she would need to take to realise the opportunities. In the context of evaluation criteria there was evidence that Tara found it challenging to identify what constituted valid knowledge with the result that no action was taken. Where suggestions were supported with what Tara considered to be clear instructions, then Tara seemed to be better positioned to take action. In her final interview Tara commenting on why she had applied for an internship immediately after attending a presentation which was run by a different department stated,

it was different, the presenter told me exactly what to do, she spoke to me afterwards and gave me guidance, she told me what to do (Tara, interview three).

6.4 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has considered how the approach to teaching in each of the employability sessions observed impacted student learning. This was done by drawing on Bernstein's model of pedagogic practice as a lens through which to analyse the teaching sessions and the student interviews.

Bernstein argues that pedagogic processes are not inert carriers of messages from the teacher to the student. Rather whenever discourse takes place then there are opportunities for what is being relayed to be transformed, as there are spaces in which ideologies can have an influence (Bernstein, 2000). That the students started university with limited knowledge and experience of the graduate labour markets and HE and a sense of feeling different to their peers, is only a barrier where pedagogic processes re-enforce these differences rather than recognise them, and adapting teaching approaches as appropriate (Bernstein, 2000).

In the next chapter, the findings from the analysis of the teaching sessions in this chapter and the findings from the analysis of the student interviews (chapter five) are brought together more holistically to identify and discuss blind spots in pedagogic practice. In this chapter the findings are discussed in the context of the existing literature.

Chapter 7 – Discussion

7.0 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of pedagogy in the reproduction of social inequalities within HE. The study examines this in the context of student employability from the perspective of working-class students in their first year of undergraduate studies, studying business and management at a research intensive university in the UK. The study draws on Bernstein's theory of pedagogic practice (Bernstein, 2000) and in particular his concepts of classification and framing, and horizontal and hierarchical knowledge structures, to explore how issues of power and control within the classroom might impact the learning experience of working-class students, which in turn contributes to the reproduction of inequalities.

This chapter brings together the findings from the analysis of the student interviews (chapter five) and the analysis of the employability sessions through Bernstein's conceptual lens (chapter six) in order to identify blind spots in pedagogic practice. The findings from the analysis of the student interviews identified a number of themes, which from the students' perspective impacted their ability to engage with the sessions. The analysis of the teaching sessions makes explicit the social class base of the pedagogic practices by illuminating the class based assumptions that these carry. Bringing these perspectives together from the two different methods deployed in the study, has enabled me to develop an understanding of the classed nature of pedagogy, and of the implications of this for working-class students through the lens of employability.

Two broad areas for discussion have been identified. Firstly, the study offers an opportunity to consider the pedagogic practices in the context of students' transition to HE through the

lens of developing their employability credentials. Secondly, the findings of the study contribute to an understanding of how pedagogic practices might reproduce social inequalities in the context of supporting students in the development of specific employability skills. This second area is broken down further into two areas of focus, firstly the way in which pedagogic practices might carry class based messages relating to how instructions and advice are given to students in the classroom. Secondly, the way in which pedagogic practices might carry implicit assumptions about what students should know about HE and the graduate labour markets, how these might act as a barrier to students seeking help from academic staff, and as a barrier to them feeling confident in developing or drawing on existing networks.

7.1 Supporting students during their transitionary period to HE

The findings of the study identify two important areas of discussion. Firstly, drawing on the findings from the analysis through Bernstein's conceptual lens of classification and pacing, how pedagogic practices during students' transition to HE can restrict their ability to affirm their position and sense of fit in the HE context is discussed. Classification is drawn upon to understand how pedagogic processes can re-enforce students' feelings of being different to their peers on entering HE, and pacing to understand how opportunities to positively acknowledge these differences in the classroom are restricted, particularly during students' transition to HE when lecture style approaches to delivery are adopted. Secondly, drawing on Bernstein's concept of sequencing, how pedagogic practices might restrict students making the more specific transition of being ready to acquire knowledge relating to graduate labour markets and the development their employability.

7.1.1 Students' transition to HE: Strong Classification and the formation of a specialist identity

The findings from the student interviews show how the students entered university with a sense of being different to their peers and a sense of entering a world in which other students already belonged. The findings also show how these feelings of being different were re-enforced in the classroom particularly during the students' transitionary period.

My findings resonate with the broader literature which show the significant challenges that working-class students face in overcoming cultural differences when transitioning to university generally (Coulson et al., 2017; Soria and Bultmann, 2014; Lehmann, 2012), and more specifically how these are particularly acute for students studying at elite institutions (Reay, 2021; Finnegan and Merrill, 2017). I am however able to bring further insights beyond why students might feel different, by contributing to an understanding of how pedagogic practices re-enforce these differences in the classroom in a hierarchical way that potentially entrenches inequality. Drawing on Bernstein's concept of classification my conceptual approach has enabled me to focus on how pedagogic practices can carry implicit assumptions relating to what students know about HE and graduate employability, and explore the relationship between these assumptions and students' learning during their transitionary period. Being different can be reinforced in different ways; here the risk is that the messages that the students receive might carry deficit connotations of legitimacy or worth.

There has been one previous study (Crozier and Reay, 2011) which has drawn on Bernstein's framework to examine issues of disassociation that working-class students feel on entering HE. No studies have looked at this in the context of employability and therefore I am also able to bring further insights to this Bernsteinian body of literature. Crozier and Reay (2011) used Bernstein's concepts of framing and classification to examine how the learning frameworks within two elite UK HEIs impacted the experiences of a group of first year

working-class students. The study illuminates the significant role of regular 1-1 supervisory and feedback meetings in overcoming challenges that the students faced in adapting to HE. The study shows how the regularity of the meetings 'forced' the students to develop their academic network, removing the impetus for this from individual students to the institution.

The analysis of the teaching sessions in chapter six shows how the teacher throughout the year used strong classificatory messages to emphasise the distinctiveness of being a student at a Russell Group university. The teachers' focus was very much on the opportunities that would prevail to the students' whilst at university, and the advantages to the students of studying at this type of HEI. Strong classification provides the opportunity to develop specialist identities through the creation of strong boundaries between contexts (Bernstein, 2000), and the analysis shows how the unique identity being assumed was an institutional identity, of a student studying at a Russell Group university. Bernstein argues that strong external classification in educational settings carries a risk of working-class students feeling marginalised as they may not have developed the right social or cultural capital to be able to relate to this unique identity (Bernstein, 2000), they will not understand "the rules of the game" (Bernstein, 2000, p. 45).

The findings of the study resonate with this theoretical perspective, particularly during the students' transitionary period. The analysis of the teaching sessions through the lens of classification illuminates how in the creation of this unique identity, the pedagogic practices carried implicit assumptions relating to what students know about studying at HE and graduate employability. The analysis highlights the risk to student learning if students are not supported in being able to relate to this identity, particularly at this time.

For example, in the first session that the students attended, the teacher used strong classificationary messages to make the distinction between HE and school, and also to emphasise the distinctiveness of the university that they were attending. In the introduction to the session the teacher stated,

Welcome to the Management School. I'm here to support you on you as you go on your careers journey. The reason that we run employability sessions is to complement your academic studies and to show you how what you are developing at university also translates into how you can become more employable…… Today we're going to talk to you a little bit more about the opportunities that are available to you in terms of taking advantage of what the university has to offer. I'm going to explain a little bit about the different aspects of university life and how they can support our employability (Teacher, session one)

Shortly after this introduction the teacher referred more specifically to the benefits of studying at a Russell Group university, the teacher stated,

Studying at this university will give you an advantage, many employers favour students who attend Russell Group universities (Teacher, session one).

In these quotes, university education is constructed as a new and different experience. The emphasis in these paragraphs and throughout the session was very much on the future, the focus was on the opportunities that university life and more specifically being at a Russell Group university can offer. The teacher is using strong classification to create an institutional identity and in creating this identity, then the analysis shows how the observed pedagogic practices carried assumptions about what the students know and feel about university. In the context of student employability, the analysis highlights a tension between teaching approaches aimed at supporting students in capitalising on the structural

hierarchies that exist within HE, and how these approaches might actually themselves re-enforce any inequalities caused by these hierarchies by carrying messages of institutional identity which the students may not be ready or able to relate to.

The creation of this strong student identity can be contrasted with the findings of the student interviews which show how the students entered university with the perception of being different to their peers, and feelings that university was a new and unique experience that was unfamiliar to them. In the context of employability, the interviews show how the students' perception of employability was that it was something over and above their core studies. All of the students expressed in their interviews that their priority was settling in and understanding how university works, rather than focusing on developing their employability.

As the students progressed through the year, the students' reaction to the employability sessions focused less on not belonging or being different, although strong institutional classification was still observed in the sessions. The findings from the student interviews show how the students had all adapted to university however the findings show that the students did this in different ways with implications for how students experienced HE and their position within it. This is discussed in more depth in the next section.

7.1.2 Student transition – how students positively acknowledge their position within HE

In this section, drawing on Bernstein's concept of pacing (Bernstein, 2000), the way in which pedagogic practices might reduce the number of opportunities for students to positively acknowledge their position within HE during their transition to HE is discussed. The analysis of the teaching sessions shows how through the strong framing of pacing the teacher controlled the rate of knowledge acquisition. Bernstein argues that strong pacing carries the

risk of learning being pushed outside of the classroom to secondary places of knowledge and that this could be to the detriment of working-class students who will not have the same access as their middle-class peers to this knowledge (Bernstein, 2000).

