

**Postgraduate International Students as Globalised
Lifelong Learners: An Exploratory Study.**

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Abstract:

This study provides a theoretical and methodological contribution to ongoing debates relating to the purpose and nature of international higher education. It does so by examining globalisation, lifelong learning and postgraduate international study through the voice of the individual student. The voice of the student is under represented in the literature and this research contributes by providing an in-depth, longitudinal study focusing on the student voice.

The experiences of international postgraduate students within one English university from 2009-2014 provide the research context. Their experience is explored through a number of integrated and interactive narrative based research methods: written narratives, interview narratives and narratives as conversations in action. There is a dearth of empirical research which integrates these methods. It is not an intention of this study to make generalisation claims or to claim universal applicability. However, the findings do add to knowledge relating to internationalisation, globalisation, lifelong learning and identity construction within higher education programmes.

The neoliberal economic view of motivation to become an international student is contested. This study suggests that motivation to take on a period of international study may be more complex and more heavily weighted towards passion, rather than towards an economic or employment based rationale. Participants do demonstrate many of the qualities identified for the international or globalised learner. However, international experience and international learning is largely brought about the agency of the international student, often in spite of, rather than as an outcome of their formal university programme of study. The study confirms that culture and identity are permeable and are influenced by the postgraduate student experience. However, nationality rather than being reduced is reinforced during the period of international study. The findings confirm that narrative research approaches such as those used in this research, can provide a rich learning experience for both participant and researcher. Such approaches may be of particular importance to individuals in transition stages, such as the international student.

Chapter One Introduction:

The research on which the study is based, is a five year (2009-2014) ethnographic study of the postgraduate international student experience, within a single higher education institution (HEI), which is referred to throughout the study as UnivX. UnivX is a large university located within the North West of England. Like similar organisations, its student population grew throughout the 1990s and peaked in the first decade of the 21st century. Its international student population is comparatively small and represents 4% of the undergraduate and 2% of the postgraduate student population. Notwithstanding the relatively small proportion of students, UnivX, like many similar HEIs in the UK, has sought to increase its number of international students throughout this period. As will be stressed throughout this study, no attempt will be made to make generalisations or to claim universal applicability through the exploration of experience within the case study setting. However, it is suggested that lessons from this exploration make contributions to knowledge in the areas of: curriculum design for international students, globalisation, internationalisation and lifelong learning, culture and identity formation and narrative approaches to research.

A key feature of this research study is an engagement with narrative. The study is concerned with the nature of narrative and interaction between participants in the narrative process. Careful consideration led to the decision to present this thesis in the first person voice, where appropriate, and to forefront the authorial voice. One particular feature of the PhD process is the space and time afforded to be able to stand back from one's own positions and prejudices and to take a longer and wider view than is possible in normal situations. I feel that this space and time has allowed me to make an informed contribution to the debate on the international student experience. It is a privileged position that colleagues dealing with their normal roles do not have. Being able to reflect, take time and engage with an issue from an informed and research base as Burke (2009, p.5) suggests "is distinctively the academic contribution". As the thesis is an account of the stories of all participants, including the researcher, it is not only legitimate but appropriate to present the narrative in this way. A feature of this study is the status of the researcher. I am not an early career researcher, (ECR), rather I am a member of the possibly underused group of late career researcher, (LCR). One of the differences between the two groups, is the breadth of experience which the LCR is able to bring to the research study. In this case, a wealth of experience and expertise in the issues addressed by

the research study of drama, institutionalisation, learning, internationalisation, narrative and the higher education curriculum. One of the aims of the study is to explore how narrative can capture data and capture learning through co-constructivist approaches to knowledge creation. It would be ironic and a missed opportunity if the learning experienced by the researcher was not shared with the reader/audience in the narration of this study. The focus is unquestionably an exploration of the student participant experience. This experience has centre stage. However, significant outcomes relating to the proposal, that lessons may be learned through narrative approaches, are further strengthened through an explicit account of the researcher's learning. One of the missing voices in this story is that of the teacher or higher education practice professional. The aim of foregrounding the voice of the insider researcher is a way of addressing this gap. I hope, therefore, that the outcomes of this academic research may help to both understand the international postgraduate experience and may also contribute to practice within the sector.

Therefore, in the spirit of narrative, I will now share the story of my research process. The story has been one of genuine pleasure and interest. As a professional who is normally involved with operational roles, the PhD process has allowed significant personal learning to take place.

My professional background relates to learning and professional learning development. I also have an operational and strategic role relating to international students in higher education. Not surprisingly, with my background, my original proposal and the impetus for this research were curriculum and pedagogical issues. Within the international student literature, a theme emerged in the 1990s and it maintains an influential position in pedagogical literature and practice. The proposition is, that international students are products of national cultures which make them passive, unwilling to engage, to contribute and to challenge the wisdom of their "professors". It is a seductive explanation for "quiet" students. An investigation of this proposition was the foundation of my original research question and proposal for this PhD. My personal experience and observations of large numbers of international postgraduate international students challenged the view of the "culturally conditioned" passive learner.

This research study began six years ago with my appointment to a role heading international and collaborative partnership development, in a large faculty, within an English University;

UnivX. I found myself in a new and interesting role. Having previously been responsible for a number of professionally based postgraduate programmes for home students. I was now in an environment where the programmes and pedagogical models were the same, but the responses to student engagement with their learning, seemed very different. In programmes for home students, when students did not engage, contribute or readily critique their teachers or authorities, a number of complex reasons would be provided, ranging from time, a demanding personal and professional life, irrelevance, lack of study skills, prioritisation, personality, shyness. In the international programmes the response for non-engagement and an apparent lack of willingness to be critical was different. It was attributed either to problems with English, or the effect of national culture. I had sympathy with the language explanation, whilst the cultural explanation required further thought. I felt that it warranted exploration, particularly from the student perspective. Like others before me (Trowler, 1996), for example, I found myself asking “what is going on here?” At the beginning of this study, in 2009, like Trowler in 1996, I was not yet informed or sophisticated enough to answer with Alversson’s (1993) confidence “apart from the obvious.”

I was therefore curious to investigate the legitimacy of approaches to international student engagement and to examine what the “obvious” might be. My questions and responses to this question became more sophisticated and challenging as the study progressed and focused more holistically on the international postgraduate student experience. This thesis presents my conclusions and where relevant, charts the personal learning journey I made in reaching them.

What began as a relatively specific wish to understand how international postgraduate students responded to a curriculum model demanding independence and criticality, gradually developed into a focus on the attitudes, values and motivation for their learning and the impact the experience has on identity formation and learning. An important starting point is to contextualise this discussion of curriculum and learning within an appropriate and explicit curriculum model. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore fully the intense and ongoing debate on the purpose and nature of the higher education curriculum. However, it is important to briefly highlight a significant work and the curriculum model on which this study is predicated. Barnett’s (2000) work on “Supercomplexity and the Curriculum” helps to set a curriculum and policy context for this study. In this work, Barnett is correct in his identification of the supercomplexity of the world, in which the higher

education sector operates and responds to. I suggest that the “supercomplexity” identified by Barnett fifteen years ago, has become even more pronounced, through the specific factors of globalisation and internationalisation examined in this study. For Barnett (2000, p.257)

Supercomplexity denotes a fragile world but it is a fragility brought on not merely by social and technological change, it is a fragility in the way in which we understand ourselves and the ways in which we feel secure about acting in the world. This triple set of challenges of understanding, of self-identity and of action arises out of a conjunction of contexts that are caught in the term a “global age” (Albrow, 1996) in which forms of life interact globally.

Barnett (2000) does not use the term transformation, or refer to the need for a transformative curriculum, but the triple set of challenges he outlines may be met in a curriculum and learning process which deals with transformation. The curriculum model on which this study is based is what is termed as the transformative curriculum model. One of the leading exponents of the model, Mezirow (2003, p.58), writing shortly after Barnett (2000), as cited by Clifford and Montgomery (2015, p.48), describes the transformative curriculum as: “Learning that transforms problematic frames of reference – sets of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning, perspectives, mindsets) to make them more inclusive, discriminatory, open, reflective and emotionally able to change.” This study later considers whether this type of transformative curriculum should be employed for internationalisation and specifically as a vehicle for developing the learning of international students in the process of personal transition, which many international postgraduate students experience. Freire (1998) is also considered in relation to lifelong learning, in this study. In considering transformative curriculum, it is worth highlighting Freire’s (1998) view, that transformative learning empowers individuals, “to become agents of change in their own lives and in the transformation of society” (Clifford and Montgomery, 2015, p.48.). The transformative curriculum model and other linked pedagogical approaches, such as those suggested by the concept of “glocalization” are examined, to consider how current higher education practice for international students, does or could address the triple set of challenges identified by Barnett (2000) of understanding, self-identity and action.

I chose to focus my research on motivation to learn, experience and agency, as these seem to be significant factors and provide a critical site for study of fundamental questions about the nature and purpose of postgraduate international learning.

After an intense literature review in year one of the study, I began to realise that conventional higher education curriculum practice, relating to international students, national cultures and learning, may be founded largely on uncritical, un-theorised almost “essentialist” and neo-liberal models of culture and learning. Much of the understanding and practice seemed to be founded on top-down, rationalist and essentialist models of the curriculum, which all students had to fit. To put this simplistically, the dominant curriculum model, even with its rhetoric of independence, inclusion and criticality, in practice demanded an increasingly centralised obedience to content and process from all students. For this study, one of the key points being, that if an international student didn’t fit this model, then it was either their personal problem, or the result of cultural dissonance. These conclusions failed to take into account, or acknowledge the responses and type of learning I perceived in my professional practice. I wanted to take the opportunity provided by this study, to assess critically the tensions between the dominant curriculum models and the experience and the learning of international postgraduate students.

By the second year of the study I had focused on the research question:

Research Question:

Are international postgraduate students globalised, lifelong learners?

I had also identified the research objectives which form the structure of this thesis:

Research Objective 1: To explore why individuals choose to become postgraduate international students. The first objective interrogates the motivation for taking part in an experience which may demand personal change, commitment and expense.

Research Objective 2: To examine the nature of globalised lifelong learning within the Higher Education sector. The second objective is designed to examine the macro context of globalisation and lifelong learning within the higher education setting.

Research Objective 3: To study the significance of culture, cultural experiences and nationality on identity and learning? The third objective examines relationships between models of culture, particularly essentialist national cultural models and approaches to identity formation and learning.

Research Objective 4: To consider whether narrative research approaches are able to both capture and develop experience and learning? The final objective considers whether a narrative based research approach is capable of not only capturing experience but also of developing experience and learning.

The implicit or tacit questions underpinning the research questions and the research objectives are:

TQ1: What effect does national culture have on learning?

TQ2: Are international postgraduate students “entrepreneurs” of the self?

TQ3: Do higher education pedagogical models reinforce or challenge dominant political models?

TQ4: Are international postgraduate students, agents or victims of learning?

TQ5: Do higher education programmes meet the expectations of postgraduate international students?

The tacit questions capture the multi layered nature of the experience under study and confirms the appropriateness of the multi-layered analytical approach adopted.

These questions and objectives led to a series of subsidiary aims which are focused on an attempt to complete a substantive portrait of the international postgraduate student experience that had been omitted from previous studies.

SA1: To investigate what individuals did outside their formal learning programme.

SA2: To explore the individual’s view of the significance of national culture.

SA3: To give attention to a specific university which had an explicit and self-proclaimed unique selling point (USP) of developing employability in its students. Throughout the period of this research it was actively engaged in creating a "ground-breaking" industry/employer led approach to integrating higher education learning with the world of work. The approach was not simply rhetorical or strategic but was operationalised through a policy of mapping all undergraduate modules against world of work skills and insisting on students and teaching staff engaging with this process.

Addressing these subsidiary aims reinforces the need for the study and the legitimacy of the main research questions.

This research study, therefore, is concerned with the examination of the experience of international postgraduate students within one higher education institution (HEI) in England. The study examines the reasons for students wishing to join an English university and their academic and personal experiences. In this process, education policy and practice is examined through a critical response to dominant curriculum models, to criticality and to the role of culture and narrative in learning and identity formation. The study examines how the dominant curriculum models in English higher education affect international postgraduate learners. In this analysis, curriculum models are located and examined within neoliberal approaches to education and learning and related to concepts of globalisation and lifelong learning. The study examines and evaluates current curriculum approaches to postgraduate, lifelong learning and considers the individual as agent of their own learning.

Even though there is no attempt made to generalise from the case study context UnivX is a strong research site for this study. It is a "New", post 1992 university which has grown from its previous polytechnic status, to becoming one of the largest UK universities and one which has readily adopted "new" approaches to curriculum, such as the credit accumulation and transfer scheme (CATS), modularisation, accreditation of prior learning and /or experience (APEL) and a commitment to work related learning. It has witnessed a rapid expansion in student numbers. At the beginning of this study, 2009, it had a mission to ensure employability as an intrinsic outcome of higher education learning. This was until November 2012, UnivX stated unique selling point. In many ways UnivX is an example of a higher education institution demonstrating many of the features of the neoliberal model of higher education in practice. It is dynamic and has demonstrated a flexible response to meeting the

needs of both the student and the perceived needs of employers. It has readily responded to government and sector led curriculum initiatives. As such, its experience may shed light on similar institutions dealing with the issues under study.

This introductory chapter now provides an account of what the research study is concerned with, an overview of why the issues under study are important and identifies how the study is carried out and some of the more important changes which have happened in English higher education, in relation to the international student experience. It concentrates on features most relevant to this research study, including the financial attractiveness of international students, the development of internationalisation, pedagogical models and cultural dissonance, students as owners and consumers of learning, globalization and lifelong learning. It goes on to provide a rationale for the study and develops the aims and objectives outlined above. The introductory chapter also provides an outline of the research methodology and the methods used. It also presents a conceptual model to capture the research approach adopted. Methodology and methods will be discussed fully in Chapter Three, before the findings are presented in Chapter Four and discussed in Chapter Five.

The political and pedagogical context of the study is fascinating and dynamic. Significant changes have taken place across the sector, many of which have been witnessed within the specific case study context of UnivX throughout the six year period of this study, culminating in UnivX's new internationalisation strategy in 2013. Change is one constant feature of approaches to international students within English higher education. Therefore, change will be highlighted throughout this chapter. However, this chapter will also highlight the possible tensions between the rhetoric of change and the reality of the immutable factors which have influenced the experience of postgraduate students both local and international in English higher education practice over the last twenty years. One consistent factor is the economic attractiveness of international student fees to English universities and consequent concern to recruit and retain high numbers of international students.

The economic importance of international student fees to UK higher must be recognised and analysed in relation to a discussion of the nature of the UK postgraduate international student experience. At the start of this research study in 2008-2009, record numbers of international students attended UK universities. With minor blips, recruitment of international students to UK universities has increased throughout the period of this research study. When the

recruitment figures are translated into income, it is legitimate to suggest that sectors of higher education are increasingly dependent on effective international recruitment. For example, at the mid-point of this study in 2010/11 fees paid by students from outside the European Union accounted for £2.9 billion of the £8.3 billion total income of the sector. This study considers whether financial requirement drives English higher education's concern with the recruitment and experience of postgraduate international students. An appropriate starting point for this consideration is an examination of changes in policy and practice relating to international students and internationalisation. These points are highlighted in the introductory chapter and considered in detail throughout the thesis.