The findings from the study resonate with Bernstein's theoretical perspective, particularly during the students' transitionary period when working-class students are less likely than their middle-class peers to be able to draw on their existing social capital to contextualise their learning (Donnelly, 2014: Reay at al. 2005). Whilst all learning cannot and should not be delivered within the classroom, my conceptual approach informs an understanding of how lecture style approaches to delivery, can mean that conversations which are important in supporting students to familiarise and establish themselves within HE (Tinto, 1997) are pushed outside of the classroom. The findings from the student interviews show how the students entered HE with little knowledge of what to expect and whilst the students had established networks of both friends and family, there was no evidence that these networks provided the students with any support in relation to this. The findings show how the opportunities for students to benefit from the sessions were reduced at least in the short term, and explain how negative feelings associated with feeling different to their peers can be re-enforced.

The findings resonate with previous studies which have explored ways in which working-class students can positively recognise their position within HE. These studies identify the important role that friendship groups and academic networks play in providing this support (Coulson et al, 2017; Morales, 2014), and also the 'risky' nature of working-class students' transition to HE. The reference to 'risky' in this instance reflects the uncertainty and unpredictability of how successful working-class students will be when faced with the challenge of overcoming significant cultural and financial challenges. Studies also highlight

the significance of serendipitous encounters (Wong, 2018; Reay, 2012), which can be significant in their own right or act as an enabler to the establishment of the aforementioned friendship groups and academic networks. My conceptual approach enables me to bring insights into the role that pedagogic practices can play in contributing to this risk, through the lens of employability. The findings from the student interviews show how the students had little understanding of graduate careers and how they had given little thought to how they were going to develop their own employability credentials beyond the opportunities offered through their programme of study. By pushing conversations outside of the classroom at a time when students had little prior knowledge and no access to the right networks, then opportunities to be able to contextualise their learning are reduced.

Take for example Linda, who in her initial interview when asked about her experience of the first session and what action she had taken as a result of the session responded,

To be honest I was just relieved that I had managed to catch the right bus and found the venue, that's my main memory…. I'm not planning on taking any action I'm just trying to get to grips with my studies, it's very different here for me, I'll start thinking about things (employability) next year (Linda, interview one).

Amanda expressed similar feelings in her first interview. When asked about she felt about what was covered and what action she would take a result of the session, she responded,

I'm still getting my head around sitting in such a big lecture with all of these people who seem to have everything under control and know what they are doing. I couldn't really think beyond the challenge of getting to the session on time (Amanda, interview one).

The findings show how the students left the sessions with contextual questions that needed to be answered to support their learning. The analysis shows how the teacher controlled the

rate of knowledge acquisition in the sessions through strong pacing and how in exerting this control the pedagogic practices carried the assumption that the students had access to these secondary sites of knowledge.

Consistent with findings from the previous studies, the student interviews highlighted how conversations with peers and serendipitous encounters provided them with support during their transition. However the findings also show how the frequency of these encounters varied and how all of these encounters took place outside of the classroom. In Bernstein's words, the students had varying degrees of access to these secondary sources of knowledge that are assumed within the pedagogic practices through strong pacing.

This can be shown when we look at the findings from Amanda and Linda's second interviews. The analysis of these interviews shows how the two students had moved from a position where they had similar feelings about their position within HE, to one where they had very different views. Amanda in her second interview expressed how much more confident she felt in her position at university. Amanda made no reference to anything in the sessions not being relevant to her circumstances, or feelings of insecurity due to her being different to her peers. In direct contrast to her first interview Amanda expressed that she could see the benefits to her and vice-versa to her peers of sharing their experiences. Amanda attributed this change to the friendship groups that she had established and the conversations that were held within the group. In Bernstein's terms, Amanda had successfully accessed a secondary site of knowledge in a way that was intended by the teacher.

Amanda's experience can be contrasted with that of Linda, who in her second interview and in a similar way to Amanda, continued to express feelings of being different in some way to

her peers. However unlike Amanda, she continued to position these differences as having a detrimental impact on the extent to which she felt what was discussed in the session had any relevance to her. Linda had established new friendship groups but there was no suggestion that these friendship groups had benefited her, with respect to recognising her position within HE in a positive way.

Previous studies drawing on Bernstein's framework have highlighted the importance of the weak framing of pacing to allow students time to contextualise and explore what is being discussed (Morias, 2002). For example, Donnelly (2018) shows how the weak pacing observed in an outreach programme run by an elite university to support high performing students from under-represented groups progress to university, helped the students to feel more confident about going to university. Time was made for 'casual' conversations between the students on the programme and students who were in their first year of study at the university. The programme had a large networking element; time was allocated for parallel conversations with first year students who had been in a similar position to the students on the programme two years earlier. For example, in the study Patrick a prospective medical student, comments how the most memorable activity that he did whilst on the programme was being given the opportunity to talk to medical students and academics about what they did. Through these conversations Patrick was able to address doubts about the nature of medical education and his perceived suitability.

The findings of the study contribute to this body of literature in the context of employability and students' transition. The findings also demonstrate the importance of contextualising the study when interpreting the results and therefore highlight the need for more studies in this area. The findings do not necessarily suggest that weak pacing should be adopted within the sessions themselves, rather they highlight the importance of ensuring that students are

able to have these conversation either within or outside of the lectures. In Donnelly's study above, all of the students taking part were from similar backgrounds and through the weak framing of pacing within sessions, the students were able to overcome any negative pre-conceptions and assumptions relating to their ability to be successful at the HEI. The weak framing of pacing facilitated the transfer of tacit knowledge through informal conversations. In the context of this study then it is unclear whether similar approaches may be appropriate due to the heterogeneous nature of the cohort.

7.1.3 When should different elements of employability be introduced into the curriculum?

Drawing on Bernstein's concept of sequencing, the findings of the study offer a way of understanding why pedagogic practices might restrict students in their ability to hear some messages relating to employability particularly during their transition to HE. The findings resonate with previous studies which show how working-class students when entering HE will prioritise settling in to university and getting to grips with their programme of study, over the development of their employability credentials (Greenbank, 2007). However I am able to bring additional insights into how the timing of when some aspects of employability teaching are introduced into the curriculum can impact student learning, and how this has implications for the way in which students need to be supported. The findings build on previous literature with respect to two areas. Firstly studies which evaluate the different models for the delivery of employability activities, and secondly the body of research which calls for the focus of employability to extend beyond the development of skills and competencies to broader career planning (Bennett, 2019). The findings highlight a tension between findings in the literature which advocate the importance of equipping students early with the necessary skills to navigate through the graduate labour markets and to

manage their own personal development (Bridgewater, 2019), and how the control exerted by the teacher in delivering these sessions, risks marginalising working-class students during their transition to HE.

In the previous section, how pedagogic practices can inadvertently push teaching outside of the classroom and the implications of this for student learning transition to HE was discussed. This section considers more specifically the timing and order of the sessions.

Bernstein's argues that the strong framing of sequencing risks working-class students not being able to keep pace with learning and that this risk is heightened when what is taught is context dependent. The strong framing of sequencing means that pedagogic practices will reflect the teachers' assumptions of where students are on the learning continuum, and this carries a risk of misalignment with the students' own experiences. Where learning is context dependent working-class students may have had less opportunities to gain that context (Bernstein, 1990).

The findings of the study give some support for this theoretical perspective. The analysis of the student interviews illuminates how from the students' perspective employability is context dependent, and highlights the importance of pedagogic practices which support students in gaining this context. For the students to be able to focus on employability, the findings show how this was dependent on them having firstly developed the context of what it was to be a student within a Russell Group university. The findings show how the students started university without this knowledge or access to this knowledge through existing networks, particularly in the short-term.

Through the analytical lens of sequencing, the findings show how pedagogic practices might restrict opportunities for students to be able to relate to the sessions by carrying

assumptions that the students have already have this context. The findings suggest that students need time to adapt to university before some structured employability sessions can be offered in this way.

The discourse evaluating the different models through which employability is taught within HEIs is mainly focused on the most effective way of ensuring that students develop specific employability skills (Tomlinson, 2017). The findings of these studies advocate models of delivery which are integrated within the students' programme of study and aligned to disciplinary knowledge. Studies show how this enables students to better contextualise what is being taught (Bennett, 2020). My conceptual lens has enabled me to extend the evaluation of these different approaches beyond a consideration of how specific skills are developed, to illuminate the need for teaching approaches that enable students to contextualise their learning more broadly if students are to be supported in their development. The findings show how, by providing students with structured learning during the period in which they are transitioning to HE, that the control exerted by the teacher carries a risk of marginalising working-class students as the students will not have had time to orientate themselves to HE. The study does not suggest that structured sessions should not take place, on the contrary the findings from the student interviews indicate the importance of structure to the students in being able to navigate their way through the demands of HE. Rather the findings illuminate the significance of the timing and the order of the sessions and how these carry class implications.

7.2 Teaching Employability

The remaining sections of this chapter focus on the teaching of employability throughout the year. The findings from the student interviews show how the students all recognised the

importance of developing their employability credentials and there was no suggestion that the content of the sessions was not important. However the findings did show that in many instances, these positive endorsements of the sessions were caveated with feelings of not being confident in knowing what their next steps should be, or expressions of feeling that what was suggested had no application to them. Whilst some of these feelings might relate to issues associated with transition and students feeling that they needed to give this priority over the development of their employability, the students' comments suggest that the reasons went beyond this to how the students reacted to the sessions themselves.

The students' feelings of disassociation and lack of confidence are explored further in this section. Two important areas have been identified for discussion. Firstly, the way in which class-based messages might restrict student learning in the context of how instructions are given, and secondly the way that these messages impact on students' confidence to develop and draw upon academic and social networks to ask for help.

The findings resonate with the broader employability literature which identifies cultural differences as one of the reasons for working-class students being less likely to focus on their employability in the early years of their programme when compared to their middle-class peers (Stuart et al., 2009). Studies show how such differences can impact on students feeling able to act on any advice given and on students' ability to recognise the need to develop their employability credentials beyond the opportunities offered within their programme of study. Studies advocate for HEIs to adopt more formalised and structured approaches to the development of students' employability to force engagement (Jackson, 2017; Greenbank and Hepworth, 2008).

My findings extend this discussion beyond models of delivery and type of assessment by illuminating class-related issues which exist independently to these factors. This is important as evidence in the literature shows that even when more structured approaches to the development of employability are adopted, these differences and frustrations persist beyond the transitionary period (Burke et al., 2017). Studies show the importance of an individualised approach to careers development where the advice is tailored to the individual (Bowman et al., 2005), but there is also a consistent message of working-class students not engaging with these activities such that this can be done (Coulson et al., 2017).

7.2.1 What is a clear instruction?

The discussion in this section draws on Bernstein's concepts of selection and horizontal and hierarchical knowledge structures, to examine in more depth the way in which class-based messages might impact student learning in the context of instructions and the advice given to students in the classroom. Selection is drawn upon to understand how in the context of employability, by exercising control over the way in which advice and instructions are given, there is a risk of marginalising working-class students. Bernstein's concepts of knowledge are drawn upon to gain a deeper understanding how this risk impacts the different elements of what is being taught.

My findings resonate with findings in the literature which show the inconsistent nature with which working-class students engage with employability activities within HE (Harvey et al., 2017). However through my conceptual framework I am able to understand this from the perspective of how pedagogic practices might support or hinder engagement by illuminating how these might impact students' ability to relate what is being discussed to their own experiences. The findings illuminate the challenges that teachers face when drawing on examples and everyday language when supporting students.

The strong framing of selection was observed in the sessions (see 6.3.1). Bernstein argues that this carries the risk of marginalising working-class students as what is discussed will reflect the norms and values of the teacher and in the context of education this will predominantly reflect the middle-class values of the institution (Bernstein, 2000).

The findings resonate with Bernstein's theoretical perspective in some instances. Firstly the findings show how what might be considered to be messages of encouragement and instruction from the perspective of the teacher and the researcher, left the students in some cases feeling frustrated that they were not clear about what actions they needed to take (see chapter 5.6). The students' frustration at not knowing what their next steps needed to be was particularly acute in instances where they were encouraged to think about their future careers or where advice was offered by students selected by the teacher to speak from earlier cohorts. This can be contrasted with the students' reaction to being offered advice relating to how to complete their CV's. Here the students' reaction was one of appreciation as to how clear the instructions were.

We can see this in Linda's second interview when she was commenting on a session that she had attended where two second year students offered advice on how to get involved in university activities. The analysis of the teaching sessions shows how the teacher through the strong framing of selection exerted control over which students should speak at the sessions, and therefore how it was the teacher who selected what they considered to be an appropriate example from which the students could learn from. The findings show how Linda was unable to relate to the intended message of encouraging students to get involved in extra-curricular activities as Linda was not able to see beyond the fact that she had not attended private school or that she did not ski.

In contrast, reflecting on the session where students were given advice about how to construct a CV, Linda reflected,

> *I found that session really helpful, I knew what steps I had to take, I could follow the instructions (Linda, interview two).*

In this context, the instructions did not seem to carry the same class-related messages.

Within formal education settings Bernstein distinguishes between hierarchical and horizontal knowledge structures (Bernstein, 2000), where hierarchical knowledge structures integrate knowledge starting from lower levels and horizontal knowledge structures are those which are segmentally organised into what Bernstein refers to as different languages. By doing this Bernstein is differentiating between knowledge structures which are more technical and rules based (vertical structures) and those knowledge structures where meaning is more context dependent. Bernstein argues that horizontal knowledge structures within formal education settings can marginalise working-class students as these carry the risk that the 'everyday' language drawn on to contextualise the knowledge will carry middle-class values and that these values dominate educational institutions. In making this distinction, Bernstein provides a way of differentiating between those elements within a subject which are context dependent and those which are not, whilst these elements are not mutually exclusive and there are elements of both in all subjects (Ellery, 2017), in practice it is difficult to differentiate between the two (Breier, 2004).

The students' reaction to both the student presentations and when they were asked to think about their future careers, suggests that this was received by the students as horizontal knowledge and so highlights a dependency of how these message are received to the way in which they are contextualised. In contrast, Adam's reaction to the CV sessions

suggests that this was received as technical knowledge. The findings highlight some of the class-related challenges of bringing informal knowledge into the classroom which is important for teachers to have an awareness of. Through exerting control of what is discussed in the sessions then the teacher risks narrowing these opportunities.

The findings resonate with the broader literature which shows how initiatives such as career fairs and alumni events can successfully support working-class students in their employability journey (Harvey et al, 2017) and the extend the findings by illuminating reasons for this. Tara in her final interview talked about how an employability session that she had attended where the speakers shared their career journeys had really resonated with her. At the session the teacher had used the strong framing of selection to determine who should present at the sessions, but at this session there were eight speakers. When asked about how this presentation had helped her, Tara focused on a presentation made by a black, female lawyer. When asked why her story resonated with her in particular, Tara commented "it felt like she was speaking to me, it was very personal" (Tara, interview two). Tara could not recall any other of the presentations at the session. We can see in this example that whilst strong selection had been exerted, the findings show how by exposing the students to a variety of different experiences then the teacher was able to increase the chances of students being able to contextualise what is taught with their own 'local knowledge'.

7.2.2 How are we expected to work?

In this section and drawing on Bernstein's concept of evaluative criteria, how pedagogic practices might influence students' confidence to develop and draw upon academic and social networks for help and advice is discussed. The findings from the student interviews show how despite being encouraged at every session to do so, none of the students had

sought help from any academic members of staff or the careers service in the year with respect to their employability. The findings also show how any reluctance to ask for help extended beyond their understanding of the processes within HE, to uncertainty relating to what they were expected to know. The findings show a misalignment between the teachers' expectations of what students were expected to know and the expectations that they were placing on themselves. The students' expectations of themselves were much greater in terms of what was needed to be achieved before they would feel confident asking for help. Whilst at one level such determination to be self-sufficient in their learning should be applauded and should not be discouraged, what is meant by 'as far as possible' is subjective and needs to be balanced with recognising when it is appropriate to seek help.

The findings resonate with findings from previous studies which show that working-class students are less likely than their middle-class peers to draw on existing or develop new social networks (Abrahams, 2017). This is despite social networks being a key enabler for providing students with opportunities to develop their employability credentials (Tomlinson, 2017). The findings also resonate with previous studies which show a general reluctance of working-class students to engage with university careers teams. This is despite early engagement with careers services being shown to significantly increase a students' employability prospects. Issues of confidence, rooted in working-class students being more insecure in their legitimacy and also meritocracy, are identified in the literature as reasons for this (Stevenson and Clegg, 2011). The findings also resonate with the literature which shows how non-traditional students may not understand what is expected of them with respect to academic behaviours, participation and the production of work (Stevenson, and Clegg 2011). My conceptual framework enables me to explore how pedagogic practices contribute to these issues of insecurity and uncertainty in the classroom by illuminating how

these can carry implicit class-based messages relating to what students are expected to know, and shows how this can impact students' confidence in asking for help.

The analysis in chapter six (see 6.3.5) shows how with the exception of the session focused on CV writing, evaluative criteria was weakly framed. Evaluative rules are the rules that clarify the homogeneity of what is valued as 'legitimate texts by tutors' (McLean et al. 2013, p. 272). Bernstein argues that the weak framing of evaluative criteria risks marginalising working-class students as this carries the assumption that students are in a position to be able interpret these requirements to their own context.

The analysis of the teaching sessions through the lens of evaluation show how through weak framing the teacher gave the students the freedom to determine which of the suggestions and recommended actions to pursue. For example, in the session focused on career planning (session five), the teacher introduced the session by saying,

this session is designed to get you thinking about the types of things that might interest you, the types of things to be thinking about (to develop your CV) and suggestions on how to make the most of the rest of your first year (Teacher, session five).

The analysis illuminates how in taking this approach the pedagogic practices carried the expectation that the students can negotiate the context in the way that the teacher saw it. In the example above, through the weak framing of evaluative criteria the teacher is giving the students the choice about which opportunities to pursue and how far to take them. In doing this the pedagogic practices carried the assumption that the students are able to make those choices. In contrast the findings from the student interviews show how when given a choice of what actions to take, any uncertainty felt by the students with respect to what they were expected to know themselves was re-enforced and therefore the students

were unclear when they should be asking for help. This is despite the students being encouraged in all sessions to ask for help when needed and messages that there was an expectation that the students would need some help.

This misalignment of expectations between what actions the teacher was expecting the students to take and what they actually did was evident in all of the student interviews. For example, Adam in his second interview, reflecting on a session where the benefits of internships were explained to the students and where students were encouraged to make an application stated,

For me I don't feel confident. I don't feel I have enough on my CV to apply. I was fine at high school but I have got to university level and it feels like everything else is at a higher level, like I have got to get more experience, better experience before I go for that … I'd like to be the best before I can apply (Adam, interview two).

In his final interview when asked whether he had spoken to the careers team, Adam replied

Not yet, I'll go when I've run out resources and done everything that I can for myself, at the moment I'm not sure what I would ask them (Adam, interview three).

Linda in her final interview expressed that she had no reason to speak to the careers team at this stage,

I already have a part time job, I'm OK for money, once I get into my final year I'll start to think about and plan what I'll do when I leave, at the moment I don't think I need to speak to anybody (Linda, interview three).

Steven who had given a lot of thought to his future career and undertaken some independent research, stated,

I don't feel that I have taken things as far as I can on my own yet, but I am very conscious that you don't know what you don't know. I'm sure that there are opportunities that I haven't even thought about. (Steven, interview three).