The period (2009-2015) of this study has witnessed an increasing number of challenges to the purpose and nature of international higher education. The recent Higher Education Academy (HEA) publication, *Internationalising Higher Education Framework* (July 2014), captures many of the changes and policy directions suggested by research during this period. Its stated outcome, for internationalising higher education, is that of "preparing graduates to live and contribute responsibly to a globally interconnected society." Its rationale for this focus is the recognition that, "Internationalisation is of growing importance to higher education (HE) within the United Kingdom (UK) and across the world, driven by political, economic, educational and technological advances". To respond effectively to this challenge the Higher Education Academy's proposal (2014) is that current practice must change, "to promote a high quality, equitable and global learning experience for *all students* (bold italics author's emphasis) studying UK programmes irrespective of their geographical location and background". The educational issues highlighted in this statement in 2014 were the stimulus for this research study in 2009. Cultural dissonance was the starting point.

One theme in the research on the international student experience is that of the tension between issues of cultural dissonance and language proficiency (Brown, 2007, Tran, 2008). Concern with language proficiency, learning behaviour and cultural explanations for behaviour was one of the primary motivations for this research. Research in the 1990s and early 21st century suggested that language aspects are the major difficulties facing international students in engaging with their disciplines (Ryan and Carroll, 2005). However, another view developed to contradict this view. Sawir's (2005) work, as cited by Tran, (2008) is a good example of this perspective. He rejects the significance of second language acquisition and proposes that the challenges international postgraduate students face may be

more complex, variable and go beyond the aspects of second language proficiency. Research, since the early stage of growth of international students numbers (Mills, 1997), had identified a range of problems faced by international students alongside language proficiency issues. In this research non-language proficiency issues are summarised as; a clash of learning styles, a lack of willingness to actively participate in learning, plagiarism, collusion and difficulties with collective and independent learning processes. Many of these problems are related explicitly to a clash of national cultures which has led to a view of South-East Asian and Chinese students in particular, as being passive, non-critical students who expect to be provided with the answers from their teachers. A number of researchers (Sawir, 2005, Bailey, 2007) writing at the beginning of this study, explain these problems, faced by international students, as a product of cultural dissonance and suggest that these cultural clashes have a major impact on the international student experience. Their arguments provide an interesting, “intellectually” attractive answer for western higher education staff struggling to engage international students and in many cases large numbers of international students within the classroom or lecture theatre. The alacrity with which colleagues teaching international students seemed to be adopting this stereotype rationale for “difficult” behaviour with their students concerned me in 2008-2009 and thus became the original stimulus for this research.

Tran (2008) highlighted the fact that little work had been carried out on individual international student strategies, personal aims, expectations and personal learning support systems. Doherty and Singh (2005) proposed, over nine years ago, that the student voice was largely missing. Since then and throughout the timeframe of this study, an increasing amount of work has been completed on the student experience and the student perspective (Killick, D. 2012, Jones and Killick, 2013). What international students say about their experiences and the strategies they use to succeed is beginning to appear. This research study, with its focus on capturing and considering the student experience from the student voice, will add to this picture.

As indicated above, the omission of the international student voice and a concern with stereotypes adopted from views of culture, are the major drivers of this research study. This work aims to make a contribution to the growing work on the student experience, as narrated by individual students, as a lived experience through narrative. In order to do this, it is necessary to recognise the multiple contexts in which this story will be told.

Here, I briefly focus on three main contexts relevant to the student experience: neoliberal approaches to education and learning, globalisation and lifelong learning. These areas are developed in the literature review and interrogated through the primary research processes.

While there may be increasing differences between education policy and practice across the world, there are also a number of significant commonalities. Commonalities of significance to this study are the notions of globalisation, lifelong learning and practices based on the dominance of the belief that education is an intrinsic element of human capital development.

In the western world, the dominance of neoliberal economic policy and practice, as the theoretical foundation for practice within sectors such as education, continues to dominate. As Bottery (2007) points out, manifestations of this approach are evident in the dominance of capitalist economic motivations for change, rhetorical decentralization of control with increased centralization of control in practice and standardization of curriculum content and practice within education. What Bottery (2007) is describing here is a manifestation of the outcomes of adopting the neoliberal paradigm.

In the neoliberal model, the individual is reconfigured explicitly and inevitably as a functional part of capitalism. The individual is viewed as, “an active agent”, or “*homo economicus*”, engaged with life primarily as an economic activity, with the individual seen as an entrepreneur of “the self”. This is an interesting and significant descriptor, which will be returned to within an analysis of the international postgraduate students’ motivation to study.

Harvey (2007), also writing at the beginning of this study and other critics of neoliberalism make points of significance to this university based case study. They suggest that once neoliberal goals and priorities become embedded in cultures and ways of thinking, even in institutions that don’t regard themselves as neoliberal, such as universities in general and UnivX in this case, they will nevertheless engage in practices that mime, extend and embed the principles of neoliberalism in practice. In other words, it is important to examine whether a discourse which personifies the market as an ethical entity and director of action, privatization, competition, marketing, and marketing discourse and a ready acceptance of the current political model are the principles and practices that can be found in the 21st century university setting. It is interesting to examine whether what Giroux (2008), for example, argues is evident within the case study setting of this study that, “The historical legacy of the university conceived as a “crucial public sphere” has given way to a university that now

narrates itself in terms that are now more instrumental, commercial and practical.” (Giroux 2008, p.46). In the case of UnivX the most recent strategic plan (2012), demonstrates a shift in direction, away from this position in its new ambition to be recognised as a “modern civic university.” Civic responsibility and internationalisation of the student experience for ***all students*** (bold italics author’s emphasis) were later set as the university international strategy in 2013. Unfortunately, it is outside the scope and timeframe of this study to assess whether the shift in policy rhetoric will lead to a real shift in practice. Nevertheless, it remains important to assess whether neoliberal approaches to pedagogy and learning have impacted on the experience of the specific international postgraduate student experience under study. A recent (January 2014) British Council led seminar on Higher Education and Employability, within which UnivX made a key-note address, suggests that the role of higher education as a significant player in human capital development may continue to dominate. The Global Education dialogue was entitled: “Higher Education and Employability- a New Paradigm, a New Challenge: South Asia and UK Perspectives”. The marketing discourse for the event indicates the seriousness and centrality with which employability and skills are viewed, not only as an element of higher education, but also as one of its “quality kite marks”. The following extract is included as it makes explicit the link between higher education and human capital development.

To achieve global success every nation has to find ways to make strategic use of its higher education sector to build and develop workforce capability. Advanced skills and employability will be essential to mobility and growth. Employability is now a key benchmark of successful Higher Education Institutions and a component of international league tables.

The South Asia series is dedicated to understanding the ways and means by which higher education can effectively incorporate the development of skills that enhance graduates’ employability into their activities to serve national interests in the countries of South Asia and in the UK. The forum will share new, specifically commissioned research findings and examples of innovation and effective practice. It will also provide delegates from industry, government and higher education with an opportunity to critically and creatively engage with one another as partners.

(British Council, 2014)

It could be argued, that even though towards the end of this study's time frame 2013 and 2014, there are examples of shifts in direction through civic engagement for example, the neoliberal discourse has been significantly reinforced by political interventions such as the withdrawal of state funding from English public universities. In 2009-2010 English universities witnessed what amounted to an almost total withdrawal of public funding for higher education. The discourse of the student as, "consumer and customer", which may have reached its peak in the 1990s, may now be back with a bang. Following the 2011 fee changes, a discourse developed within the English higher education sector, and was witnessed within UnivX, which refers to students as "The £9,000 student". The term refers to the annual fee required from individual undergraduate students. It is the speed with which the term has become part of formal discourse, the apparent ready acceptance of the terminology, the implied change in status and consumer/customer behaviour of the student, which may be of particular significance. For this study, it may also be interesting to note that a similar discourse did not appear relating to the £12,000 international student through 1996-2011. However, it is possible to find references to international MBA students as the university "cash-cow" (Currie, 2007) and international students in general, as indicated earlier in this introduction, as significant providers for third stream income.

Like neoliberalism, globalisation has developed a much used and much contested profile within higher education. The period of this study has witnessed an increasing engagement with the discourse of globalisation and internationalization, (Caruana, 2014, Leask, 2013, Whitsed and Green 2014).

Numerous definitions of globalisation exist, ranging from the simple yet influential early definition provided by Giddens (1990, p.64.) "Globalization can thus be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away." or, the attractively simple definition of Albrow and King (1990, p. 8.), "All those processes by which the peoples of the world are incorporated into a single world society." Or a more critical definition provided by Khor (1995, p.15.) echoing Marx's *Das Kapital*, "Globalization is what we in the Third World have for several centuries called colonization." A summary of more contemporary 21st century definitions discussed in the literature review demonstrates a similar mix of contradictions. Although it is tempting to continue to engage with the definitional debate it is important for this introduction, to relate the globalisation discussion

to the specific context of Higher Education and the international student experience. In this context Deem's comment in 2001 is still helpful; "Globalisation is a fashionable theoretical stance but care needs to be taken in applying it to education, not least because social theorists cannot agree on definitions and implications." (Deem, 2001, p.7). This study explores whether she may still be correct in 2015. Nevertheless, even with its lack of clarity and definition, globalisation and related concepts such as "internationalization" and "global engagement" have a growing profile and ready acceptance within discourse and practice in higher education. Globalisation is a concept of particular significance to the international postgraduate experience. Whether postgraduate international students represent models or examples of globalisation is a major question for this research study.

Lifelong learning has also enjoyed a prominent position in this research study's time frame, 2009-2105. At the beginning of the 21st century, lifelong learning and its concomitant partner "The Learning Society" (Jarvis, 2007), achieved a remarkable place, not only as an approach to learning, but as a solution if not the ultimate solution to a number of profound societal problems. "Third-way" politicians in the UK, such as Blair, were advocates and users of ideas emanating from the concept of the learning society. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to investigate the importance of lifelong learning as a vehicle for social change and the common good. However, it is important to consider the links between globalisation, lifelong learning and individual international student learning, as part of the investigation into the research questions posed by this thesis.

In terms of solutions, lifelong learning is seen not only as a manifestation of the globalisation process, but also as the most important strategy to cope with the globalisation process itself. One version of globalisation is that of a world being brought closer together by the apparent continuous development of communication technology, a world of global simultaneity and a market operating in real time for the first time Kristensson Uggla (2008). In this new globalised world flexibility, adaptability and the ability to continually respond to change is seen as the prerequisite for success at a social and individual level. The decision to become an international student may demonstrate many of the features of this new lifelong learner: flexibility, adaptability, willingness to change, travel, learn new languages and engage with new cultures, to be in transition and to explicitly and deliberately engage with the globalisation narrative as globalized citizens Kristensson Uggla (2008). Whether international

postgraduate students exemplify this model in practice is a major question explored throughout this study.

A concern with the postgraduate student experience within the context of neoliberalism, globalisation and lifelong learning therefore, led to the focus and approach adopted for this research study as captured in the title:

Title: Postgraduate International Students as Globalised, Lifelong Learners: An Exploratory Study.

And to the research objectives, subsidiary aims and tacit questions underpinning the study as outlined earlier in this introduction.

The philosophical underpinnings of this research study are located within research approaches which attempt to capture and understand the lives of participants as they are lived. Stake's (1995) view is helpful here. His comment captures the aim, approach and fundamental view of research adopted as appropriate for this study. "The function of research is not necessarily to map and conquer the world, but to sophisticate our beholding of it" (Stake 1995). Stake not only makes a powerful point about the possible outcomes of research but also highlights the potential of choice for the researcher. I have made a conscious and deliberate decision to choose a research approach based within a phenomenological and constructivist approach to knowledge creation. I argue in Chapter Three, that this is the correct approach to adopt for a study with the aim of exploring individual experience, in order to shed further light on the phenomena under study, rather than on solving a problem. I also focus on ethnography and provide an explanation for the decision to adopt this approach and suggest that adopting an insider research approach, "Being native, rather than going native." Anderson and Kerr (1999) add to the outcomes of a research study of this kind. A rationale for the ontological, methodological approach and methods is discussed fully in Chapter Three. Questions of validity and reliability must also be addressed explicitly. These concepts have caused ongoing debate in relation to qualitative research generally and in particular, to ethnographic, insider case study research of this kind. Some argue for the use of the same criteria to establish reliability and validity, as in quantitative research, Morse et al 2002. Others such as Rolfe (2006) reject predetermined criteria for this kind of research. This study adopts an intermediate position. The adopted approach is based on the principle that the different epistemological assumptions underpinning qualitative research, in this case a

constructivist approach to knowledge, require different quality criteria to those of reliability and validity accepted in quantitative approaches. Figure 1 captures the approach adopted in this study.

Figure 1: Criteria for quality in quantitative and qualitative research

Quantitative Research Criteria of Quality	<i>Qualitative Research Criteria of Quality</i>	Descriptor
Objectivity or Neutrality	<i>Confirmability</i>	The extent to which the findings are the product of the inquiry
Reliability	<i>Dependability Consistency/Auditability</i>	The extent to which the study could be repeated and variations understood
Internal Validity	<i>Credibility Truth/Value</i>	The degree to which the findings can be trusted or believed by the participants
External Validity	<i>Transferability Applicability/Fittingness</i>	The extent to which the findings can be applied in other contexts or with other participants.
Outcome Validity	<i>Analytical or Theoretical Generalizations</i>	The extent to which the outcome of the process rather than solving a problem forces the researcher to recognise the need for further questioning and research as an outcome of the study