7.3 Intersection of class, gender and ethnicity

The analysis in chapter five shows how generally there were no notable differences relating to gender and ethnicity to the way that the students experienced the sessions, issues relating to class were much more apparent. For example, the analysis in chapter five shows how aware the students felt about being the first in the family to attend university and it was this that the students attributed to feelings of being different (see 5.1). The analysis in the chapter also shows how when students from later cohorts were drawn upon to share their experiences it was the socio-economic background of the students that was a point of difference rather than their gender or ethnicity. The findings show, with the exception of being the first in their family to attend HE, the students did not overtly characterise themselves in any other way.

Two notable exceptions to the above were observed, firstly how ethnicity was significant to Tara (the only student in the study who was not white) when identifying with somebody who she considered to be a role model, and secondly in the way in which the male and female participants drew on support from their friends.

Tara in her interviews did not generally make any references to being Black when describing the way in which she was experiencing HE or any of the specific sessions. It was only in the context of a particular situation that she appeared conscious of her ethnic background in the context of HE. I am conscious that Tara is a single case and also, in the participant information the students were told that that the focus of the study was social class, and

therefore this might have influenced their responses. However class was not directly referred to in the interview questions, the questions were designed so that issues relating to class or any other background factors would emerge and be participant led.

Research shows how female students are more likely to draw on friendship groups for support and the findings resonate with this, but no differences in the propensity for students to draw on academic or careers staff for support were noted. None of the students in the study had sought help with their employability from the careers team or from members of academic staff in the year.

The findings support the body of literature which shows how the benefits experienced by male students in the way in which systems and processes within HE favour them in the context of employability are tempered by class. The findings also resonate with the broader literature which identify class as a structuring factor in its own right (Stevenson and Clegg, 2012) but also how class can be influenced by other factors (Stevenson, 2019).

Evidence in the literature shows how middle-class students and in particular middle-class male students take a more strategic approach to employability than their peers. My findings are consistent with this broader literature which shows how all the students were taking a step by step approach to both education and employability, none of the students were taking a strategic approach to employability and only Steven had actively considered his career options prior to starting university as he had researched apprenticeships. There was no evidence that the female participants had considered an apprenticeship but equally no evidence they had dismissed the idea.

7.4 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has considered how the approach to teaching in each of the employability sessions observed impacted student learning. This was done by drawing on Bernstein's model of pedagogic practice as a lens through which to analyse the student interviews and using the themes from the thematic analysis to develop a rich understanding of the findings.

The themes that emerged from the thematic analysis of the interviews indicated that the students had started university with limited knowledge of what studying at HE would involve and of the graduate labour markets. All of the students were conscious of being the first in their family to go to university and most linked this to feelings of being different to their peers, and in turn to feelings that some of the content of the sessions did not relate to them, particularly in the initial interviews. As time progressed and as the students settled into their own routines then these feelings of being different to their peers were less apparent, but what continued was a sense that some of the opportunities presented were out of their reach or not relevant to them. The students did take some action in the year to develop their employability however the catalyst for this tended to relate to experiences outside of the sessions rather than the sessions themselves.

Bernstein argues that pedagogic processes are not inert carriers of messages from the teacher to the student, rather whenever discourse takes place then there are opportunities for what is being relayed to be transformed as there are spaces in which ideologies can have an influence (Bernstein, 2000). That the students started university with limited knowledge and experience of the labour markets and HE, and a sense of feeling different to their peers is only a barrier where pedagogic processes re-enforce these differences rather than recognise them and teaching approaches are adapted (Bernstein, 2000).

In the next chapter the conclusion of the study is given. In this chapter the way that the study contributes to enhancing knowledge is discussed, this extends beyond the findings. The limitations and recommendations for future studies are also discussed, and the implications of the study for HEIs and Government policy are examined. The chapter concludes with my final reflections.

Chapter 8 – Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

The initial discussion in this concluding chapter focuses on the main findings of the study. Following this the benefits of the approach that I have taken are discussed with an emphasis on how this contributes to the enhancement of knowledge, both conceptually and methodologically, these extend beyond the findings. The limitations of the study are then discussed and following this, recommendations for future studies are made, the implications of the study for Government policy, HEI's, and my own institution and practice are then examined. The chapter concludes with my final reflections and thoughts on the study.

8.2 Summary of the main findings

The overarching research question for this thesis was to explore whether pedagogic practice (purposefully or inadvertently or implicitly) reproduces social inequalities and to develop an understanding of how might this be happening. Through the use of the sociologist of education Basil Bernstein's analytical framework, I was able to shine a light on the classed nature of pedagogy. The findings illuminate how pedagogic practices can carry implicit class based assumptions, and how these can act as a barrier to working-class students being able to relate to and therefore benefit from what is being taught. This was explored in the context of a series of timetabled employability lectures delivered to first year students studying business and management at a Russell Group university.

Within the body of literature which examines issues of inequality within the graduate labour markets, there is a substantial body of literature which examines and evaluates the different teaching models through which HEIs support students in the development of their employability credentials. From this a consistent premise emerges that employability

initiatives need to be embedded within the curriculum and aligned to subject content if opportunities for working-class students to engage with these activities are to be maximised (Bennett, 2019; Pegg et al., 2012; Thomas and Jones, 2007). The findings from my study extend this discussion and considers how pedagogic practices, which can also exist independently of these models of delivery contribute to inequalities in the way in which students experience HE. This is important as evidence in the literature shows the persistent nature of social inequalities within HE and more specifically within the graduate labour markets. Studies also show how these exist irrespective of what model of delivery is adopted (Burke et al., 2017). Bernstein's framework has not previously be drawn upon to understand issues of inequality in the classroom in the context of employability, and therefore the findings from the study makes a unique contribution to both understanding inequalities within HE and also to the Bernsteinian body of research. Proponents of his work argue that his theory and concepts have been underutilised in the context of HE (Donnelly and Abbas, 2018).

The longitudinal nature of the study has also enabled me to examine the significance of the timing of when sessions are delivered across the year, and in particular it enabled issues of inequality to be examined in the context of the students' transition to university. Prior research shows that students from working-class backgrounds find the transition to HE and elite institutions in particular, challenging and therefore the study was designed so that this period could be considered in the analysis (Finnegan and Merrill, 2017).

Finally the findings also contribute to the growing body of research that counteracts deficit discourses as an appropriate way of positioning and therefore understanding issues of inequality. Critics of these deficit approaches call for approaches which contextualises the problem at institutional rather than at individual level and calls for an examination of

processes and practices within HEIs (Reay, 2018). The above areas of focus are discussed below.

8.2.1 The classed nature of pedagogy

In chapter six of this thesis I drew on Bernstein's concepts of classification and framing to explore how the pedagogic practices adopted in the sessions might carry social biases particularly towards the hierarchical structures within HE and society more broadly. In Bernstein's words,

> *these biases lie deep within the very structure of the educational system's process of transmission and acquisition and their social assumption* (Bernstein, 2000, p. xix).

By drawing on these concepts, I was able to systematically analyse the practices within the teaching sessions at a level that enabled me to model pedagogic practice such that not only the reproductive characteristics of the learning process can be understood but also potential opportunities for change or transformation can be identified (Moore, 2013a; Bernstein, 1990). To Bernstein pedagogy is not simply a neutral relay of knowledge, in itself pedagogy can create knowledge which is influenced by both external factors (such as Government policy and organisational structures) and the preferences and values of individual educators which will be context dependent (Bernstein, 2000). It is the latter that were explored in this study.

The findings contribute to an understanding of how pedagogic practices can act to re-enforce social inequalities in the following three areas: firstly, during students' transition to university; secondly, when examples are drawn upon to re-enforce understanding; and finally how pedagogic practices might restrict students' confidence in asking for help. These three areas are discussed below.

Transitionary period

During the students' transitionary period, the analysis of the teaching sessions shows a tension between pedagogic practices designed to develop an institutional identity from which students can leverage advantage, and how these can carry class based messages that students may not be able to relate to. The findings also show how pedagogic practices can act to restrict the students' ability to affirm their position and sense of fit in the HE context during the period of their transition to university. Finally in the context of students' transition to HE the findings show how pedagogic practices might restrict students in making the more specific transition of being ready to acquire knowledge relating to graduate labour markets and the development their employability.

In the analysis of the teaching sessions in chapter six, I drew on Bernstein's lens of classification to examine the way in which employability was positioned by the teacher in the context of the students' previous experiences and their broader university experiences. The analysis shows how the pedagogic practices carried strong external classificationary messages and weak internal classifcationary messages and how this created a distinction between the students' experiences whilst at university and their previous or broader experiences. Bernstein refers to this distinction as boundaries which when created Bernstein posits, provide an opportunity for unique identities to be created (Bernstein, 2000). In chapter six I show how the strong identity reflected within the pedagogic practices, was that of a student studying at a Russell Group university. Importantly through the lens of classification I was able to uncover how the observed pedagogic practices carried assumptions that the students were comfortable and familiar with what studying at university would entail, and also that the students had knowledge of the graduate labour market. The findings illuminated how in doing this a barrier to learning is created if students

cannot relate to this identity and also highlighted how pedagogic practices can restrict opportunities for this. These are discussed further in the next paragraph.

The findings from the student interviews in chapter five show how the students all entered university with feelings of being different to their peers. In chapter seven by bringing together the findings from the analysis of the teaching sessions and the analysis of student interviews through Bernstein's conceptual lens of pacing, I show how opportunities to positively acknowledge these differences in the classroom can be restricted when lecture style approaches to delivery are adopted. When pacing is strongly framed then it is the teacher who controls the rate of knowledge of acquisition within the classroom, and where students cannot keep up with the pace, then this means that students' will be reliant upon secondary sites of knowledge which exist outside of the classroom (Bernstein, 2000). In the context of the students' transitionary period to HE then drawing on Bernstein's concept of pacing I was able to show how conversations were pushed outside of the classroom at a time when the students had limited support networks outside of the lectures to draw upon to contextualise what was being discussed.

Finally in the context of students' transitionary period to HE and more specifically in the context of employability, drawing on Bernstein's concept of sequencing I was able to illuminate how pedagogic practices carry class based assumptions about where students are on the learning continuum. This has relevance for employability as students will have entered university with very different experiences. Teachers may not be able to avoid teaching practices that carry class based assumptions but the findings of the study illuminate the importance of teaching practices which mitigate the impact of this risk. The study illuminates the importance of teaching practices which allow students to bring their

own experiences into the classroom enabling them to positively acknowledge their position within HE during their transition and beyond.

The use of examples in the classroom

Drawing on Bernstein's concept of selection, the findings demonstrate the way in which real life examples and everyday language, used both to illustrate points and contextualise knowledge, can carry social biases which in certain contexts can marginalise working-class students. In chapter six I show how by exerting control over who is chosen to deliver the example and the examples given, then it is the teacher who has control over what is considered to be representative. The findings show how in exerting this control then in certain instances this can have the contradictory effect by re-enforcing students' feelings of being different to their peers. In chapter six I show how Linda was left feeling disheartened after attending a session where a student from a previous cohort shared their experiences of developing their employability in their first year of study. The findings show how Linda could not see beyond the fact that unlike the student presenting, she had not attended private school and did not have what she considered to be industry connections. In contrast the discussion in chapter six also shows how Tara was able to identify with a presenter at a session that she attended, the difference was that in this session that Tara attended there were seven speakers and one resonated with her.

Drawing on Bernstein's distinction between hierarchical and horizontal knowledge structures, where hierarchical knowledge structures integrate knowledge starting from lower levels and horizontal knowledge structures are those which are segmentally organised (Bernstein, 2000), my study has enabled me to develop a more nuanced understanding of these challenges in the context of employability. In chapter seven I identify that some

sessions there were more technical or rule based elements, for example how to structure a CV, and some were more context dependent, for example when students were asked to consider their future careers. The findings show how the risk of marginalising students is heightened when knowledge is context dependent.

Asking for help

Finally I was able to show how pedagogic practices might adversely influence students' confidence to develop and draw upon academic networks for help and advice, by illuminating implicit messages relating to what students are expected to know. In chapter six my analysis of the teaching sessions through Bernstein's lens of evaluative criteria shows how through the weak framing of evaluative criteria the students were given the 'freedom' to decide which of the suggestions and recommendations made in the sessions to act on. For example, in one of the sessions where the teacher discussed the skills and attributes that employers are looking for, the teacher made suggestions as to how these could be developed and the students had the 'freedom' to decide the most appropriate way forward for them. My findings show how in doing this pedagogic practices can exacerbate broader issues relating to feelings of uncertainty and insecurity with respect to working-class students' position within HE and graduate employability.

8.2.2 A challenge to deficit discourse

In the introductory chapter to the thesis, I make the distinction between deficit approaches to understanding issues of inequality which position the problem as one belonging to the individual, and alternative approaches which call for an examination of practices at a system or intuitional level. These different approaches are examined in more depth in the literature review (chapter two). My synthesis of the literature shows the dominance of deficit

discourse in understanding inequalities but also the growing body of research that challenges the effectiveness of these approaches in addressing the issues (see for example Smit, 2012). Critics of deficit approaches show that by placing the responsibility for these problems on individuals, then issues caused by institutional practices and processes are overlooked. In the context of systems within HE, critics argue that the result is a system where institutions voice a commitment to widening participation but one which places the responsibility of adaptation to HE on the student rather than the institution. In chapter two of my literature review, my synthesis of the literature shows that whilst HE within the UK has expanded in terms of the number of students attending university, the resultant structures are one of a two-tier system within which the higher-tier largely consists of institutions that existed prior to expansion. The review also shows how the systems and processes within these higher-tier institutions in particular are dominated by middle-class values that working-class students have to adapt to.

Chapter three discusses how Bernstein's concepts have been shown by researchers to be valuable tools in uncovering practices which are ingrained within the very fabric of the institution. Through these concepts the institution becomes the focus of how actions within the institution result in certain behaviours being prioritised and what counts as legitimate knowledge being determined (Donnelly, 2018). My study builds on this body of work to understand these issues in the context of employability; the findings from the student interviews show how the students entered HE with a sense of feeling different to their peers and also shows how they came with a wealth of different experiences. My study informed an understanding of how processes and practices within the classroom can act to re-enforce these feelings of being different with an emphasis not on changing the individual, but on

how pedagogy can be designed to take into account the experiences of working-class students.

8.3 The value of a Bernsteinian approach to understanding inequalities in HE

This section considers how Bernstein's framework can be used in the context of HE to examine causes of inequality within the classroom. As discussed in the methodology chapter (chapter four) I found the process of working with Bernstein's theoretical framework extremely challenging, particularly with respect to the practical application of his concepts. This study and the body of literature drawing on Bernstein's work have demonstrated the value of his analytical framework. However to date it has had limited application in the context of HE (Donnelly and Abbas, 2018) and in particular in the context of employability.

One of the criticisms levelled at Bernstein's work is the opaque nature of his tools, and critics of his work have identified this as one of the reasons for their limited application (Moore, 2013a). This study therefore provides a methodological contribution to knowledge by documenting in detail my approach. The approach to data analysis has been documented at a level of detail that does not exist in published articles.

The study also contributes to an understanding of how Bernstein's concepts of vertical and horizontal knowledge can be operationalised to understand issues of inequality (see chapter six). These have had little application in practice and are relatively under developed (Muller, 2006). One of the issues identified with the application of these concepts is that whilst each concept is discussed in detail within Bernstein's work, discussion of what falls in the middle group is limited which makes operationalising the concepts difficult in practice. In this study I have shown how the concepts can be used in the context of employability to differentiate between knowledge structures which are technical and those which are more contextual. By

doing this I have shown how Bernstein's concepts can develop a deeper more nuanced understanding of class-based issues within a particular subject area.

8.4 Limitations of the study

By design the study focused on six students, studying at a point in time, and evaluated a specific research context at a single institution. However this does lead to limitations with respect to how generalisable the results of the study will be.

A second limitation relates more specifically to the focus of the study. Any study which analyses causes in the differential outcomes within HE is limited in the extent to which the findings explain causality due to the multiplicity of issues involved (HEFCE, 2015). It is not always possible to tell which issue is actually the cause of the outcomes and this study has considered one perspective.

The final limitation relates to the complexity of class as a construct. There is no uncontested definition of working-class (Smart et al., 2009), and therefore this limits the comparability of the findings between research studies and also the interpretation of the findings themselves. Most definitions use objective measures which are mainly linked to parents' occupation and their level of education, and also the students' place of residence. More recently there have been calls for measures of class to incorporate more subjective self-definitions of class (see for example, Rubin et al., 2014) to supplement more quantitative measures.

The above limitations have been recognised in the way that the thesis has been written up. I have been conscious of making the research process as transparent as possible to enable readers to relate and compare the findings to their own practice and other research where applicable.

8.5 Recommendation for future studies

The recommendations in this section in part are an extension of the limitations section as they consider the limitations relating to gaps in the research. They are also informed by the knowledge that I have gained as a researcher in working with Bernstein's theoretical framework and how this might be employed in a HE context beyond employability.

In the context of student employability generally, there is a need for further research examining the effectiveness of different approaches to developing student employability which extend beyond the development of specific skills, to how these translate to success in the graduate labour markets. There is also the need for further research which examines why students from lower socio-economic backgrounds do not achieve the same outcomes in the graduate labour markets as their middle-class peers. By the Governments own admission, little is known about the reasons for this beyond structural issues which relate to factors such as course studied, attainment and prior qualifications (HEFCE, 2015).

The findings highlight the importance when evaluating such initiatives of recognising the classed nature of the student experiences and it is therefore recommended that consideration is given to this in the design of future studies. The findings show how this risks solutions being recommended which benefit the majority but will marginalise a group of students.

It is also recommended that future studies are needed which evaluate teaching practices within other Russell Group universities, and also to explore this in the context of post-92 universities. Studies show how student cohorts at Russell Group universities tend to be more stratified with respect to their socio-economic background when compared to post-92

universities (Gordon, 2013) and therefore it would be helpful to understand if pedagogic practices re-enforce differences in the same way.

Finally in the context of employability it is recommended that future studies consider the experiences of students beyond their first year of study. The study shows how pedagogic practices can create barriers to students feeling that they are able to benefit from what is being taught through implicit class-based assumptions carried within pedagogic practices. It is not known whether this is still relevant in future years when students may have established their position within HE, both in terms of whether the students will eventually benefit from what has been taught, or whether it means that class has less significance in the design of teaching in future years.

In the context beyond employability the study highlights the classed nature of students' transition to university and how institutions can effect this through pedagogic practices. This in as area that has not been considered in the literature and it is therefore recommended that this is the focus of future studies. This can be in the context of examining specific teaching initiatives or examining students' experiences more generally.

8.6 Implications of the study for Government policy, HEI's and my own institution and practice

8.6.1 Implications for Government policy

The findings of the study and my reading highlight the importance of reflecting the classed nature of the student experience in policy relating to issues of fair access and student success. Despite this, class is currently not one of the protected characteristics identified within the UK equality legislation (Equality Act, 2010) and as a result class is not one of the measures used in the benchmarking data which the Office for Students use in their assessment of HEI's, these focus on the protected characteristics.