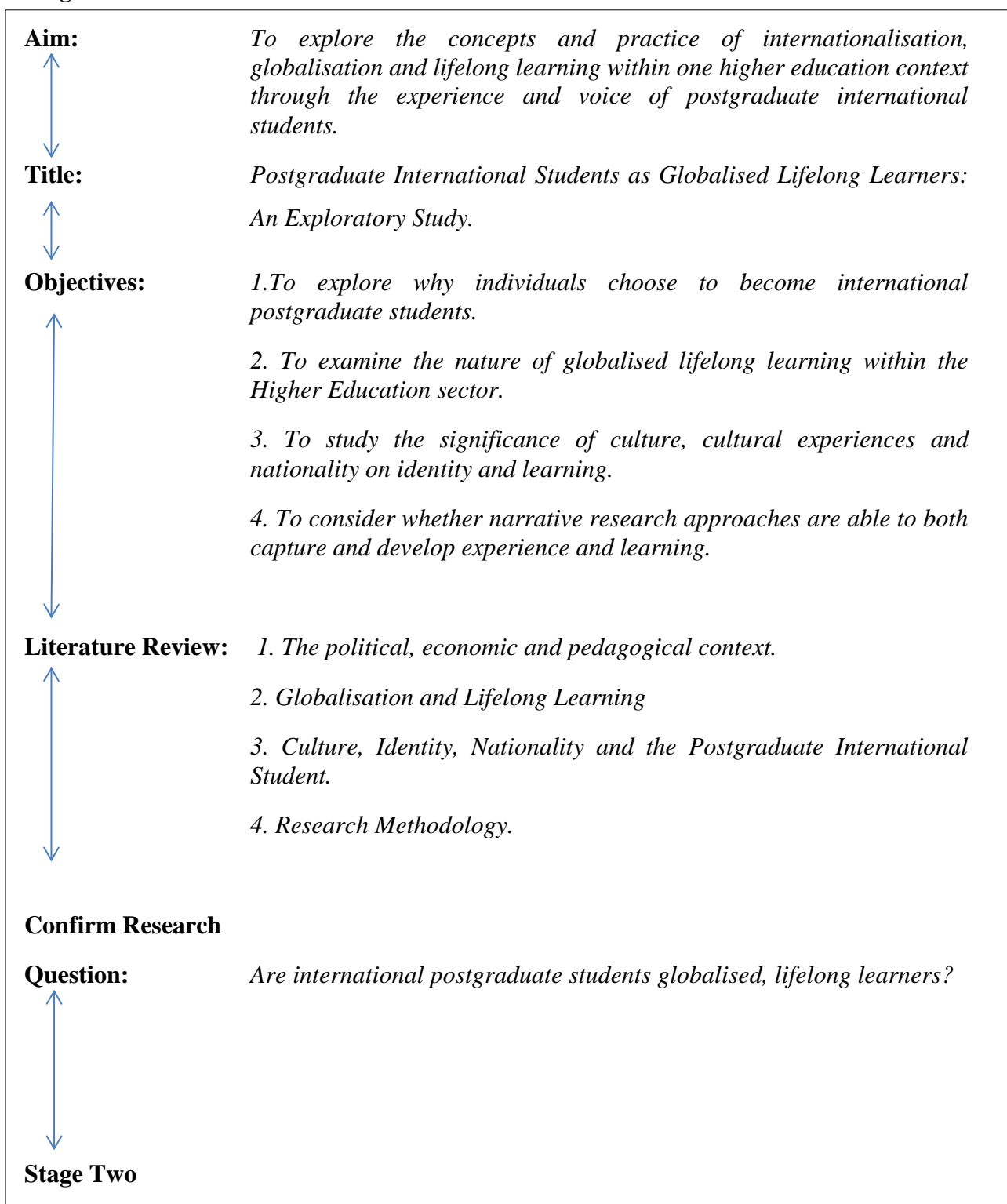
Adapted from: Guba and Lincoln, 1981, Lincoln and Guba, 1985: Erlandson, 1993, Nelson, 2008: Petty et al 2012

Note: ***Bold Italics*** indicate the approach adopted in this study.

The aim of this introductory section is to briefly highlight the methodology and methods adopted. At this introductory point it is useful to capture and illustrate the research process as a staged research map. The detail underpinning the map is discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

Figure 2: The Research Map

Stage One:



Stage Two:

Methodology:

Qualitative/Constructivist:

Focus on narrative capture and development

Dialogic

Paradigm:

Knowledge Problematics:

Inter-subjectivism – Subjectivism:

Insider-Research- Close-up – Sense-Making- Reflexivity

Ethnography – “Being Native Rather than Going Native”

Data Collection:

Literature Review

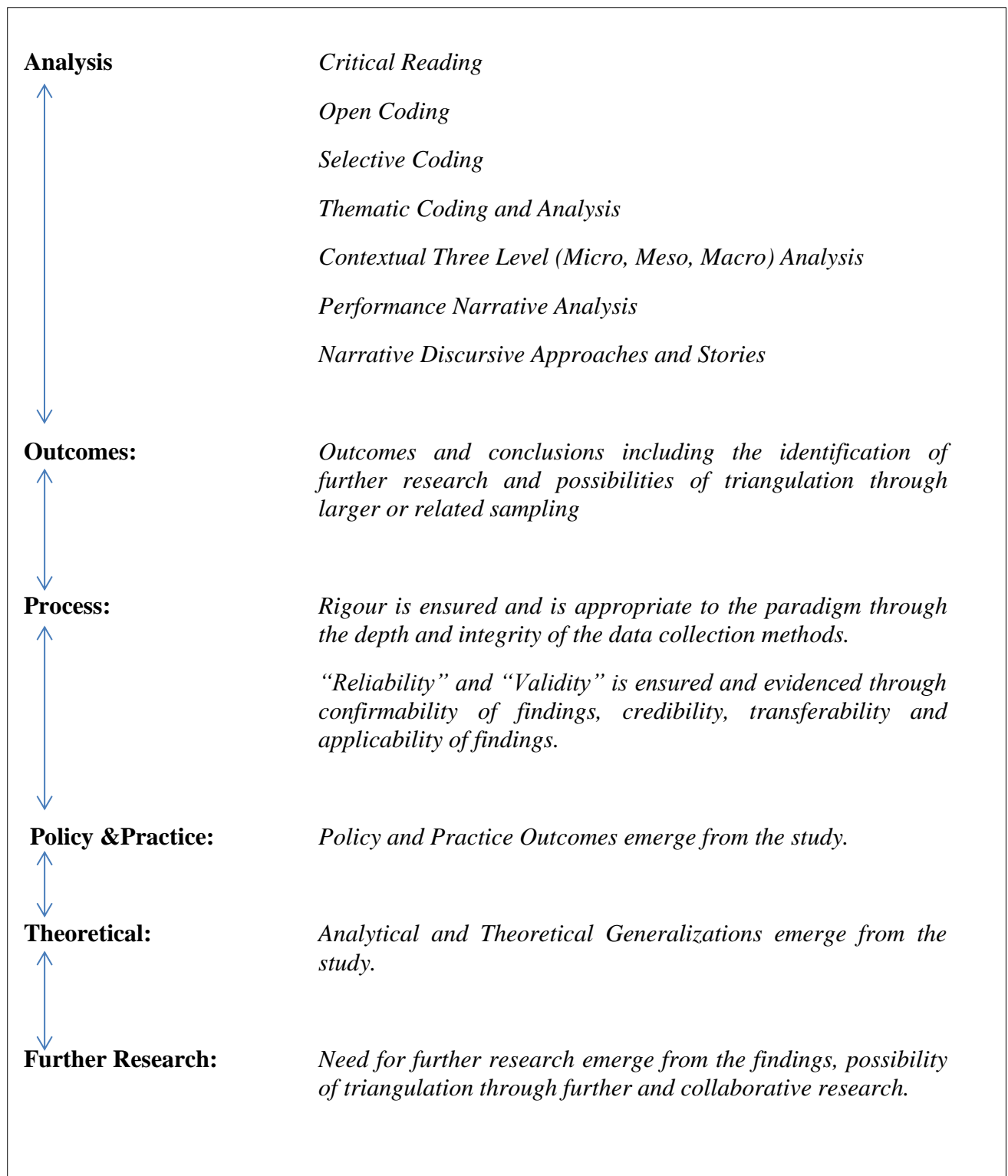
Written narrative accounts

Interviews

Narratives as conversations

Stage Three:

Stage Three:



A constant feature of my professional career has been my interest in narrative. My earlier interest and background is in the arts. Narrative, storytelling and the dynamic between actor, audience and discourse has been an interest of mine and was reignited when completing this research. Having decided that a constructionist phenomenological approach was appropriate and having revisited the qualitative research paradigm, I was intrigued by the efforts to objectify and standardise accounts which may not only be intrinsically subjective but valuable because of their subjectivity. These concerns confirmed the legitimacy of my interest in exploring narrative within research. Narrative appears to be particularly appropriate for this piece of “close-up” insider-researcher case study, where the researcher is an intrinsic part of the research (Trowler, 2012). This is particularly so within the constructivist paradigm, which suggests that the meaning of the issue or phenomenon under study is co-constructed between the researcher and the researched (Crotty, 1998). This is a fundamental element of the notion of narrative as conversations in action (Georgeakopoulou, 2006), which is one of the methods used to capture and construct data and meaning. This study concurs with the view that these approaches are well-suited to research of this kind; that is insider research within a context like higher education (Trowler, 2011)

There is a well-established and developing interest in the use of narrative in research and within higher education. Smith and Sparkes (2008, p.17) effectively summarise the value and nature of narrative inquiry in the following comment: “Like stories themselves, narrative inquiry supports and calls for multiple perspectives. It might therefore best be considered an umbrella term for a mosaic of research efforts, with varied principles, philosophical assumptions, theoretical musings, methods and/or empirical groundings all revolving around an interest in narrative as a distinctive form of discourse.” The same researchers Smith and Sparkes (2008) go on to make a point of significance to this research. They suggest that increasingly narrative inquiry has, “Moreover come to be premised not as a transparent window to an antecedent reality or an interior based phenomenon, but as a *form of social action*.” (bold italics author’s emphasis), (Atkinson and Delamont, 2006 cited in Smith and Sparkes, 2008, P.17)

There is also a well-established and developing interest in the use of biography and narrative in the specific area of enabling students to make sense of their learning within higher education, (Wengraf, 2001, Taylor and Littleton, 2006, Williams, R., Karousou, Gumtau, S., Howell-Richardson., 2008). The narrative based research in this thesis, adds to the umbrella

of narrative inquiry, by interrogating the social action of being a postgraduate international student through capturing the socially constructed narrative accounts of that experience. One of the consistent features of commentary on narrative (Goffman, 1981, Reissman 2008) is the agreement that meanings of narratives are co-constructed through the teller and his/her audience. Stories are always located in time and place and told in a specific time and place. I will propose in Chapter Three that rather than this process of context specificity, creativity and subjectivity being problematic and something to avoid for the researcher, it is legitimate and inevitable in research of this kind.

In this case, as with much similar ethnographic insider research, the researcher must have an extended engagement with the participants, their experiences and the specific research context. My own background, organisational role and understanding of the social and pedagogical context and the complex dynamics of being a postgraduate international student in UnivX is a particular strength in identifying meanings in the narratives. Polkinghorne's (2007, p.483) work on narrative validity is helpful here. His proposal that "one cannot transcend one's own historical and situated embeddedness" seems particularly true for both the researcher and subjects in this study and his conclusion that "thus textual interpretations are always perspectival" (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 483) is evidenced throughout this study. This view further confirms the appropriateness of foregrounding the authorial voice in this study.

The research study was carried out in three phases. Phase one being the capturing of written narratives, phase two semi-structured interviews and phase three a series of narrative conversations. The written narratives were designed to allow individuals to provide a structured and coherent account of their rationale for becoming a postgraduate international student and a reflective account of their time on their programme. The interviews were designed to build on the written accounts through the use of a very different interactive research process. The keenness with which many participants engaged with the process is a feature of this research and became one of the reasons to develop a narrative/conversation approach in part three of the research process. Comments such as, "*this has been the most English I have spoken since I have been here*", or "*thank you for listening to me and taking me seriously, you are very kind*", or "*It is so important to have someone to talk to*", or "*I have never thought about that till I said it*", confirmed the need for the research. The primary research was carried out over a period of three years. This extended time frame provided

sufficient time to ensure rigour with data collection and reflection. Pilot studies were completed for both the semi-structured interviews and consequent narrative conversations.

The thesis adopts a conventional structure. It is organised through five chapters. Chapter One introduces the study, its purpose, context, research methodology and methods used. Chapter Two, the literature review, sets the political and pedagogical context of the study. It does so by initially exploring the economic attractiveness of the international student to the higher education sector. This is developed through an examination of the political underpinnings of the dominant pedagogical models and the demands such an approach to learning makes on international students. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the attraction of postgraduate students to English higher education and the tension between neoliberal models of learning and models of students as rational, informed consumers of learning. The aim of the chapter is to highlight the neoliberal basis of curriculum and pedagogical models used in English higher education and the possible tensions this can create for postgraduate international students. This chapter sets the context for the discussion of how higher education is responding to globalisation and lifelong learning. Two of the main concepts addressed in the study; globalisation and a response to globalisation in the form of lifelong learning are addressed through the literature review. This chapter demonstrates the difficulties of arriving at convincing definitions of both concepts, whilst suggesting that practice within higher education is based on quite specific views both of what globalisation is and how learning should be developed as a response to the apparent globalisation agenda. The literature review concludes with an examination of the linked concepts of culture, nationality and identity formation. Outcomes of this analysis suggest that the postgraduate international student experience is a significant event for individuals. For many, it represents a transition, rupture or change or at least is a significant stage to further experience. The literature suggests that this experience is one where engagement with cultures can have a major impact on identity formation and that the identity of being an international student, while transient, may be of particular significance to the individual. Theories of culture and identity formation are explored in this chapter and lead to the final statement of the necessity and relevance of the research question implied in the title of the thesis. The explicit research question implied in the title is, “an exploration of postgraduate international students as examples of the globalised lifelong learner?” with the implicit research question being, “If so, what example or examples do they represent?”

Chapter Three outlines the details of the primary research study. The research design, methodology and methods are discussed. The study adopts a qualitative, phenomenological, hermeneutic, constructivist approach. A detailed discussion and rationale is provided for this position. The chapter also considers the study as a piece of ethnographic research, highlighting the case study “close-up” nature of the research and the advantages and disadvantages of insider research. This leads to a discussion of the major research approach of narrative capture and suggests that this is not only suitable for this study but may also be a valuable learning tool for all learners and teachers in higher education. Data analysis techniques are discussed here as are the ethical issues arising from this study, especially those raised by the insider relationships within the research site. A summary of how theory is used throughout the study is provided in this chapter.

The data and findings of the study are outlined in Chapter Four. The outcomes from the research encounters are presented and discussed.

Chapter Five discusses the main findings, in relation to making sense of the international postgraduate student experience. The issues raised by the research objectives are synthesised through a discussion of what this study suggests, in relation to the political and pedagogical context underpinning curriculum for international students. It discusses the concepts of globalisation and lifelong learning and considers whether the participants in this study represent examples of the globalised, lifelong learner. Concepts of the self, identity and culture are examined in relation to the outcomes of the study. The interplay between culture, behaviour and identity for the international postgraduate student is considered. The efficacy of the narrative research methods is reviewed, with a consideration of their role in capturing and creating the student voice. Outcomes from the research study lead to conclusions, recommendations and identification of emerging research in relation to each of the specific research objectives.

Chapter Two: The Literature Review:

As indicated in the introduction the political and pedagogical context of the study is fascinating and dynamic. Significant changes have taken place within the specific case study context throughout the five year period of this study. A new strategy for internationalisation has been operationalised within UnivX (2013), for example, which reflects some of the changing dynamics of the student experience and higher education practice. These changes will be highlighted. The focus of this chapter will also be to demonstrate the stubborn constants which have influenced practice, in relation to internationalisation in English higher education practice over the last twenty years. One of these constants is the economic importance of international student fees to UK universities.