The Office for Students, which has responsibility for the regulation and monitoring HEI's within the UK, in its access and participation guidance and published dashboards (Office for Students, n.d) does highlight the significance of socio-economic background to issues of inclusion. However the discourse refers to students from lower socio-economic groups as disadvantaged and remedies to address this disadvantage tend to focus on how institutions can equip students with the right resources. In doing this the focus is placed on the individual rather than the issue being framed as one belonging to the institution, as a result institutions are not reflected in legislation as being sites of inequality (Coulson et al, 2016) resulting in less emphasis on class-related issues.

8.6.2 Implications for HEIs

In this section the findings are discussed in the context of a recent report from the Russell Group entitled Pathways for Potential (Russell Group, 2020), which makes specific recommendations as to how members of the Russell Group can address issues of inequality, and also a recent report issued by Universities UK[8] (Gaskell and Lingwood, 2019) which examines the impact of students socio-economic background on graduate outcomes. Both reports acknowledge that despite widening participation initiatives, inequalities persistent in the extent to which students from disadvantaged or underrepresented groups benefit from and experience HE. In both reports a commitment to take action to eradicate these reported inequalities is made. The Pathways for Potential for example sets out the Russell Groups' approach to transformational change over the next ten years although specific targets are not given (Russell Group, 2020).

[8] Universities UK is an organisation which represents the interests of the HE sector in the UK

My reading of both publications highlights two areas of particular importance for HEI's in the context of my research and reading, firstly the persistence of discourse that is still one of deficit, and secondly the need for mechanisms to be put in place at institutional level and across the sector to encourage more practice based research which focuses on how issues of inequality might be addressed. These are discussed in more detail below.

A deficit discourse

In both reports whilst it is recognised that it is the role of HEIs to ensure that all students are supported to reach their full potential, the focus is on what new provision might need to be put in place by themselves or other interested parties such as the Government or employers to support students. In taking this approach then the discourse is still one of deficit where a disadvantaged group needs to be supported to bridge a gap, how existing practices and processes within HEIs might need to be adapted is overlooked. For example, the Pathways for Potential calls for more collaborative work with schools and families, there is no discussion of how existing practices might exclude families and schools in the first place (Russell Group, 2020).

By design my study was small in scale and therefore caution needs to be taken when generalising the results, the findings are however consistent with the broader literature which challenges this deficit discourse and highlights the need for HEI's examine internal systems and processes and make these a focus of systematic review.

In the context of employability, the findings provide further evidence that if issues of inequality are to be addressed then institutions need to move from 'bolt-on' delivery models which are particularly prevalent within research intensive institutions (Bennett, 2020) to models where employability and careers initiatives are embedded within the

curriculum. The findings provide specific evidence of how such provision may carry social biases and leave students feeling unable to participate in activities. Again this challenges the deficit view and shows how the issue is not one of supporting students to engage with existing provision but adapting existing provision in order to support students.

Practice-based interventions

Consistent with calls within the broader literature, both reports highlight the need for the sector to gain a better understanding of the effectiveness of different initiatives aimed at widening access and participation. Within Pathways for Potential, the need for the greater evaluation of initiatives is highlighted (Russell Group, 2020) and Universities UK call for more 'evidence based decision making' (Gaskell and Lingwood, 2019). There have been many reports published which highlight good practice and frameworks in this area, (for example see Thomas and May, 2010 and Advance HE, 2019) but there is a paucity that looks at specific interventions from inception through to evaluation (Stevenson et al., 2019). The Russell Group report highlights practical challenges of undertaking such evaluations, my reading of literature and my findings show how the challenge is more than one of time of resources. The study highlights the complexity of addressing issues of inequality and the need for staff to be supported with training in this area and also has implications for the way in which staff are rewarded. Whilst the widening participation and the inclusivity agenda continues to be an area of importance, inclusive teaching is not part of the reward structures with HEIs (HEFCE, 2015).

8.6.3 Implications for my own institution and practice

My research and reading has highlighted to me the importance of embedding skills and careers support within the curriculum and also the importance of developing and sharing

practice-based research across the sector, this has influenced my practice in the following ways.

In my role as Director of Undergraduate programmes (2019-2021) I have worked closely with first year module leaders in the redesign of a skills module to ensure that careers support offered within the department is aligned more closely with the module and embedded where possible. One of the assessments for the module now requires students to have shown active engagement with the careers team. I have also recently joined a newly formed departmental inclusive teaching working group and I have as one of my objectives for the group is that consideration should be given to even more integration.

Finally, the research highlights the need for institutions to share practice (HEFCE, 2015) and in January 2022 with a colleague from my own institution, I approached the British Academy of Management with the idea of designing and delivering a series of workshops aimed at bringing academics in business and management schools together to share and co-create best practice in this area. The first workshop was held in February 2022 with 55 attendees across five countries, the second workshop is scheduled for May 2022.

8.7 Final words on the study

During the final write up of this study, the UK Governments' Education Select Committee issued the findings of a follow up to a study undertaken seven years earlier which reported "White working-class underachievement in education is real and persistent" (The House of Commons, 2021, summary, paragraph one). The report essentially reached the same conclusion. The opening paragraph of the summary section concludes with the statement,

" It is vital that we work together as a country to address those issues (of underachievement) and we commit to investigating this in our future work on left-behind groups" (The House of Commons, 2021).

At one level the report re-assured me as a researcher as to the relevance of my study, however on a different level I was disappointed that the problem was still framed as an issue relating to participation rates within HE and the discourse within the document was one where working-class students were positioned as lacking in some way. In the summary section which identifies factors that might contribute to the reported issues, that students lack social capital and family experience of education were cited as factors.

I started this study as a concerned and confused practitioner and I have ended it still concerned but less confused. This study has enabled me to examine teaching practices through the eyes of working-class students and illuminate how it is institutional practices rather than the attributes and circumstances of the students which are contributing the persistent nature of class inequalities within education. In doing this I am hopeful that this study will lead to similar studies in this area to deepen our understanding of institutional issues and also that the findings of the study will influence current practice.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Ethical approval University of Sheffield

The University Of Sheffield.

Downloaded: 09/04/2021
Approved: 14/05/2018

Caroline Chaffer
Registration number: 150239671
School of Education
Programme: EdD

Dear Caroline

PROJECT TITLE: Employability: Understanding the pedagogy a Bernsteinian approach
APPLICATION: Reference Number 017351

On behalf of the University ethics reviewers who reviewed your project, I am pleased to inform you that on 14/05/2018 the above-named project was **approved** on ethics grounds, on the basis that you will adhere to the following documentation that you submitted for ethics review:

- University research ethics application form 017351 (form submission date: 11/05/2018); (expected project end date: 19/09/2019).
- Participant information sheet 1038480 version 3 (16/04/2018).
- Participant information sheet 1038479 version 4 (16/04/2018).
- Participant consent form 1038481 version 3 (16/04/2018).

If during the course of the project you need to deviate significantly from the above-approved documentation please inform me since written approval will be required.

Your responsibilities in delivering this research project are set out at the end of this letter.

Yours sincerely

David Hyatt
Ethics Administrator
School of Education

Please note the following responsibilities of the researcher in delivering the research project:

- The project must abide by the University's Research Ethics Policy: https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/rs/ethicsandintegrity/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure
- The project must abide by the University's Good Research & Innovation Practices Policy: https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.671066!/file/GRIPPolicy.pdf
- The researcher must inform their supervisor (in the case of a student) or Ethics Administrator (in the case of a member of staff) of any significant changes to the project or the approved documentation.
- The researcher must comply with the requirements of the law and relevant guidelines relating to security and confidentiality of personal data.
- The researcher is responsible for effectively managing the data collected both during and after the end of the project in line with best practice, and any relevant legislative, regulatory or contractual requirements.

Appendix 2 – Student Participant Questionnaire

Participant Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to identify potential participants for a study which is seeking to understand how students feel that the employability sessions which are run within the school have supported them in their career development. Research suggests that the social class is a factor in the way in which students learn, this study will specifically focus on students from working-class backgrounds. Where possible and where it is appropriate the study aims to identify ways in which teaching could be developed to better meet student needs.

The research is being undertaken by, Caroline Chaffer. You will know Caroline as a senior lecturer at The University of York, she also a student studying a Doctorate in Education at the University of Sheffield of which this study forms a part.

You are invited to complete the attached questionnaire which consists of a series of questions relating to yourself and your family, this will be used to identify participants who will be invited to take part in three interviews. These will each take approximately 60 minutes with Caroline, where you will be asked about your experience of a particular employability session that you have attended or your overall 1st year experience.

Completion of the questionnaire and your participation in this research study is voluntary. Your responses will be confidential and you are under no obligation to take part in an interview if you complete the questionnaire today.

All precautions will be taken to keep your information confidential. All electronic data will be password protected and your paper based survey will be stored in a locked room and discarded once the work is complete. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes all results when published will be anonymised.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Caroline Chaffer. Caroline's email address is cchaffer1@shefield.co.uk

Student Questionnaire

1. Name _____
2. Date of Birth _____
3. Home postcode _____
4. Are you a home or overseas student? Y/N
5. Do you intend to undertake a student placement year?
6. What is your Employment status? Part-time job during holidays/ Part-time job throughout the year/ No job/ Other (please explain) _____
7. Does one or more of your parents/step parents/guardians have a degree? Y/N
8. Please give the occupation of your parent, step parent or guardian who earns the most in your household. If he or she is retired could you please give their most recent occupation.
9. Did you attend a state or independent school for your secondary education?
10. Please indicate from the list below which social class you feels best describes yourself, your mother and your father.

1. Poor
2. Working Class
3. Middle Class
4. Upper class
5. Don't know

Contact email address: _____

Appendix 3 – Teacher Participant Information Sheet

Teacher : Participant Information Sheet

NB This information sheet will be given to colleagues that the researcher has a close professional relationship with

Classroom Observations

Project title: Employability. Understanding the pedagogy, a Bernsteinian analysis

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Project Aims

The aim of the project is to explore how the approaches taken to the teaching of employability initiatives during their 1st year of study has impacted their learning. Where possible and where it is appropriate the study aims to identify ways approaches to teaching could be adapted to meet student needs. The research is being undertaken by myself, Caroline Chaffer. You will know me as a senior lecturer at The University of York, I also a student studying a Doctorate in Education at the University of Sheffield of which this project forms a part.