Economic Importance of International Students:

Figures throughout the first decade of the 21st Century and throughout the timeframe for this study 2009-2015 demonstrate an increase of international student numbers in all categories, undergraduate and postgraduate. The total numbers of non UK domicile students at the beginning of the study in 2009/10 was 405,805 and rose at the midpoint to 428,225 in 2010/11. The number of Asian students, which is of particular significance to this study, grew from 171,950 in 2009/10, to 185,675 in 2010/11 HESA, (2012). In 2009, international students represented 15.3% of Higher Education enrolments in the UK (OECD). The recession and change of government in the UK in 2009 led to some significant changes. There was a tightening of visa controls and increased vigilance from the UK Border Agency (UKBA), that led to a 6% fall in student visa applications for the UK. However, numbers of international students continued to increase, although the “global” picture of international student recruitment may be becoming less clear. The convention of students travelling almost exclusively to the West, may be beginning to show signs of change and has led to some significant policy change and realignments in English universities, such as the revisiting of the concept of internationalisation. Bone’s (2008) proposals for the internationalisation of the UK student experience outlined below, are now beginning to appear as strategy and practice within English universities, such as UnivX. These proposals are driven by a number of developments. Since 2009 there has been a discernible shift in policy for international students within the UK. The shift may be due to concern over western universities’ monopoly of international students. Bone’s (2008) review of UK international higher education for the

Department for Industry, Universities and Skills Debate on Higher Education makes a number of important points. He points out, for example, that: “From the point of view of overseas governments and perhaps at least as importantly the press overseas, the main problem with the UK is a perception that our universities are solely interested in international students as a source of revenue.” (Bone, 2008 p.3).

He argues, as a starting point, that the government should, “avoid the temptation of short-term mass recruitment to traditional study in the UK” (Bone, 2008, p.1) and goes on throughout the report, to propose that greater emphasis must be placed on supporting UK students to have international experience, as part of their study. He proposes that this will benefit employers in the UK employing these students and also individual employment prospects. As Brooks et al (2012) suggest, such arguments underpin the second phase of the Prime Minister Initiatives (PM12) from 2006-2011, where bids were sought from partnerships providing international experience for UK students. This trend is also evident in the Framework for Higher Education (Higher Ambitions) 2009, cited in Brooks et al (2012) which states that: “There is a vital role for universities in helping to internationalise the experience of British students, so that they emerge from higher education with a clear sense of Britain’s European and global context. Spending even a short period abroad as a student helps individuals develop new perspectives.”(Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, 2009, p.60). Many of these points are advocated in the current “Internationalising Higher Education Framework” (HEA, 2014).

Similar trends can be seen across other Western countries which are usually destinations for international students such as America, Australia, Canada and within Europe. For example, members of the European Union have agreed that by 2020, 20% of those graduating within the “European Higher Education Area” should have had a period of training abroad (CEC, 2009) cited in Brooks et al (2012). UnivX is currently working within these policy trends. It is also now not unusual to find examples such as the following in the higher education press:

“De Montfort University is planning to send half of its students overseas in a multi-million pound attempt to allay fears that British graduates do not have enough international experience. The proportion of home students at UK universities who take placements abroad during their degrees is below one in 16, a figure the sector is trying to increase. The scheme will cost £1.5 million to £2 million a year to run,

according to the vice-chancellor Dominic Shellard, and is affordable because of the income the university has attracted in recent years from the growing numbers of international students.” (Times Higher Education Supplement 2.10.2013)

However, what is important for this study is that what appear to be significant changes in policy direction are still firmly located within the neo-liberal view of the outcomes of higher education. In this view, outcomes of higher education learning are explicitly viewed in terms of economic output to the individual and society. As Brooks et al (2012) suggest the higher education strategy document *Higher Ambitions* (BIS, 2009) echoes the neoliberal-human capital development position in its statement of higher ambitions. A similar discourse is articulated in the 2009 Green Paper on ‘Learning Mobility’ (CEC, 2009, p.2, cited by Brooks et al, 2012)

Studies confirm that learning mobility adds to human capital, as students access new knowledge and develop linguistic skills and intercultural competences. Furthermore, employers recognise and value these benefits It can also strengthen Europe’s competitiveness by helping to build a knowledge-intensive society thereby contributing to the achievement of the objectives set out in the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs The mobility of learners should form part of a renewed drive to build Europe’s skills and ability to innovate and compete at the international level.

Evidently, there is now an increasingly strategic, political and economic drive to encourage Western students to become more “internationalised” (Leask, 2013). The current international strategy of UnivX (2013) has changed in line with these policy shifts, to encourage internationalisation of the whole student experience. Brooks et al (2012) work interrogating this new direction for UK students and their employability, highlights this shift in international student policy and suggests that this may represent a subtle but possibly significant shift. How effective the policy shift will be in helping to create a paradigm shift for internationalisation to be a genuinely global process rather than the current “East to West” model is a fascinating question which I am sure will be addressed in future study, however it is too early to influence the outcomes of this study. This policy point will be addressed as an area for emerging research in the conclusions of this thesis.

In this study the internationalisation process under review is one still firmly locked within the dominant model of international students coming to the UK for their international and global

experience. Even with the dramatic increase in student fees, strategic policy shifts and changes in the international student global market place, there is still a demand and a financial need for conventional East to West international students within UK higher education. The demand to recruit international students to UK universities continues to be an economic necessity.

A breakdown of recent enrolment statistics demonstrates both the size and economic importance of international students to UK higher education. At the mid-point of this study, the total of international, i.e. non-UK students increased from 428,225 in 2010-2011 to 435,230 in 2011-2012, an increase of 2%. In this period, the number of international undergraduate full-time students rose by 8%, international full-time research students was up by 5% and full-time other postgraduate students rose by 2%. However, full-time postgraduate taught courses, an area of particular interest to this study and the second largest category of non-UK students, fell by 2%. So the first decade of the 21st century witnessed a small but largely consistent growth in international student numbers. The following figures indicate the economic importance of international students. Again at the mid-point of this study in 2011-2012 international (non-UK) students made up 14% of full-time first degree students and 14% of all first degree students. For postgraduate programmes, the focus of this study, the international figures are significantly higher. In 2011-2012 international students (non-UK) made up 69% of full-time taught postgraduate programmes and 41% of all taught postgraduate programmes. In the same period 2011-2012 international students (non-UK) made up 48% of full-time research degree students and 41% of all research postgraduates.

When enrolment figures are translated into income figures, the economic importance of international students to the sector is startling. In 2010/11 fees paid by students from outside the European Union accounted for £2.9 billion of the £8.3 billion total income of the sector. The international student fee income has become even more attractive, if not essential, for many UK universities with the increase in UK domestic student fees and substantial cuts in government subsidy from 2012. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) commenting on the financial health of the higher education sector 2012-2013 saw the first real terms reduction in total income on record. It suggests that, “there is clearly potential for increased income volatility as a result of pressures on student recruitment (including increasing competition for international students from other countries) and the significant fall in part-time undergraduate and postgraduate courses.” (HEFCE) Reduction in

income is contrasted by HEFCE, with the need to finance investment in facilities and approaches to attract home and international students. This point will be returned to in the discussion of internationalisation.

In relation to the postgraduate sector, the focus for this research, the economic importance of the international postgraduate student is marked. UK postgraduate education is now critically dependent on international students and risks severe damage if overseas demand falters (Ince, 2012). This is also the key conclusion of the first report from the Higher Education Commission, a new UK body with cross-party political support and backing from the British university sector. In brief, since 1999, the number of postgraduate students from outside the European Union at British universities has grown by more than 200 per cent. The growth figure for UK and other European students is just 18 per cent. International students are a significant element of UK higher education. The demand to recruit international students to UK universities is now an economic necessity.

The International Student Experience and Cultural Dissonance:

Whether it is an economic marketing model, or an ethical approach driving practice and research alongside the growth in numbers of international students, witnessed from 1997, there has been a growth in research related to the international student experience. The timeframe of this research study 2009-2015 coincides with a marked increase in research on internationalisation, globalisation and the student experience. As indicated in the introduction, one theme in the research on the international student experience is that of the tension between performance and what is frequently referred to as “cultural dissonance” (Sawir, 2005, Bailey, 2007) “Cultural dissonance”, it is argued is manifest in a clash of learning styles, a lack of willingness to actively participate in learning, plagiarism, collusion and difficulties with collective and independent learning processes. What is significant to this research is that many of the problems are related explicitly to a clash of national or West-East cultures.

Within this perspective Ozturgut (2011), for example, explains Chinese students’ apparent passive learning style, as a direct consequence of cultural tradition. The influence of national cultural values is identified by other commentators as a major influence on learning, “for instance harmony or conformity is a key Chinese cultural value that often causes Chinese students to refrain from voicing opposing views in the classroom. “(Liu, 2001 p33). Students are expected to, “compromise, moderate and maintain harmonious relationships in which

individualism and self-assertion are discouraged; honour the hierarchy first, your vision of the truth second” (Bond, 1991 Maley, 1983 cited in Ozturgut, 2007, p.101). Ginsberg (1992) cited in Ozturgut (2007 p.103) adds that in “China knowledge is not open to challenge and extension; and that students arguing with teachers is unacceptable. The teacher decides what knowledge is to be taught, and the students accept and learn that knowledge”.

As indicated in the introduction, the alacrity with which colleagues teaching international students seemed to be adopting “cultural dissonance” as an explanation of “difficult” behaviour with their international students concerned me and was the original stimulus for this research.

Also significantly for this thesis, Tran (2008) highlighted the fact that little research had been carried out on individual international student strategies, personal aims, expectations and personal learning support systems. Doherty and Singh (2005) proposed that the student voice was largely missing. Since then an increasing amount of work has been completed on the student experience and the student perspective. The timing of this study, 2009-2015, has coincided with a marked increase in interest on this topic. What international students say about their experiences and the strategies they use to succeed is beginning to appear and this research adds to this picture.

A growing number of UK based researchers have explored the voice of the international student. Currie’s (2007) work on the voice of the international student on the MBA is relevant. Currie’s intention is to examine cultural dissonance or in his terms “asymmetry” experienced by Chinese Students during their participation in an MBA at leading UK business schools. The pedagogical model outlined for the MBA by Currie shares most of the features of the pedagogical model under study in this research. One of the drivers of his research is the beginnings of expressed student discontent with their learning and an attempt to understand what leads to dissatisfaction from the students. Currie (2007), explores the student experience through an examination of what he deems, the Anglo-American pedagogical framework underpinning the MBA and the possible cultural conflicts that imposing this will have. The following lengthy quotation is added, as it is suggested throughout this study, that the processes and principles outlined here are still the processes in place for the range of postgraduate programmes under study in this work.

Within the Anglo-American pedagogical framework there is an expectation that the students be as proactive within the learning process as the management teachers themselves. This draws upon Socratic approaches to education, where knowledge is generated, or co-constructed, through a process of questioning and evaluation of beliefs (Holmes, 2004). Typically, this requires students to make contributions within lectures or engage in syndicate learning. Associated with this, students are expected to exhibit an ability to analyse critically. So, for example, they might critique management theory or practice by drawing upon their own knowledge and experience. Similarly, the ability of students to construct and verbalise an argument is deemed a significant element of an MBA learning process, often facilitated by a contrary stance being taken by the management teacher to encourage debate. Encouragement of these pedagogical behaviours preoccupies management teachers, as evidenced in the main European academic journals that consider matters of business education- *Management Learning* – with the thrust of many of its articles focused upon how to develop an engaged, reflective, more critical learner. (Currie, 2007, p.540.)

This study examines the pedagogical framework outlined by Currie, in relation to a number of postgraduate programmes. It considers whether this pedagogical model remains a constant within the international student experience. It also captures the student voice and, as with Currie, helps to “bring the experience of international students from the margins and contribute to the debate about the significance of national cultures” (Currie, 2007, p.548).

Currie identified student dissatisfaction in 2007 and as the 21st Century progresses and competition for international student recruitment intensifies, universities have become more compelled to ensure high levels of student satisfaction. Consequently, the student “voice” has been sought more readily, through a range of formal evaluation tools to capture student satisfaction (Arambewela and Hall, 2013). Interestingly, alongside the growth in evaluation strategies, there has also been a growth in research on international student evaluation and in particular on how international students complain and respond to dissatisfaction (Hart and Coates, 2011). While as Arambewela and Hall, (2013) point out, the 21st century has witnessed an increase in the amount of research investigating student satisfaction, it has been “narrowly focused on aspects of the internal environment, such as teaching and learning and services offered by the institutions (Elliot and Healey 2001, Lizzio, Wilson and Symons, 2002; Symons, 2006: Ting 2000; Wiers-Jenssen, Stensaker and Groggaard 2002) cited by

Arambewla and Hall (2013, p.972). This study concurs with Arambewla and Hall's (2013) view, that to get a better and more accurate understanding of the international student experience and levels of satisfaction, it is important to investigate the broader aspects of the student learning experience, by examining and going beyond the internal institutional factors (LeBlanc and Nguyen, 1999 cited by Arambewla and Hall (2013).

In order to understand the broader aspects of the international student learning experience, it is necessary to explore the influence of neoliberalism on the curriculum.

Neoliberalism and the Higher Education Curriculum:

In the western world, the dominance of neoliberal economic policy and practice, as the theoretical foundation for much curriculum and pedagogical practice continues to dominate. Davies and Bansel (2007, p.250) suggest that, "neoliberalism as a form of governmentality first emerged in the 1970s as a response to some of the more radical and progressive positions being taken in education and the media". The mid-1970s witnessed the publication of apocalyptic reports, forecasting the demise of democracy and freedom, such as the Report on Governability (Crozier *et al* 1975, cited by Davies and Bansel, 2007, p.250). The report concludes, that democratic citizens must be made more governable and more able to serve capital. The apparent failure of Keynesian economics in the 1980s Western financial crisis was the catalyst to promote these earlier rhetorical versions of neoliberalist economics into policy and practice. As Davies argued in an earlier work; "The inflationary crisis was an opportunity for classical liberal theorists, most influentially Hayek and Friedman to regain dominance. In the US it gave Carter (and, later, Reagan) the opportunity to (re)vitalise the discourses of (neo) liberal economics (Tabb, 1980). In the new order big business once again gained the upper hand, workers' wages and conditions were reined in, and the global market dominated government decision- making." (Davies, et al., 2006, p. 309)

Consequently, what was one economic response to a crisis rapidly became the canon of inevitability and "common-sense". There were now no logical alternatives to the neo-liberal model. Bourdieu makes this point passionately:

"Everywhere we hear it said, all day long, and this is what gives the dominant discourse its strength-that there is nothing to put forward in opposition to the neoliberal view- that it has succeeded in presenting itself as self-evident that there is

no alternative. If it is taken for granted in this way, this is the result of a whole labour of symbolic inculcation in which journalists and ordinary citizens participate passively and, above all, a certain number of intellectuals participate actively. (Bourdieu, 1998, p.29)

As indicated in the introduction, recent changes in strategy and policy suggest that universities may be beginning to distance themselves from explicit adoption of the crudest forms of neoliberalism. In the case of UnivX this is evident in its latest strategic statement and shift from a “World of Work” Unique Selling Point (USP) to its Civic Modern University USP. Unfortunately, it is outside the scope and timeframe of this study to assess whether the shift in policy rhetoric will create a shift in direction and in approaches to learning both for Univ X and the sector. However, it is within its scope to consider the impact of the neoliberal narrative on curriculum practice for the postgraduate international student from 2009-2015.

A number of earlier commentators, such as Rose (1999), theorised neoliberalism and identified a significant irony. The irony being that neoliberalism produces docile individuals who are strictly governed yet see themselves as being liberated by the process of neoliberal practices. As Davies and Bansel (2007, p.249) point out, within the neoliberal model “all human actions are predicated along liberal economic lines as logical and rational calculations made to further the individuals own interests and those of their families.”