The study will specifically focus on students from working-class backgrounds. Current research across the higher education (HE) sector indicates that students from working-class backgrounds may not always be in position take full advantage of the learning opportunities made available to them when compared to peers from middle-class backgrounds.

This study therefore aims to understand this issue in the context of the approaches to teaching adopted with the York Management School. More specifically the teaching of employability initiatives has been chosen as a focus of the study due to the importance of student being able to secure employment on graduation.

The study will take 18 months to complete.

The remainder of this information sheet consists of the answers to a number of questions that are aimed at providing you with the information that you will need in order to make an informed decision as to whether to participate. If you require any additional information then please do not hesitate to ask.

1. Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen as you lead a number of lectures/workshops where employability initiatives are taught.

2. Do I have to take part?

Taking part in the research is entirely voluntary; it is up to you to decide whether to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and you will be asked to give your written consent. Even after giving your consent you can still withdraw within 3 months of the observed session. You do not have to give a reason.

3. What will happen to me if I take part?

The employability sessions that you lead will be observed by myself. The purpose of my observations is to collect data in order to systematically analyse the way in which employability skills are taught using a theoretical model informed by the work of Basil Bernstein. I would be happy to talk you through the approach in much more detail if required but essentially Bernstein's model for pedagogic discourse provides a systematic way of modelling approaches to teaching at a level of detail that should identify areas which could be adapted to be more inclusive for all students.

It is not anticipated that the classroom observations will cause you any personal discomforts but please be assured that all information will be treated in strictest confidence.

The analysis is not a critique or evaluation of you as a teacher, when the results are analysed and reported then the approach to teaching will be reported objectively and factually. The purpose of the study is to identify ways in which teaching can be progressed and existing practise evolved.

You will be given the opportunity to review and provide comments on the write up and analysis of the results prior to the final submission of my thesis.

4. Will the classroom sessions be recorded?

With your permission I would like to use lecture capture to record the sessions, this is to ensure that my analysis is complete. The recordings will be stored on a network drive which will be only accessible to myself, once reviewed and my analysis complete they will be deleted. The analysis developed will be stored on the network drive, any hard copies will be stored in a secure filing cabinet. All files will be anonymised including the naming conventions of the files.

5. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

It is hoped that this work will benefit all academics at the Management School and beyond by providing insight into how we can adapt our teaching to ensure that working-class students are fully benefiting.

6. What if something goes wrong?

Whilst it is not anticipated that there will problems with the research process if you have concerns about the way in which you have been treated during the classroom observations or feel that you have suffered adverse effects as a result of the observations, then there is a complaints process which you can follow. In the first instance complaints about the research process itself should be made to myself, Caroline Chaffer (caroline.chaffer@york.ac.uk), the principal researcher but if you feel that you are unable to come to me or that your complaint has not been handled to your satisfaction then can escalate your issue to Dr Vassiliki Papatsiba (v.papatsiba@sheffield.ac.uk). Dr Papatsiba is my academic supervisor for the project. If you feel that your complaint has not been appropriately handled then you can contact my course leader at Sheffield University David Hyatt (D.Hyatt@sheffield.ac.uk) who will escalate the complaint through the appropriate channels.

If you feel that that you have suffered adverse affects as a result of the classroom observations then in first instance you should contact Sinead McCotter (Director of UG studies at the University of York), sinead.mccotter@york.ac.uk.

7. Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All the information that I collect about you during the classroom observation will be kept strictly confidential. Given the narrow focus of the study it will not be possible to keep your participation in the research confidential but all information will be anonymised.

8. What type of information will be sought from me and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research project's objectives?

The research project is looking at the way in which employability initiatives are taught and establishing whether they are taught in such a way which means that students from a working-class background are not able to take full advantage of the opportunities available to them.

Classroom observations of classes that you teach will be undertaken, the focus will be on the different processes underpinning the approaches to teaching for each of the student learning objectives relating to employability in the first year.

The information is relevant as the study aims to analyse whether the way in which employability is taught has an impact on whether students from a working-class background can take advantage on the opportunities available to them and identify where applicable opportunities for teaching interventions that will increase the accessibility of these opportunities.

9. What will happen to the results of the research project?

The research project will form part of my final Doctorate of Education thesis and will be publically available online. In addition the results may also be published in an academic journal.

10. Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This project has been ethically approved via the department of education's procedure at Sheffield University and has also been approved by the ethics committee at the University of York.

11. Contact for further information

If you wish to obtain further information about the project then please do not hesitate to contact me, my details are as follows:-

Caroline Chaffer, The York Management School, The University of York. YO10 5GD.

Caroline.Chaffer@york.ac.uk 01904 325044.

I would like to thank you in advance for agreeing to take part in the study I appreciate that your time is precious but I hope you can see that studies such as these are important for continual improvement.

Best wishes

Caroline

Appendix 4 – Student Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Student Interviews

Project title: Employability. Understanding the pedagogy, a Bernsteinian analysis

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Project Aims

The aim of the project is to explore how the approaches taken to the teaching of employability initiatives in your 1st year of study, have impacted your learning. Where possible and where it is appropriate the study aims to identify ways approaches to teaching could be adapted to meet student needs. The research is being undertaken by myself, Caroline Chaffer. You will know me as a senior lecturer at The University of York, I also a student studying a Doctorate in Education at the University of Sheffield of which this project forms a part.

The study will specifically focus on students from working-class backgrounds. Current research across the higher education (HE) sector indicates that students from working-class backgrounds may not always be in position take full advantage of the learning opportunities made available to them when compared to peers from middle-class backgrounds.

This study aims to explore this issue in the context of the approaches to teaching adopted with the York Management School. More specifically the teaching of employability initiatives has been chosen as a focus of the study due to the importance of student being able to secure employment on graduation.

The study will take 18 months to complete.

The remainder of this information sheet consists of the answers to a number of questions that are aimed at providing you with the information that you will need in order to make an informed decision as to whether to participate. If you require any additional information then please do not hesitate to ask, my contact details are included at the end of the sheet.

1. Why have I been chosen?

You are 1 of 6 students who have been chosen to take part in the study. You have been chosen as the information that you provided on the questionnaire that you have previously completed shows that your class background is working-class.

2. Do I have to take part?

Taking part in the research is entirely voluntary, it is up to you to decide whether to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and you will be asked to give your verbal consent and written consent. Even after giving your consent you can still withdraw within 3 months of any interview. You do not have to give a reason.

3. What will happen to me if I take part?

You will take part in three interviews, it is anticipated will each will take no more than 1 hour. You will be asked questions about the way you have developed your employability skills in your first year. You will be specifically asked about the way in which employability has been taught in your first year and how beneficial this has been to you. You will be asked both closed questions where clarification is needed and open questions which will give you the opportunity to explain your answers in depth.

It is not anticipated that the nature of the questions asked will cause you any personal discomforts but please be assured that all information will be treated in strictest confidence and the answers that you give will have no bearing on your current and future studies.

4. Will the interview be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?

With your permission the interview will be recorded, this is to ensure that your responses are fully captured. Your responses will be treated in the strictest confidence and the recording will be immediately uploaded onto a network drive which is only accessible by myself. Once uploaded the recording on the portable device will be immediately deleted.

The audio recording will be transcribed to enable your responses to be analysed, at this point the recording will be deleted. The transcriptions will be stored on the network drive, any hard copies will be stored in a secure filing cabinet. All files will be anonymised including the naming conventions of the files.

5. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for you in participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will benefit future cohorts of students on your course of study and across HE more generally.

6. What if something goes wrong?

Whilst it is not anticipated that there will problems with the research process if you have concerns about the way in which you have been treated in the interview or feel that you have suffered adverse effects as a result of the interview, then there is a complaints process which you can follow. In the first instance complaints about the research process itself should be made to myself, Caroline Chaffer (caroline.chaffer@york.ac.uk), the principal researcher but if you feel that you are unable to come to me or that your complaint has not been handled to your satisfaction then can escalate your issue to Dr. Vassiliki Papatsiba (v.papatsiba@sheffield.ac.uk). Dr. Papatsiba is my academic supervisor for the project. If you feel that your complaint has not been appropriately handled then you can contact my course leader at Sheffield University, David Hyatt (D.Hyatt@sheffield.ac.uk) who will escalate the complaint through the appropriate channels.

If you feel that that you have suffered adverse affects as a result of the interview then in first instance you should contact Sinead McCotter (Director of UG studies at the University of York), sinead.mccotter@york.ac.uk.

7. Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All the information that I collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and your participation in the research will be confidential. You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications. Direct quotes will be used in the write up of the results and your specific circumstances may be referred to, where this is the case, these will be anonymised.

Your participation in the study will have no bearing on your studies at the York Management School.

8. What type of information will be sought from me and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research project's objectives?

The research project is looking at the way in which the teaching of employability initiatives are taught and establishing whether they are taught in such a way which means that students from a working-class background are not able to take full advantage of the opportunities available to them. You will be interviewed with the objective of understanding your learning experience in your first year of study. The focus will be on the process of teaching, the teaching approaches used for each of the learning objectives relating to employability in your first year will be discussed with you and how well these supported your learning will be explored. You will be asked about previous learning experiences and your family background to explore how this has impacted your learning.

9. What will happen to the results of the research project?

The research project will form part of my final Doctorate of Education thesis and will be publically available online. In addition the results may also be published in an academic journal.

10. Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This project has been ethically approved via the department of education's procedures at Sheffield University.