Neoliberalism, the dominance of the market and the legitimacy of the individual as entrepreneur of the self, remain the dominant discourse of “common sense”, the “inevitable” and the “natural” way to behave. This neoliberal common-sense, inevitability discourse is a dominant feature of higher education and underpins much current UK higher education policy and practice. In his introduction to international perspectives in educational policy, Ball (1998) argues that we inhabit a small world with big policies. Ball’s view is that from the mid-1980s, one dominant view is manifest in both rhetoric and policy in higher education in the UK, US and Australia. The dominant view being that found within the ideology of neoliberal economics.

Other commentators, from the educational sector, suggest that while, “there are substantial differences in educational policies between countries in the Western industrialised world, over the last few decades there have been an increasing number of commonalities. One significant commonality is the dominance of the neo-liberal market agenda as the basis for

educational policy” Bottery (2007, p.89). Bolson and Miller (2008, p.78) propose that the neoliberal market agenda has been dominant in the U.S., U.K. and Australia for the last 25 years. “It finds expression not only amongst economists and policy think tanks but also in the pronouncements of heads of state and ministers of education”. In this view, education is explicitly seen as an investment in human capital. This point was identified earlier in this chapter, with reference to the UK context in: *Higher Ambitions: the Future of Universities in a Knowledge Economy* (BIS, 2009) or exemplified in the European policy context by promoting the learning mobility of young people (COM, 2009). Here, learning is viewed as a tool to enhance competitiveness and reward the individual, corporations and the national economy. This view stresses the economic importance of education and sees market competition as the most efficient means for the delivery of goods and services. What is important for this research is the view, that the neoliberal agenda in higher education also turns university academics into competitive providers of a transparent economic service and students as informed consumers and buyers of this service. Furthermore, what is also of major significance to this research is that students consequently are viewed as informed, rational consumers or customers of a product. Therefore students “become” rational, informed customers who know what they want, what they are buying and why they are investing in the purchase.

As indicated above, over the last thirty years many writers have identified and traced the impact of neoliberal ideology on education. Trowler, (1996) makes significant comments on the effect of neoliberal policies on the nature, purpose and approaches employed to learning in higher education. Trowler, for example, (1996) traces the radical changes experienced by the UK higher education sector from the 1980s. He proposes that the purpose of higher education in particular, witnessed an explicit shift, as represented by statements contained in policy documents like the 1987 White paper: *Higher Education Meeting the Challenge*: his extract from this document confirms this view:

“Meeting the needs of the economy is not the sole purpose of higher education nor can higher education alone achieve what is needed. But this aim, with its implications for the scale and quality of higher education must be pursued.... The Government and its central funding agencies will do all they can to encourage and reward approaches

by higher education institutions which bring them closer of the world of business.
(DES, 1987, p.2)

As Trowler (1996) argued the 1991 White Paper Higher Education: a New Framework; set out the structural reforms and articulated explicitly the need for economy, efficiency and clear sense of purpose related to the demands of the economy for higher education. Barnett (1994), identifies policy documents and consequent pedagogical shifts driven by government legislation and incentives, as bringing about a significant shift in universities from propositional knowledge, “knowing that to performativity or “knowing how” and with this change in purpose, significant changes in pedagogy. The 1990s witnessed ongoing debate about the nature and purpose of higher education and the debate today continues unabated. It may, as Trowler suggested in 1996, be that vocational and or academic purpose is a far too simplistic summary of the debate, as may be the view that higher education is a simple tool of government: “Postmodernist thinking would suggest that there has been a shift over the years towards encompassing a riot of world views including beliefs about the nature and role of higher education, turning this into essentially contested terrain with the government only one, albeit powerful, voice among the multitude.”(Trowler, 1996, p. 7)

Trowler is right to identify the complex terrain of higher education and the multiplicity and complexity of its discourse. Government and the economy is one discourse among many in higher education policy and practice. Nevertheless, this research study proposes that the neoliberal economic education discourse, with its employment driven motivation for learning, remains the dominant discourse within higher education at policy and pedagogical level and that this represents the much heralded globalised model of learning and lifelong learning underpinning the postgraduate curriculum model, during the timeframe of this research study. This research examines whether individuals accept or challenge and contradict this view of learning, in their lived experiences and narratives.

Curriculum models which reflect the demands of the neo-liberal agenda are well established in English higher education. This research suggests that the curriculum model for the postgraduate students participating is a prime example of such an approach to learning. The range of taught Masters programmes, taken by participants in this study, all share features of the modular credit accumulation curriculum models introduced into English higher education

in the 1990s. They all share a similar modular structure to that described almost thirty years ago by Theodossin (1986), in which a designated number of discretely taught and assessed units of learning (modules) lead to the attainment of the specified qualification. They are located within a “semesterised” academic year, which it is claimed offers more choice and flexibility to the student “user”, rather than year-long, or three unequally sized terms. It would be inappropriate to attempt to provide a detailed account of the development of the modular postgraduate curriculum in this study, however it is important to acknowledge that the credit accumulation and transfer model (CATS) and modular approach to learning developed in the 1990s, remains the dominant curriculum model, still used in many English universities, such as UnivX. Critics commenting on the implementation of the CATS framework argued that, “there is a powerful dynamic, both organisational and ideological, which binds these apparently eclectic innovations together” (Scott, 1995, p.156). What this dynamic may be is dramatically proposed by Duke (1992), in the view that the CATS framework moved higher education into a new paradigm and a new role in the wider community from, “finishing school” to “service station”. Duke’s (1992) image of the service station is resonant with the stated experience of many of the participants in this study, while interestingly, the finishing school or “grand tour” metaphor also hasn’t been replaced for a number of participants. This point will be further developed through the individual interviews narrative accounts of the postgraduate students taking part in this research.

Other earlier commentators, such as Robertson (1994), an advocate and designer of CATS, saw the system shifting the balance from provider, to user of the service, as representing a libertarian shift. In this view, the “new” higher education model represents a paradigm shift, from the traditional producer monopoly of elite higher education, to one where education must and should be shaped by the user. Whether the model was seen from a favourable progressive perspective of offering access and opportunity, what Brandes and Ginnis (1985) called, the “new orthodoxy”, or from a more negative perspective, of ensuring higher education as a tool for human capital development, the CATS curriculum model developed in the early 1990s is still the dominant curriculum model in English post 1992 universities, such as UnivX. It is the pedagogical model experienced by the international postgraduate students in this study.

It is important to stress, that along with Ball (2012) and others, I do not find it easy to condemn out of hand initiatives and programmes in higher education, which although driven

by a neoliberal stance, have nevertheless offered access to learning to individuals who otherwise would have had no access. The history of UK higher education is littered with many examples of widening access initiatives, many of which I have played a role in initiating and operationalising. My concern and emphasis in highlighting the dominance of neoliberal approaches to learning in higher education is recognition of the need to make explicit the context in which with the issue under study takes place. Neoliberalism is not “just out there” (Peck and Tickell, 2003 cited by Ball, 2012, p. xiii), but fundamentally underpins and directs our approaches to learning. If research is fundamentally a process to discover, “What is really going on”, then any attempt to find out about the international postgraduate student experience, must be viewed within the still dominant neoliberal paradigm which provides the theoretical and operational underpinning for the curriculum models under study.

In the UK, the neo-liberal approach was introduced by Conservative governments from the 1980s, then intensified under Labour and reinforced and developed by the current coalition government. The dominance of the neoliberal view, in education policy and practice, throughout this period has led writers such as Lynch (2006, p1) to conclude that, “the view that education is simply another market commodity has become normalised in policy and public discourse”. Foucault made significant points in relation to neoliberalism much earlier when he claimed that “Under neo-liberalism, individuals are transformed into equally competent, equally privileged, entrepreneurs of themselves” (Foucault, 1979, p.198 cited by Hirsh, 2007, p. 497).

In higher education, advocates of the neoliberal approach argue that policies and practices now simply provide individuals with choice. However, a feature of many of the accounts provided by students in this study, highlight the absence of choice and the limited experiences offered by formal curriculum. Agency is often performed outside the curriculum, rather than within it.

Lynch (2006,), argues that the drive to shift control from the school or university as the producer, to the sovereign consumer user is indicative of the broader political shift to the right, witnessed from the 1980s and is a symptom of a particular view of education and learning. A distinctive neoliberal view of fairness, efficiency and progress based on the free market economic model has taken root, not only in universities in the West, but dominates

much of what is referred to as approaches to globalised learning. What is significant for this research is that the neoliberal view and consequent policy maintains the original liberal view of the individual as an autonomous, rational being unconstrained by emotional or economic restraints. It is not an overstatement to suggest that this view now defines the individual and, ultimately for this research, the international postgraduate student, as a rational individual whose learning is driven by individual economic needs. Lynch (2006) makes this point when she says that, “in line with classical economics, neo-liberalism also defines the person to be educated in economic terms, as “*homo economicus*”, (Lynch, 2006, P.3), a labour market actor, whose life and purposes are determined by their economic status. The experience, expectations and motivations of participants in this research are sought to examine whether economic rationality is their prime motivation for learning. Overtly rational models disregard passion, emotion and marginalise concepts of collectivism and interdependency, while stressing and supporting individualism as the primary focus for effective learning. Again, the legitimacy of these assumptions is examined in this research.

The rational, economically driven model of the postgraduate learner is a significant view within concepts, proposals and practices of globalised lifelong learning. It is in Ball’s words, a world where individuals become enterprising subjects, who live their lives as an enterprise of the self. “Competitive individualism is no longer seen as an amoral necessity but rather as a desirable and necessary attribute for the constantly reinventing learner as “*entrepreneur*”. (Ball, 2003, p. 217) Increasingly, formal, lifelong learning strategies and pedagogical models, such as those set for many postgraduate programmes, including those in this study, provide the contexts and frameworks for this economically driven, constant personal reinvention. It is this model of learning which is interrogated through the experience and narratives of the participants in this research and is captured in the first research objective.

RO1: To explore why individuals choose to become postgraduate international students?

Globalisation and Internationalisation:

This research investigates the experience of postgraduate international students as examples of the globalised learner. The concept of globalisation, although well-established within a common sense meaning is a problematic and contested term. An extensive and growing

globalisation literature exists. This research study will not attempt to summarise the globalisation debate in terms of its points of difference, rather it will address globalisation in relation to approaches to learning and to the theories and ontological positions emerging from the narrative based research approach, adopted for this study.

Like neoliberalism, globalisation is another influential discourse of “common-sense” and a statement that there is “no alternative”. In this view globalisation is an inevitable manifestation of the modernist agenda of progress (Giddens, 1994, 2002) and deregulation. Globalisation, in this view, demonstrates the inevitability of the free market as the true global economic model and the consequent requirement for individuals to continually reinvent themselves through reflection and learning or lifelong learning, to meet the requirements of globalisation. This view may summarise the current global orthodoxy, however the concept is contested.

As highlighted in the introduction, numerous definitions of globalisation exist and there continues to be an ongoing and dynamic discourse about globalisation and internationalisation within Higher Education.

The role of higher education within globalisation has been much debated in the 21st century. Marginson and Van der Wende’s (2006) commissioned work for the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) interprets higher education within globalisation, arguing that higher education is not only influenced and transformed by globalisation forces, such as the widening, deepening and speeding up of world-wide interconnectedness, but higher education is now more important than ever, as a medium for the continuous global flow of people, information, technologies and products. They suggest that, “even as they share in the reinvention of the world around them, higher education institutions, and the policies that produce and support them, are also being reinvented in any consideration of the future of higher education, the international and global aspects must be taken into account.” (Marginson and Van der Wende, 2006, p.6.) Marginson and Van der Wende cite Teichler’s (2004) interesting and perceptive remark, which made a decade ago still has resonance to this study, “it is surprising to note how much the debate on global phenomena in higher education suddenly focuses on marketization, competition and management in higher education. Other terms, such as knowledge, society, global village,

global understanding or global learning, are hardly taken into consideration”. (Teichler 2004, p.23). I agree with the point made by Marginson and Van Der Wende (2006), that this is surprising, however, I propose that if it is true, it is even more surprising nine years after the publication of this OECD paper. Teichler’s view is considered specifically later in this study. Since 2006 technology and internet activity have continued to grow, offering potential for new kinds of pedagogy, access and new forms of internationalisation, yet the dominant forms of institutional led neo-liberal models of learning originating in the 1980s and 1990s still continue to dominate higher education practice, even though a critical discourse on internationalisation and higher education has developed through the second decade of the 21st century.

The timing of this research has coincided with a growing number of studies investigating internationalisation within higher education, links with globalisation and the student experience (Caruana, 2013, Leask, 2013, Killick, D, 2014). Many of the questions and concerns driving this research are shared by researchers in the UK, Australia and Canada in particular.

Yang (2003) provides a good starting point for a critical analysis of higher education’s response to globalisation, internationalisation and practice from a critical theory perspective. Yang addresses globalisation and higher education development from a critical theory perspective, suggesting that adopting critical theory as a theoretical framework will facilitate an examination of power relationships with a view to offering voice to the unheard and challenging inequalities. I would suggest that this is a laudable and shared aim with this study. It draws attention, like Deem (2001) and current thinkers such as Whitsed and Green, 2014 to the lack of a precise definition of globalisation and takes Deem’s argument further to suggest that higher education has been complacent and has become almost a partner in establishing and maintaining a neoliberal approach to education through a largely unquestioned acceptance of globalization as a positive force. Yang argues that: “Globalisation goes together with a doctrine of economic salvation which a whole host of advisers are constantly bringing into politics. In simple terms, the basic thesis is that the market is good and state intervention is bad.” (Yang, 2003, p. 274). Without wishing to overstate this argument, or to simply rehearse arguments made earlier in this study, it is useful to highlight this work. It demonstrates that at the beginning of the 21st century writers were exercised in exploring and

critiquing the dominant models of learning in higher education and asking questions of significance for this study which may remain unanswered in 2015.

One of these questions is the relationship between globalisation and internationalisation. Yang (2003) suggests that, “Very few people within higher education have clearly identified the differences between the effects of globalisation and those of internationalisation on universities. The two terms are used interchangeably. It is unclear where one starts and another stops.” (Yang, 2003, p.276). This is without doubt the case within the research setting of UnivX. Researchers in other contexts, such as Knight (2004-2013) and Beck (2012) in Canada, have explored these concepts and their influence in higher education practice throughout the first decades of the 21st century. Knight (2004) raised the importance of internationalisation for higher education and recognised that there is a distinction between internationalisation and globalisation. She asserted ten years ago that, “Internationalization is changing the world of higher education and globalization is changing the nature of internationalization.”(Knight, 2004, P.5). Beck’s review of globalization and higher education (2012) makes a number of points of importance to the debate and to this specific study. Beck (2009) cited by Beck (2012) proposes that theorisation of internationalisation in higher education must begin with an analysis of the complex connections between globalisation and internationalisation, to both critique harmful influences and also to realign internationalisation towards ethical principles and practices. For example, he suggests that we need pathways to move internationalisation away from what Luke (2010) and others have referred to as “edu-business” towards more educational life serving practices. This is a point of major significance to this study, which is developed in a consideration of lifelong learning models and through the exploration of the student experience in this study. Knight ‘s (2004) definition of internationalization as, “The process of integrating an international and intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions (primarily teaching/learning, research, (service) or delivery of higher education.” (Knight,P.87) proved popular as an aim or intention for higher education. Her current work (2013), which reviews the changing landscape of higher education internationalisation, sub-titled for “better or worse”, adds significant critique to developments in higher during the past decade. Beck (2012) summarises (Figure 3) the research on Canadian higher education’s response to internationalisation. The points identified by Beck have a strong resonance with the UK

experience and the specific case study of UnivX. The points identified here are reflected within the research questions set in this study in 2009-2015:

Figure 3: Beck 2012 Review of Canadian Research on Internationalisation

1. Conceptual confusion in the field
2. The lack of understanding of perspectives, practices and the experiences of participants involved in internationalisation
3. The implications of this on how internationalisation is conceptualised and practised
4. Little attention to curriculum
5. Almost none related to pedagogy
6. A propensity towards an economic rationale for internationalisation with
7. Intensified competition in the recruitment of international students
8. Branding
9. The increase of study abroad programmes and exchanges
10. Satellite campuses and partnerships with universities in “developing countries”
11. Increasing alarm and dismay over the dominance of commercial interests and ideologies as the basis for internationalisation
12. Internationalisation strategies tend to promote fixed ideas of the global as being “out there” and the local as being “here”

In coming to conclusions about the position of internationalisation in Canadian higher education, Beck asks the question, which is asked implicitly in this study, “In seeking more equitable or balanced responses to this trend, in what ways can the practices of international education identify and recognise local needs, values and practices and identities of those who arrive in (Canada) to learn?” Frameworks for internationalisation as Beck (2012) argues often ignore the experiences and needs of those involved in the international learning experience. This study is part of a growing number of studies which attempt to fill this gap in the framework, by seeking the participant voice.

It is important to conclude this section with comment on current approaches to internationalization (2014) impacting on higher education and the case study of UnivX. Many of the points and policies made by Knight in 2013 in her review of the Changing Landscape of Higher Education- Internationalisation for Better or Worse, are now part of the current discourse of UnivX's (Strategic Framework 2012), UnivX's Internationalisation Strategy 2013 and at sector level with the Higher Education Academy (HEA) 2014, consultation on internationalising higher education. The new international strategy for UnivX, for example, resonates with Knight's (2013) identifiable shift away from crude capacity building, to status building initiatives, to gain world class ranking and reputation. However, although it is relatively easy to trace significant change in the rhetoric and in some cases the practice of internationalization during the timeframe of this study 2009-2014, there may still be major gaps between aims, strategy and pedagogical practice.

Even though it is outside the scope and timeframe of this study to fully evaluate current pedagogical models for internationalisation, it is important to comment briefly on one pedagogical model which is beginning to develop a prominence in the international pedagogical literature. Its relevance to this study is that it represents a model which participants in this study experience, as an unsatisfied expectation. In a recent article Patel and Lynch (2013) propose and consider the concept and practice of "Glocalization" as an alternative to the dominant internationalization models dominant in higher education.

In this paper, their aim is to introduce glocalization as an alternative paradigm to what they consider to be the deficit model offered to international students in higher education. They cite Welikala's (2011) study, which asserts that the internationalization paradigm in practice in higher education in the "West", frames the international student as being, "in deficit, obedient, passive, lacking autonomy and unable to engage in critical argumentative process (Welikala, 2011 cited by Patel and Lynch, p.15)." As indicated in earlier chapters of this study, these were the perceptions of and approaches to international students, found in practice within UnivX and elsewhere. An investigation of this deficit paradigm and pedagogical practice in 2009 was one of the major drivers for this study. Patel and Lynch (2013) make another pertinent point in their summary of approaches to internationalisation. They suggest that the current internationalisation models endorsed as favourable goals for higher education in the "West", simply advocate the acculturation and assimilation of international students into the host country's culture and practices. Welikala's study (2011) of

earlier international pedagogy researchers such as Currie (2007) argues that approaches to pedagogy for international students, simply favour and repeat the local pedagogical approaches for international students. These approaches, “emphasize Western didacticism encouraging assimilation and socialisation of international students to the learning approaches and theoretical perspectives advocated by the host university.” (Welikala, 2011, p 13.) This can lead to a largely unchallenged outcome, of placing the international student in a deficit position. It is the deficit position being theorised and then acted on as a result of national cultural experience, which again originally motivated this study. Patel and Lynch (2013) make this point, “As noted in Welikala (2011) internationalisation upholds the dominant culture’s ideology and utilises the less dominant (i.e. minority cultures) to frame its strategic hegemonic agendas through negative shaping of minority cultures.” (p.226).The proposal for an alternative “Glocalization” model is fascinating. Unfortunately, it is outside the timeframe and scope of this study to consider it fully. However, a consideration of this model is an emerging outcome of this study. Its key points are worth highlighting here. They propose that Glocalization pedagogy would embed and link the local with the external. It would do so by embracing “third culture” building. It would take the pedagogical impact of learning, beyond cultural relativism and engage the local and the international student towards a deeper level of respectful dialogue and engagement among cultures. Figure 4 provides an outline of the features of the proposed Glocalization model:

Figure 4: Patel and Lynch 2013 Glocalization Model

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicit reinforcement of the notion that respectful exchange of cultural wealth among learners and teachers will inform and enhance pedagogy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The explicit importance of embedding and providing support for critical reflection for all participants learners and teachers as a central feature of the learning programme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The creation of Third Culture spaces where dialogue/reflection and learning can take place
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of a space for story telling as a vehicle for sharing and Third Culture building

A number of points for this study emerge from this model including the prominence given to storytelling as an element of internationalisation and learning. Story telling will be discussed as a major element of research methodology for this study and its significance emerges as an outcome of the study.

Within the current internationalisation in higher education debate, Clifford and Montgomery (2014) also offer some important insights of significance to this study. They suggest that one way of challenging western higher education internationalisation practice can be achieved by promoting graduates as “Global Citizens”. There are links between this work and earlier work referred to in this study from Bone (2008). Clifford and Montgomery (2014) refer to Schultz (2007) who identified the term being promoted in higher education at the beginning of the 21st century. Schultz (2007) suggests that it is the terms “feel good factor” which made it attractive but argued that little serious research was carried out as to what this “Global Citizen” would require in their learning. Interestingly, just two years later Booth et al (2009) argue that tertiary education's servitude to the economy meant that the debate on educating global citizens had quickly become muted. Yet in 2014 Clifford and Montgomery argue that the growth in internationalisation identified by other writers such as Knight (2013) has opened up opportunities to revisit the broader aims of higher education and has allowed higher education to question the increasingly reductionist employability agenda so dominant in UK higher education and particularly as demonstrated within UnivX. Current work, such as that of Yemini (2015), suggests that the internationalisation discourse in higher education may have hit “its tipping point” and requires a new definition. She argues that the term “internationalisation” has now been adopted as a catch-all concept to cover both internal institutional and sector responses and the external drivers of internationalisation including globalisation. Her proposal is that education in general, not solely higher education, must put the learner to the fore of practice and discourse. Her proposed new definition is, “Internationalisation can be defined as the process of encouraging integration of multicultural, multilingual and global dimensions within the education system, with the aim of instilling in learners a sense of global citizenship.” (Yemini, 2015, p.21). It is tempting to consider just how distinctive this definition is, in relation to earlier definitions, apart from the focus on adopting an education systemic approach. However, she does conclude her current definition with a plea for instilling global citizenship in all learners. Before leaving the internationalisation debate, it is important to revisit the globalised citizen concept raised by

Yemini (2015) in her definition. It is of direct relevance to the issue raised by this study. It is within these debates that the linked concepts of globalisation and lifelong learning must be considered.

One of the outcomes of this study is a response to the invitation made by Szersynski and Urry (2002) in their discussion of the culture of cosmopolitanism, “We ask a simple empirical question, with the development of global processes so brilliantly outlined by Marx and Engels in 1848, is cosmopolitanism becoming more widespread and if so of what does it consist?” (Szersynski and Urry, 2002, p.402). Cosmopolitanism is another concept which is again appearing in the internationalisation and globalisation literature, (Caruana, 2014). For some, the view of the mobile globalised cosmopolitan learner is simply a current manifestation of wealth and privilege echoing earlier grand tour processes. Dower (2008), for example is definite in his view of the identity of the global citizen, “Global citizenship is largely a privileged status of rich Northerners and a product of their wealth, leisure opportunities and access” (Dower, 2008, p.39). Similarly Hamdon and Jorgenson (2009) see the term student mobility and global citizenship, as manifestations of the dominant neoliberal discourse, that privileges individualism, mobility and competition and perpetuates minority privilege. A need to explore the truth of such statements and contrary statements, advocating mobility as an individual and social good, prompted the research questions set for this study.

It is also interesting to explore whether technologically driven communication systems have added a further globalising process which were unpredictable even by Szersynski and Urry (2002), only over a decade ago. As with other related points, it is beyond the scope of this study to fully interrogate the impact of what might loosely be called, digital communication technology, on the international student experience. However, it would be errant not to recognise that the period of this study 2009-2015 has witnessed unprecedented development in digital communication technologies. During this period, social media applications have become universal and commonplace. Two examples illustrate this point vividly. FaceBook originated in 2006 and has witnessed a rapid growth to a position in 2014 where the site receives an estimated 1.44 billion monthly hits. Twitter mirrors this massive growth between 2006-2015 and claims to currently have over 500 million users. Writers such as Kenny, Rouvinen and Zysman (2015) have an almost apocalyptic view of the impact of globalisation and digitalization. They propose that the confluence of both factors has “induced an ongoing

societal transformation that may prove to be as significant as the original industrial revolution.”(Kenny, Rouvinen and Zysman 2015.)

Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this study to interrogate this view. However, it is within its scope to explore and interrogate what examples of the “globalised citizen” are represented by students participating in this study (Killick, 2014). Do they represent the mobile, wealthy, cosmopolitan elite or at least the conscious dynamic entrepreneur of the self or are they part of the alternative view offered by Pashby (2011)? Pashby argues that within the developing higher education internationalisation discourse, the focus is now on developing students as “National” or local citizens, with an international or global awareness, rather than a privileging of the “global” in global citizen. There are echoes of glocalization (Patel and Lynch, 2012) in this argument. There are also echoes of Giroux’s (1988) earlier work on, “teachers as intellectuals and towards a critical pedagogy”. In his work, Giroux stresses the importance of, “preparing students to be active, critical, risk taking citizens whose task is to interpret the world with the intention to change it” (p.127). Giroux’s comment echoes the principles of the transformative curriculum identified earlier in the introduction, Barnett, 2000, Mesirow 2008 and Clifford and Montgomery 2014 and discussed later, as an outcome and emerging research from this study.

As demonstrated throughout this chapter, internationalisation is an increasingly contested and dynamic terrain within higher education discourse, policy and practice. Beck (2012) highlights the views of Brandenburg and De Witt (2011) who argue that “Scholars known for their strong promotion of internationalisation for higher education, have in recent years, been expressing alarm and dismay over the dominance of commercial interests and ideologies in higher education” Brandenburg and De Witt (2011) cited by Beck (2012, p.138). The tensions between the commercial and economic importance of international student fee income to higher education and the increasing debate on the nature and purpose of international experience for students is rapidly developing a strong research profile. This study adds to the research, by capturing the voice of the postgraduate international student. To capture this comprehensively and to add to this contested terrain, it is necessary to locate the exploration within the equally contested area of lifelong learning. Conflict over the nature and purpose of lifelong learning, as outlined earlier in this chapter share many of the features outlined in the contested areas of globalisation and internationalisation.

Lifelong Learning and the Postgraduate International Student

As indicated in the introduction to this study, since the 1980s, alongside neo-liberalism and globalisation, lifelong learning has enjoyed a prominent position, (Kristensson Uggla, 2008). Kristensson Uggla (2008) suggests that lifelong learning is the new manifestation of modernism, “Today, lifelong learning is proclaimed as the new meta-narrative, a privileged narrative identity communicated and strongly supported by the OECD, EU and UN together with almost all policy makers and governments.” (Kristensson Uggla, 2008, P.212). He goes on to make a powerful point that it is, “no exaggeration to state that during the last decade a global policy consensus on lifelong learning has emerged”. This new approach to knowledge and learning, manifested in the discourse of lifelong learning, is focused on, “all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence, within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective” (European Commission 2001, cited by Kristensson Uggla 2008, p.213). It is difficult to critique the European Commission 2001 comprehensive and eclectic definition. It echoes much of the original notion of lifelong learning, as an entitlement and as a manifestation of and support for active citizenship, enlightenment and cultural engagement, argued many years ago (Dewey, 1970). However, as Kristensson Uggla (2008) and other earlier commentators, such as Boltanski and Chiapello (1995/2005), suggest the real focus on lifelong learning is now explicitly work related. Coffield (2002) also argues that the early 21st century consensus, on the legitimacy of lifelong learning, may be misplaced and diversionary. He proposes that there are several reasons why it may have been so popular at the beginning of the 21st century and why its popularity is still powerful, at least in political and educational policy rhetoric. He proposes that, “lifelong learning legitimates increased expenditure on education, it provides politicians with the pretext for action, it deflects attention from the need for economic and social reform and it offers the comforting illusion that for every complex problem there is one simple solution.”(Coffield, 2002, p.174). In terms of simple solutions, what is particularly significant for this study is that lifelong learning is now seen, not only as a manifestation of the globalization process, but also as the most important strategy to cope with the globalization process itself. In this new globalized world, flexibility, adaptability and the ability to continually respond to change is seen as the prerequisite for success at a social and for this study an individual level. The international postgraduate student demonstrates many of the apparent features of this new lifelong learner: flexibility,

adaptability, willingness to change, travel, learn new languages and engage with new cultures, to be in transition and to explicitly and deliberately engage with the globalization narrative as globalized citizens.

Biesta (2006) summarises the arguments outlined earlier. He proposes, that since the mid-1980s there has been a discernible shift in approaches to lifelong learning and concludes that the dominant model is now explicitly and unashamedly linked to investment in the individual and almost purely within what can be best summarised as, a human capital investment model,

“Over the past decades there have been important shifts in policies for adult education and lifelong learning in many countries. Whereas in the past lifelong learning was seen as a personal good and as an inherent aspect of democratic life, today lifelong learning is increasingly understood in terms of the formation of human capital and an investment in economic development.” (Biesta, 2006, p.169).