11. Contact for further information

If you wish to obtain further information about the project then please do not hesitate to contact me, my details are as follows:-

Caroline Chaffer, The York Management School, The University of York. YO10 5GD.

Caroline.Chaffer@york.ac.uk 01904 325044.

I would like to thank you in advance for agreeing to take part in the study I appreciate that your time is precious but I hope you can see that studies such as these are important for continual improvement.

Best wishes

Caroline

Appendix 5 – Interview Schedule – 1st interview

Interview schedule 1st interview

1.0 Introductions.

Explain the purpose of the study, ask for the participant to sign a consent form and ask permission to record the interview.

2.0 Start by asking the students to talk specifically about the sessions they attended – Question.

You have just attended a session ' How you Make the Most of University – how to get ahead' the purpose of which was to give you insight into the opportunities on offer to put you in a the strongest position possible to get the job that you want when you leave.

Can you describe to me how you felt when you entered the session?

Prompt:

Were you looking forward to it? Why?

Were you nervous?

Had you given it any thought at all?

Did you feel comfortable with the other people in the room?

Can you describe to me how you felt when you left the session?

Prompt:

Did you feel any different to how you felt when you entered the session?

3.0 Could you describe to me as you left the session how helpful did you feel that it had been to you?

Prompt: Could you relate to topic discussed?

Prompt: Did you understand everything that was covered?

Prompt: What did you learn?

Prompt: What will you do as a result of attending?

4.0 Could you describe to me what was it about the session that made you feel that it had been of benefit to you?

5.0 Were there elements of the sessions that you did not find helpful?

Prompt: Why was this the case?

Prompt : Could you relate to the subject matter?

Prompt: Did you understand everything that was covered?

6.0 Exploring more specifically the way in which the sessions were designed.

If I can go back to the specific elements of the session. There were 4 things/areas covered in the session (these are taken from the lecture slides):-

1. Understand the support that is on offer from the Careers and Employability team

2. To have an understanding of what opportunities there are and how to find them

3. To have an understanding of how different aspects to university life can support and develop your employability

4. To have an understanding of what employers are looking for and the general recruitment cycle

If we go back to each one – (interviewer reminds the interviewee of the purpose of each element of the session).

For each of the elements a question will be asked.

1. Has the objective been achieved?

2. What will you do as a result of 'learning' this?

3. If yes, what was it that has made you want to take action

4. If no what is stopping you?

As these questions are being asked, where applicable the interviewer will refer specifically to the way in which these elements were delivered and give examples to understand whether this had an impact

7.0 If not covered already then

1. Have you considered what job you would like to do when you graduate?

2. What has influenced this decision? Parents/School?

8.0 Have you got anything else that you feel that you would like to discuss with respect to the session which we haven't covered?

Appendix 6 – Interview Schedule – 2nd and Final Interview

1.0 Introductions.

Welcome the student 'back'. Thank the students for their time, remind the students of the purpose study and that their participation is voluntary, that they can stop at any time during the interview and can withdraw from the study.

2.0 Start by asking the students to talk specifically about the sessions they have attended since we last met. (Draw on the schedule of lectures to remind the students of the sessions)

Can you describe to me how you felt when you entered the session?

Prompt:

Were you looking forward to it? Why?

Were you nervous?

Had you given it any thought at all?

Did you feel comfortable with the other people in the room?

Can you describe to me how you felt when you left the session?

Prompt:

Did you feel any different to how you felt when you entered the session?

3.0 Could you describe to me as you left the session how helpful did you feel that it had been to you?

Prompt: Could you relate to topic discussed?

Prompt: Did you understand everything that was covered?

Prompt: What did you learn?

Prompt: What will you do as a result of attending?

4.0 Could you describe to me what was it about the session that made you feel that it had been of benefit to you?

5.0 Were there elements of the sessions that you did not find helpful?

Prompt: Why was this the case?

Prompt : Could you relate to the subject matter?

Prompt: Did you understand everything that was covered?

6.0 Exploring more specifically the way in which the sessions were designed.

If we go back to each one – (interviewer reminds the interviewee of the purpose of each element of the session using the lecture slides)

For each of the elements a question will be asked.

6.1 Has the objective been achieved?

6.2 What will you do as a result of 'learning' this?

6.3 yes, what was it that has made you want to take action

6.4 If no what is stopping you?

As these questions are being asked, where applicable the interviewer will refer specifically to the way in which these elements were delivered and give examples to understand whether this had an impact

7.0 If not covered already then

1. What have you done since we last met to develop your employability outside of the sessions?

Prompt: Have you joined any societies? What was the reason for this?

Prompt: Have you attended any additional sessions/events?

8.0 Have you got anything else that you feel that you would like to discuss with respect to the session which we haven't covered?

In the final interview then explain to the students at the end of the session the next steps with respect to the analysis and write up stage. Remind the students that they can withdraw as long as it is within the next 3 months.

Appendix 7 – Research Instrument. Classification and Framing

	C++	C+	C-	C--
External Classification	Previous experiences are ignored or never referred to in discussions. Skills and knowledge are developed in isolation of life experiences and relationships beyond those experienced in HE. Discussions are very much forward looking, thinking about plans for the future.	Previous experiences and relationship outside of HE are referred to only if necessary for students to be able to follow the theme being discussed. Or if students ask a specific question.	Previous experiences and relationships outside of HE are referred to help students to be able to follow the theme being discussed.	Previous experiences are the starting point for discussions and exploring job opportunities. The link between previous experiences and how this relates to future choices and actions are made and explored.
Internal Classification	Activities and themes are not discussed in the context of other areas of study. Links are not made between what is being discussed and other modules studied or other opportunities that the university has to offer, for example extra-curricular activities.	Aspects of the curriculum and broader opportunities available to students are drawn upon when it is necessary for students to be able to understand what is being discussed.	Aspects of the curriculum and broader opportunities available to students are drawn upon throughout to support the discussion and enhance understanding.	Activities and themes are positioned in the context of student's holistic university experience. Opportunities available to students within their programme of study or made available through extra-curricular activities are the starting point for discussion.

Framing

To be explored for each of the knowledge areas

	F++	F+	F-	F--
Selection	Lecturer/teacher indicates the aspects to be studied in each session	Lecturer/teacher give the contents considered to be most important accepting student's suggestions	Lecturer/teacher make a list of contents that may be studied. Without referring to priorities and ask students to make a selection	Lecturer / teacher ask students to suggest contents to be studied
Sequencing	The timing of what is to be studied/covered when clearly articulated and follows a rigid order which is determined by the lecturer/teacher. Sessions are lecturer/teacher lead and what work is to be undertaken within and outside of the classroom is determined by the teacher with timescales clearly articulated. All teaching sessions are planned and communicated in advance, the timing and the sequencing of the sessions is determined by the teacher/lecturer.	The realisation of tasks follows an order determined by lecturer/teacher which students can alter minor aspects. Through questions students can influence the order of what is taken. The teacher periodically asks for feedback on which aspects of the content to cover next.	The realisation of tasks follows an order planned by students with lecturer/teacher guidance. Students are aware of the different topics/areas of the syllabus that need to be covered, students can determine the order of what is covered depending on their preferences, priorities and previous learning. The teacher works closely with the students to understand their needs in the context of the syllabus and	Students can determine when specific areas of the syllabus are studied and in what order. The realisation of tasks follows an order planed by students.

			adjusts the order as appropriate.	
Pacing	Sessions are delivered very much in a lecture style, the teacher does all/most of the talking. The time available to cover each area/topic is pre-determined and the schedule is 'stuck to' The format is teacher lead, involves relying a series of points. Students may be invited to ask questions but the format does not lend itself to questions. Students are not invited to engage in a discussion or personal reflection in the sessions.	Sessions are delivered as lectures but through either open questions and/or allowing students to work together there is some interaction on topics/areas determined by the teacher. The overall objectives of the sessions is determined by the teacher but the time spent on what is delivered could vary depending on student questions. The total time available for teaching is pre-determined but the time spent on each topic will vary depending on student questions.	Sessions are delivered through a mixture teacher led and student led discussions. The time needed in exploring issues/ideas is determined by students but the teacher/lecturer pushes them towards certain deadlines. Additional teaching sessions will not be run but students are encouraged where applicable to follow up queries informally with the teacher on a 1-1 basis.	Students lead the discussion, the time spent on each topic/subject area is determined by the students. No set time for covering topics. Additional sessions will be run/ additional time made available for students who require it. The sessions are predominantly discussion based.
Evaluation criteria	The teacher/lecturer provides detailed explanations of how success will be	The teacher/lecturer provides detailed explanations of	Outcomes are determined by the student at an individual level	Outcomes are determined by the student at an individual level.

	evaluated throughout the year. The teacher makes it clear what success looks like for any particular activity /task and students are clear when a task has been completed to a good standard. It is clearly articulated what students need to have achieved by the end of the year. Milestones throughout the year are also clearly explained and articulated. Explanations/discussions are very detailed in terms of what is expected of students and students are able to take notes on all aspects of the criteria. Students receive feedback where applicable so that they check progress.	how success will be evaluated at the end of the year. Milestones throughout the year are determined by the teacher. Students are generally aware on what success looks like for a particular task and clear when a task has been completed to a good standards. Explanations / discussions are detailed and illustrated, Students take notes only on the main aspects.	with input from the teacher. Where students would like to be at the end of the year is student lead but there is a requirement for students to obtain feedback on their plans from the teacher/lecturer. Students are made aware of what success looks like for a particular task, they can ask further questions and seek feedback as to whether the task has been completed to a good standard. Explanations / discussions are not very detailed or illustrated and students take some notes	Where students would like to be at the end of the year is student lead. Students are presented with opportunities to develop/explore their employability and it is at their discretion how far this is taken