Jarvis's (2010) overview of the National Voice for Lifelong Learning (NIACE) inquiry into the future of lifelong learning adds a more current view. The report was commissioned as a response to the decline of adults involved in publically funded lifelong learning in the UK since 2006. It adds an important balance. According to Jarvis (2010) the report is, “based on a vision of society in which learning plays its full role in personal growth and emancipation, prosperity, solidarity and global responsibility.....it is ultimately connected with the achievement of choice, health and well-being, dignity, cultural identity and democratic tolerance.” (p.397). The Lifelong Learning report highlights a number of points of specific relevance to this study. One is the comprehensive vision of lifelong learning proposed by NIACE (Jarvis 2010) and the linked point that the NIACE report's focus on institutional learning, suggests that much learning policy and practice, such as that found in higher education, do not match this vision of learning. The report also suggests that in the complex society of the 21st century, there are more points of life transitions, than in previous generations. It also proposes innovative ways about how and when people should be able to receive learning support in these transitional stages. One of the questions explored in this study is whether the international postgraduate student experience represents a significant transitional period and how well supported are students at this stage. Therefore before leaving the NIACE report (2010), it is important to finish with Jarvis's final comments on the report, which relate directly to the issues of transition, change and learning and how lifelong learning

processes can be supported. He identifies the emphasis in the report on a vision of a future dynamic society, where change is a constant feature and where consequently learners should have explicit learning entitlements to what is referred to as a “Citizens’ Curriculum”. The specific chapter dealing with this proposal deviates from the reports more direct approach and turns to two academics; the welfare economist Amartya K. Sen and the cultural theorist and adult educator Raymond Williams. Sen’s focus is on lifelong learning and capability with capability seen as the capacity to achieve well-being. William’s analysis focuses on how learning and consequently lifelong learning can and should help people to make sense of change, to adapt to change and possibly even more importantly, how to shape change. Here both Sen and Williams emphasise the importance of individual and social agency and how and where agency is manifested and could be supported. The suggestion in the report is that the main four categories for agency are: finance, health, employability and cultural fulfilment.

Agency and change and learning, in periods of transition and change are explored through this study and in particular through the narrative research methodologies employed. A question explored through the stories of the participants is that of their agency and the importance of reflection as a learning support for change and transition. While reflecting on this issue I came across a powerful image. Matthew Parris writing in the Times (20.11.2013) about a train journey in the Australian outback makes an important observation. It was an unusual single track line in the outback, where in this case the train moved in reverse for the entire trip, “It strikes me that life, too, is lived like this. We only know what has passed. We go forwards into the future facing backwards, blind to what’s ahead. All we can do is see where we did go. And guess where we will be”. In the spirit of this comment, it is useful to conclude this discussion of lifelong learning with some discussion of alternative lifelong learning pedagogies of where we have been and where we may be able to go.

Just as with glocalization (Patel and Lynch, 2013) there is a growing number of suggested alternative lifelong learning models, which reject the inevitability of global neoliberal capitalism and reductionist human capital based curriculum models. Walker, (2009) for example, proposes an alternative pedagogy based on what she claims, “Freire can still teach us”. She makes a summary of approaches to lifelong learning by identifying Faure’s (1972) report, with its emphasis on learning as a vehicle for personal and social development, to a view of lifelong learning which through the 1980s till now she, like others, sees as being intertwined with economics. The highpoint for this model, she claims is the period of the late

1990s and early 21st century. A period, she claims, when neoliberalism meets third way capitalism. It is during this period in the UK, when we have politicians such as Blair's rallying call in 1997 for "Education, Education, Education" and more sober statements such as Blair's proposing that "Education is the most important economic policy we have (2003), or Blunkett (2002) "Education is the key to prosperity and an economic imperative" (Hylands, (2002). As stated earlier in this study, as a professional involved in a range of higher education initiatives designed to widen access to higher education, I am loathe to dismiss the liberalisation and social change direction of education policies and practices instigated by 3rd Way politicians, such as Blair and Blunkett. For them lifelong learning and access to higher education is a tool for inclusion rather than exclusion. Notwithstanding this, the point made by Walker about the nature of the learning within the "new neoliberal and 3rd Way pedagogy" is one which needs to be interrogated and explored through an examination of student aims, expectations and experiences of their learning, within this curriculum model. "In this framework lifelong learning becomes a way to help citizens adapt to an already existing world. It has been given no real role in re-imagining an entirely different world order where the free market or corporate profits no longer remain an unexamined "good". (Walker, 2009, P.87) According to Walker models such as that outlined by OECD continue to dominate approaches to lifelong learning and the higher education curriculum. The rhetoric of transferable skills and industry-led and endorsed learning continues to have a high profile in higher education curriculum in 2014. It seems to match comments made in OECD publications such as, "A successful lifelong learner is one who is flexible, adaptable and one who develops transferable skills." (OECD, 2005) or in earlier publications such as Re-thinking Human Capital (OECD, 2002), "a lifelong learner is one who can improve his firms and country's productivity, one who has better decision making skills, an awareness of opportunities." (OECD, 2002, p.128). Or "It is the purpose of government and already self-proclaimed lifelong learners in this case to show how skills can open the door to their world." (OECD, 2003, p.175). Curriculum development in higher education during this period evidences the rapid adoption and adaptation of pedagogical and learning models advocated by such reports. One of the central aims of this research study is to question both how successful such approaches have been adopted by international students and whether they legitimately summarise the nature of learning, as experienced and desired by participants within this study. Another point raised by Walker and of direct relevance to the international student experience is the adoption of commercial practices by higher education. As Walker

(2010) argues, “Progressive and critical educators assert that by taking the neoliberal globalised order as given, lifelong learning has not only been promoted to help citizens adapt to that order but in fact this has been accompanied by adult educators, higher education and administrators internalising the free market ethos and offering for profit and for the economy courses.” (Walker, 2009, p. 88)

Within this context, it is important to consider and see how international students are viewed and view their own experience of higher education, for example, are they fully integrated, or at the margins? Do they simply represent “cash cows” for Western higher education? Is it this free market which has led to the current institutional concerns with the quality of the international student experience? These are questions which will be addressed throughout this study.

However, a central tension which is not addressed in this study but will be addressed in future work is that of the teacher within this context. The tension may be that many critical educators feel stuck between critiquing the dominant framework of learning and the obligation of helping their students to succeed within this model. One response to this tension is provided by Brunner (1987). He suggests an approach which has little presence in current higher education models. His suggestion is that teachers should help and encourage their students to “dream”. To encourage their students to imagine and create a world which “could be”. The transformative nature of a relationship between tutor and student would then become an essential element of a lifelong learning model. Walker (2009) adds to this proposal by quoting Freire, “Dreaming is not a necessary political act, it is an integral part of the historico-social manner of being a person.” (Freire, 1991, cited by Walker, 2009, p 91). Freire sharply attacks the neoliberal, no alternative discourse. He is appalled by the requirement for individuals, even in their higher education to, “accommodate the facts as given- as if they could be given in no other way-as if we had no duty to fight.” (Freire, 1990, p.90 cited by Walker 2010, p.90) Walker highlights Freire’s higher education prison metaphor. Freire’s point is a stark warning of the potential negative effect of lifelong learning. For Freire if we don’t dream, challenge and question through learning then lifelong learning is simply either a life sentence or at best a prison sentence with remission on retirement.

There may be, or should be, a place for dreaming and change in higher education. The UnivX strap line is one which states that the university provides an environment for the student to

“Dream, Plan and Achieve”. Whether participants in this study are able to fulfil all three elements of UnivX mission is examined in this study. Freire’s dramatic prison metaphor may be an overstatement but it does add a balance to the possibly over optimistic views of lifelong learning particularly when its outcomes are linked so explicitly to human capital investment. Boltanski and Chiapello, (1995, 2005) make a significant contribution to the debate on the meaning and practice of lifelong learning. Their proposal is that human life is changed by this new lifelong learning narrative into one of constant learning where the distinction between private and professional life is blurred and diminished. They take this point further to suggest that lifelong learning has replaced Weber’s protestant work ethic as the defence of capitalism. In Boltanski and Chiapello’s (1995, 2005) view lifelong learning is the new spirit or defence of capitalism where “the development of oneself and one’s employability is the long term project underlying all the others” (Boltanski and Chiapello 1999/2005, p.111). The logic of the new lifelong learning narrative then is one where identity is flexible, the individual welcomes and is able to deal with change and engagement with new cultures and contexts. In this case employability and personal success rather than dreaming, spirituality, creativity or change is the primary motivator. Flexible identity and cultural change then is the dominant feature of the lifelong learner and may be demonstrated significantly in individuals who choose to become postgraduate international students. Whether this conclusion is evidenced by the international postgraduate students participating in this research is examined in this study.

This discussion provides the context and stimulus for the second research objective addressed in this study.

RO 2: To examine the nature of globalised lifelong learning within the higher education sector.

Culture, Identity and Nationalism:

“There is no way out of the game of culture.....” Pierre Bourdieu (1984)

Within the research literature concerned with international students a significant view emerged in the mid1990s. This view as suggested in the introduction became something of the orthodoxy within UK higher education and within the research site UnivX. As indicated

earlier, the view is that many international students, particularly those from South East Asia, appear to share strong, immutable national cultural identities. The outcome of these cultural identities are made manifest when these individuals are expected to engage with the interactive, critical and independent curriculum requirements of their programmes of study in their UK university. They appear not to engage, contribute or be critical in their programmes of study. They are viewed as passive learners. Significantly, this apparent behaviour is increasingly not traced solely to problems of language, assimilation, class sizes, preparation or learning delivery methods within host universities but rather to the influence of national cultures. As suggested in the introductory chapter practice in some parts of higher education now operates within this orthodoxy which as Currie (2007) proposes may have limited empirical basis. This study examines whether a misunderstanding of culture may have led to inappropriate practice. For example, highlighting the impact of stereotypical essentialist views of cultural impact, can lead to a culture or practice of, “blaming the victims” as in the apparently nationally, culturally passive student discussed in this study. This point is made powerfully by Patel and Lynch (2012) and becomes a driver of their Glocalization model, as an attempt to replace a deficit view of the international student within western higher education. However, as Abramson (2012) points out, practice in higher education may be even more complex than this. Tension exists between those who attempt to acknowledge the importance of cultural “inputs” on behaviour and those who ignore its role “while simultaneously imposing their own normative assumptions about what all people want” (Abramson, 2012, p.178). This study questions whether such normative assumptions and apparent universal consensus about the nature of outcomes of learning are inevitable and logical outcomes of the neo-liberal models of globalised lifelong learning, rather than inevitable cultural and national manifestations. Answers to such questions may be arrived at through ethnographic studies such as this, which attempts to capture the experience of individuals, rather than make generalisations about national groups.

A growing and insightful trend in the international student literature highlights concerns with the trend of viewing international students as a homogeneous group. Koehne (2005), almost a decade ago, for example, calls for the need to explore the complex identities of international students, rather than locating them in certain cultural or national groups. Also, significantly for this work, Tran (2008) highlights the fact that little work has been carried out on individual international student strategies, personal aims, expectations and personal learning

support systems. Doherty and Singh (2005), also a decade ago, suggested that the student voice is largely missing. At that point little had been written about postgraduate international student experience, from the student perspective. In effect, what students say about their experiences and the strategies they use to succeed had been under researched. As suggested and referenced in the introduction chapter, the omission is now being addressed. There is currently rapid growth in research in this area. It would appear that some of the concerns I felt at the beginning of this research were shared by other researchers working in this area at this time.

The need to investigate the student experience from the student voice and a fundamental disquiet with the national cultural explanations for behaviour was the initial catalyst for this research. To equate leaning behaviour so directly to national cultures, demands consideration of what we mean by culture.

Culture is a powerful, dynamic, multi-layered, and ephemeral concept. It may still be what Gerth and Mills (1954, p.xxii) over half a century ago described as one of the “spongier” words in the social sciences or what Alvesson (1993) later described as a word for the “lazy”. It is easy to use culture in an unreflective, uncritical and under-theorised way. Possibly some of the cultural dissonance responses to international student behaviour fit into the category of being uncritical and largely un-theorised. Notwithstanding its “pulpy” characteristics, any understanding of the experience of the globalised lifelong learner requires a theoretically informed understanding of culture and its impact on human behaviour. The aim in this chapter is to identify explanatory theories of culture and themes which can be used to inform methodological decisions, data analysis and interpretation in this thesis in relation to the central research question of models of the globalised lifelong learner.

At this point, it is important to briefly revisit the question of national identity, culture and behaviour. It is valuable to reflect on some of the current and seminal literature of national identities, before considering their effects on identity and behaviour within the globalised context. Several current commentators such as Rembold and Carrier (2011) ask the question whether national identities are still pertinent in an age of “globalisation”. They point out that by the mid -1990s some writers had diagnosed the end of the nation state. They (Rembold and Carrier, 2011, p.361) cite Gruhenno, 1995 and Ohmae, 1995. What is significant for this study are the conclusions Rembold and Carrier arrive at as an outcome of the apparent

disappearance of the nation state. “When out of the manifold identities of an individual the nation as a reference point diminishes, other more situationally defined identities (Campbell and Rew, 1999, p.10) take on greater significance.”(Rembold and Carrier, 2011, p.361). One of the issues in this study resonates with this question. Are the identities of postgraduate international students influenced significantly by their experience as postgraduate international students? Does the identity of international student or globalised learner take on greater significance than nationality during their period of study?

The themes which underpin Rembold and Carrier’s (2011) article are of particular significance to this study. Their work explores how the features of globalisation, examined earlier in this study, such as migration, the increasing borderless flow of economies, fundamental changes in communication technologies effect behaviour and identity. They ask a question of particular significance to this study, if students have an opportunity to meet “citizens from all over the world” then “what impact do these experiences have on identity construction?”

In the same work, Rembold and Carrier (2011) provide a very useful overview of conceptual approaches to the studies of national identities. They stress the significance of context in identity building. Their work (Rembold and Carrier, 2011) is part of a multi-disciplinary well established approach to the exploration of identities and national identity. From an historical disciplinary perspective, the 1980s witnessed the work of Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) and the 1990s Hobsbawm (1990) in which they questioned the ideological groundings of nation states. As Rembold and Carrier (2011) suggest these texts, “set in motion reflections about the construction and management of national identities” (Rembold and Carrier 2011, p.362). Anderson’s (2006) work is also highlighted by Rembold and Carrier (2011) as a ground breaking study highlighting the “constructivist” approach in history and Anderson’s assertion that “nations are imagined communities generated by the evolution of print capitalism (Anderson, 2006: revised ed., pp. 44-45 cited by Rembold and Carrier 2011, p. 362). From a geographical perspective Rembold and Carrier (2011) refer to the term the “spatial turn” and the work of Doreen Massey (1993). As Rembold and Carrier (2011) point out Massey argues that there is a positive and dynamic relationship between place and identity, in her words “a progressive sense of place” (Massey 1993). What may be of significance to this study is her conclusion, that identities are flexible, multiple and constructed in particular time and space.

This may be of even more importance at a time of globalisation, migration and travel and therefore of major significance to the experience and identity construction of the international transient students participating in this study (Killick, 2011). One of the central questions raised by Massey and others such as Appadurai (2005), writing from an anthropological perspective is therefore, whether “local” or specific identities, such as that of being a transient, globalised learner, ever take precedent over earlier identities, such as those created as nationalities. Several writers suggest that this may be the case if relationships are made on a transient, fleeting and globalised basis. As Rembold and Carrier (2011, p. 365) suggest writers such as Appadurai (2005) “hold soil and place to be no longer central to identity construction.” He defends “locality” as a lived experience in a globalised and de-territorialised world.” However, other writers are reluctant to dismiss the significance of nationality to identity so readily. They suggest that the process of identity formation is more complex and more layered. The argument here being, that national identities may dissolve in some situations, but they also can readily recompose and be persistent and significant as the situation demands. Their view is redolent of and linked to concepts of hybridity. The view of hybridity here is significantly not that of simple ethnic or cultural sharing, but of a perceived change in identity through immersion in another culture. Notions of hybridity are examined specifically in this study through the experience of a number of participants. An exploration of whether culture has a permanent or transient impact on identity and behaviour is a legitimate point, which will be considered throughout this study, but to do this convincingly requires further clarity with the concept of culture.

Abramson (2012 p.155) suggests “during the last half-century, competing understandings of culture and how it affects individual and collective action have rapidly risen and withered in modern social science disciplines such as sociology, anthropology and political science (Ortner, 1984, Sewell, 1999 cited by Abramson 2012, p.155)”. The concept of culture as “high culture” or “artistic expression” or even “national culture” still has a significant place in a general understanding of the concept, however these perspectives have been replaced in social inquiry by views of culture as socially produced motivations, values and actions (Weber, 1905) or culture as collectively available skills for dealing with everyday problems (Swidler 1986, 2001) or culture as shared meanings, shared representations and understandings, (Geertz, 2000). Burke’s (2008) work on cultural hybridity has resonance for this study. His reasonably broad definition of culture is helpful in this overview,

This essay will confine itself to cultural trends, defining the term “culture” in a reasonably broad sense to include attitudes, mentalities and values and their expression, embodiment or symbolization in artefacts, practices and representations” (Burke,2009 p.5).

However, even this “reasonable” view is contested. As Abramson (2012) proposes views on culture are often set as opposing and definitive views of what “culture is”. With Abramson I will suggest that a mixing and integrating of these approaches and recognition of the significance of time and social context is necessary to gain a real understanding of the relationship between culture and human behaviour.

The time and social context of this study is specific and significant. The study is located within English higher education, in the institutional UnivX case study context, during the time frame of 2009-2015. It is within this context, that consideration will be given to the effect of cultures, nationality and identity on the experience of international postgraduate students.

Recent work such as that completed by Rusheweyh and Lanser (2013) on performing identity, culture and nationalism make a number of relevant points to this study. They are influenced by earlier seminal writers on nationality, ethnicity and identity such as Hall (1990, 1991). They suggest that although national identities are relevant and endurable they are not static. They argue that national identities are “not given indefinitely but are always reinterpreted and restructured. They are acquired through strategic negotiations and remain a dynamic, changeable relationship with national, ethnic and religious belonging” (p.192). They, like Hall , (1990) do not underestimate or falsify the power of ethnicity , culture and religion in identity formation and consequent behaviour but they stress that cultural identity is positioned and remains always in a specific context, in time or in space, in respect of the past, present and the future (Hall, 1990). It is as Clifford succinctly and dramatically proposes that identity is a matter of “becoming as well as being” (Hall, 1990, p.225 cited by Clifford, 2001, p.477) in other words identity formation is a process of “dialectical entanglement of indigenous “roots” and travelling/migratory “routes”. In this study I argue that narrative approaches to research can not only capture this process, but may also be instrumental in creating the “routes.”

Theorising the dynamic between “root” and “route” has been undertaken by numerous writers. Those with particular significance to this study include Bourdieu and Giddens. I share something of the concern highlighted by Reay (2004) that some contemporary educational research seems keen to overlay research analyses with the work of Bourdieu to provide gravitas rather than analytical rigour. I will return to this point in the following methodology chapter. However, I do share Reay’s view (2004) that for Bourdieu the goal of sociological research is to uncover “the most deeply buried structures of the different social worlds that make up the social universe, as well as the mechanisms’ that tend to ensure their reproduction or transformation, (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 1 cited by Reay 2004, p.431). For this study,’ the concept of habitus may be helpful in unpicking the structure of identity and behaviour demonstrated by the international students under study. For Bourdieu, habitus is part of his attempt to, “transcend the dualisms of agency-structure, objective-subjective and the micro-macro” Reay, 2004, p. 432). For Bourdieu, it is the interaction of habitus with field or structure which determines behaviour. Habitus represents the system of behaviour an individual is predicated to act with and upon. It predisposes individuals to certain forms of behaviour, based on experiences, and expectations or cultures. Habitus can, for example, exclude out of character behaviour. As Reay (2004, p.433) points out “Bourdieu views the dispositions, which make up habitus, as the products of opportunities and constraints framing the individual’s earlier life experiences.” Bourdieu seems to be suggesting that individual habitus, demonstrates a degree of uniform behaviour through shared cultural experiences, whilst at the same recognising that individual experiences can be diverse and lead to forms of non “conventional behaviour, “Just as no two individual histories are identical, so no two individual habitus are identical” (Bourdieu, 1990c, p. 46). So, habitus may predispose individuals to certain forms of behaviour, but it allows for individual agency. Whether habitus excludes the unfamiliar, i.e. doing things not characteristic of previous experience in the case of international postgraduate students in higher education, such as apparently challenging their professors, is considered as part of this research. According to Bourdieu, habitus can be continually restructured by individuals, leading to what he calls a “cultured” or learned habitus. Learning and change is thus possible for the individual. Bourdieu’s empirical work supporting this theory is largely based on his work with the Algerian working class in the 1950s and 1960s. Here, he argues that a new social reality transcending earlier cultural/life experiences could be achieved. He argues that choice is at the heart of habitus, the art of inventing and learning. However, Bourdieu alongside this positive view of cultural

change and learning, highlights the limitations of choice through the resilience of structures or in Bourdieu's terminology "fields". As Reay (2004) points out there is a close dynamic between habitus and field.

"Social reality exists, so to speak, twice, in things and in minds, in fields and in habitus, outside and inside social agents. And when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it is like a "fish in water": it does not feel the weight of the water and it takes the world about itself for granted. (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 127 cited by Reay, 2004, p.436.)

The logic of this statement is that when habitus encounters a field with which it is not familiar, the resulting differences can generate change and learning. This is a point which may be of significance to the individuals in this study who are all in an unfamiliar setting and often at a point of transition or change. This point is later interrogated through the analysis of narrative, with reference in particular to the influence of discursive patterns such as canonical narratives (Bruner, 1987) and their influence on identity building and behaviour.

As indicated above, Bourdieu's work was based on a marginalised or outsider group, i.e. the Algerian working class. There is a growing literature on marginalised groups in higher education. Literature and research on working class student experiences of higher education and the growing disability research in higher education literature, addresses the issue of marginalisation and the need for the student voice. There may be some significant similarities and resonances to the accounts of marginalisation provided through this research on the international student experience. It will be interesting to see whether comments made in this research mirror the following points made about working class students that: "A majority of students (Working Class) go through university rather than university going through them" and "students take up fractured spaces within Higher Education where people can participate without damaging or changing identities or influencing what happens" (Archer and Leathwood, 2003, cited Reay, D. et al 2009.p.6.).

This observation raises interesting questions and comparisons in relation to Bourdieu and Passeron's (1979) earlier notions of working class and now in my case international students as potentially being, "fish out of water" in educational contexts. Archer and Leathwood's (2003) observations on working class students taking up fractured spaces within Higher Education, without damaging or changing identity, or influencing "what happens" may be

shared by the international students under study. Habitus provides a tool for analysing the experience of social agents, such as the students under study and the objective structures or fields which constitute the experience. As Reay (2004) suggests the dynamic between habitus and field may be a useful way of viewing the relationship between structure and individual action within large scale settings such as universities. However, if Bourdieu's theorising is to be useful to this study, as Trowler (2012) suggests, it must be used as a tool for interrogating the data, rather than a simple reference to the great thinkers. Hopefully, using Bourdieu's theory within narrative discursive theory will provide effective analysis of data produced in this study. This point is discussed explicitly in the methodology chapter and will be revisited in the final sections of this chapter.

The importance of structure and the resilience of culture, in relation to identity and behaviour, as highlighted by Bourdieu (1992) is minimised by a number of influential current social and educational theorists. There is a tendency in some theorization of social change and identity formation to place reflexivity at the heart of modern identity formation. In this theorization, the outcomes of major social trends such as "globalisation" and the apparent breakdown of cultural barriers come together to forge the self, through a transforming and liberating process of reflexivity (Adams, 2003). What is particularly significant for this research study is that this type of theory is not only predicated on the impact of major global changes but is also resonant of "neo modernist" and "neoliberal" discourses of the self (Mestrovic 1998, Adams 2003).

Kristensson Ugglas work on globalisation (2002, 2008), referred to earlier in this work makes an important contribution to the theorising of culture, identity and behaviour through flexibility and reflection. He does this in his claim that, lifelong learning has become the new life narrative (2008). His argument is that globalisation has led to a new world order demanding flexibility in identity and behaviour. "Human life refigured to the new life narrative of lifelong learning is constituted as a process of constant learning. And every person is expected to refigure his/her life in accordance with this new narrative identity" (Kristensson Ugglas, 2008, p.215). He cites Alheit's (2002) view that this process leads to identity and behaviour being a product of a process of "biographicalization" by the individual. Here, the individual constructs their identity based on their current individual experiences and expectations. He proposes that this is inevitable with the disappearance of the normal/traditional life/work script (Alheit, 2002). Fejes (2006) summarises this approach as

being one where the individual facing a process of constant change, has to adopt a “general educableness” where they become “self-regulated actors responsible for their own futures.” (Fejes, 2006, p.65 cited by Kristennson Ugglå, 2007, p.215). Rose’s earlier work (1989/1999) suggests that this new self is organised through flexible identities, choice, autonomy and self-fulfilment. Kristennson Ugglå (2007) also highlights Sennett’s work (1998/1999), who paints a picture of this flexible individual, as someone who has deliberately lost all links to the past, but who has the skills, abilities, networks and temperament to associate and disassociate with “cultures” as required.

This research study explores whether the postgraduate international students, as examples of the globalised lifelong learner, demonstrate these flexible, “liberated” identities. However, in order to do this within the specific higher education context, it is necessary to also consider Giddens’s work on identity, culture and reflection. This study suggests that Giddens’ theorisation on identity and reflection forms the basis of many of the curriculum and pedagogical models experienced by the participants in this study. This study also argues that Giddens’s (1994, 1998, 2003) theorization of identity, represents the core of this approach and as such provides, although possibly misplaced, a theoretical framework for much current learning policy and practice for international students in higher education. His basic argument is that reflexivity now takes on a core and extended role in processes of identity formation once it comes into contact with the “post traditional” settings which emerge from modernity’s dynamism (Adams, 2003). What is particularly significant for this study is that international students undertaking globalised lifelong learning and immersion in new cultures could be seen as being a prime example of modernity’s “boundary free dynamism”. For Giddens “reflexive self- awareness provides an individual with the opportunity to construct self-identity without the shackles of tradition, culture and class (Adams, 2003, p.222). Giddens is not alone in such views. As Adams (2003) argues Beck’s (1997) “risk society”, Lash’s “reflective modernity” and theories such as Resource Mobilization Theory and Rational Choice Theory, see the process of identity formation as an individual making rational and calculating decisions about who they are and what they will be. Rational Choice Theory understands all social phenomena in terms of calculations made by self-interested individuals.

One specific point of relevance to the questions raised in this study is highlighted by Giddens in 1992, “The self today is for everyone a reflexive project – a more or less continuous interrogation of past, present and future.” (Giddens, 1992, p.30). In this view individuals are

seen as no longer being bound to fixed, culturally given identities, including national identities, “We have no choice but to choose how to be and how to act” (Giddens, 1994, p. 75). There was a burgeoning of similar theorising at this time evident within the work of Giddens, Castells and Beck. In brief, these authors argue that as cultural and traditional barriers breakdown, reflexivity provides a capability for the individual to construct and reconstruct the self. Such views have been central to the neoliberal views of learning and globalisation and lifelong learning policies as outlined earlier in this work. Critics of reflexive self-identity theory, such as Alexander (1996) argue that culture is a more powerful realm of experience and that reflexivity can “be understood only within the context of cultural tradition, not outside of it” (Alexander, 1996, p 136). In Alexander’s view the claims for reflexivity put forward by Giddens, Beck et al are little more than a restatement of the claims of modernization theory. The following comment reinforces this point:

“Beck etc. argue that tradition and culture once structured and determined our lives in our ignorance. Thus retrospectively in terms of western culture, we were once naïve cultural dupes. More “traditional” cultures which still persist today may also be perceived as more naïve than the predominately post traditional west for “global” society in this context. In post traditional society reflexivity has released the subject from such deterministic constraints, allowing her or him to construct identity and environment with new-found freedom. Similarly, theories of modernization suggested that rationally ordered capitalist economies were the pinnacle of civilization, as they successfully swept away the weight of tradition, which held back “development” if adhered to.” (Adams, 2003 p.225)

I have included this quotation, as Adams encapsulates many of the features of the modernization agenda, which provides the theoretical and political framework which neoliberal models of globalised lifelong learning appear to be based on and on which significant theories of identity formation, such as those provided by Giddens (1992) appear to rest within. This study considers whether proposing unconstrained reflexivity and objectivity as the basis for action and identity formation and lifelong learning, overlooks crucial factors such as context, wealth, nationality and language which may still have significant influence on the choices individuals make. One way of coming to an informed decision, as to the significance of all these factors, including reflexivity and learning may be found by listening to the voice of the individual learner.

Narrative, Biography and Identity:

There is a well-established concern with narrative and identity in a number of areas such as social psychology, discursive psychology and narrative in psychology (Taylor and Littleton, 2006) which add different perspective to the modernist thinkers such as Giddens. An influential set of work for this study is provided by Taylor (2005) and Taylor and Littleton (2006). In many ways their work echoes and responds to the concerns raised by Alexander (1996) and Adams (2003). The following quotation is added as it encapsulates this point and summarises the foundations of the approach to narrative employed in this study: “We introduce this biography as a situated construction produced for and constituted within each new occasion of talk but shaped by previously presented versions and also by understandings which prevail in the wider discursive environment, such as expectations about the appropriate trajectory of a life.” (Taylor and Littleton, 2006, p 23.) Taylor and Littleton’s work adds an important balance to some of the “identity through reflexivity” models outlined above. It suggests that the almost “Romantic” notion of the individual as hero seeking their own untrammelled destiny, through reflexivity proposed by Giddens et al, may be at best inappropriate in dismissing previous experience and wrong to reject the significance of culture and nationality to identity formation and behaviour. The arguments outlined in this section are a response to the third research objective explored in this study:

RO 3: To study the significance of culture, cultural experiences and nationality on identity and learning.

The following chapter discusses the process in coming to a decision to adopt a number of narrative based research methods, to allow participants to reflect on their experience, their identity and their future. The intention is to provide a range of integrated research methods which provide an “extended, discursive narrative focus to explore the possibilities and constraints which speakers bring to an encounter from their previous identity work, or in other words how they are positioned by who they already are.” (Taylor 2005, cited by Taylor and Littleton, 2006, p.25). The following account is therefore a response to the final research objective: **RO 4: To consider whether narrative research approaches are able to both capture and develop experience and learning.**

Chapter Three: Methodology, Methods, Data Collection and Analysis:

As indicated throughout the introduction and the literature review, what began as a relatively specific wish to understand how international postgraduate students responded to a curriculum model demanding independence and criticality, gradually developed into a focus on the attitudes, values and motivation for their learning and the impact the experience has on identity formation. I chose to focus on motivation to learn, experience and agency as these seem to be critical factors and provide a critical site for study of the fundamental questions about the nature and purpose of postgraduate international learning.

As stressed earlier, in this study, after an intense literature review in year one of the study, I began to realise that conventional higher education curriculum practice relating to international students, national cultures and learning was founded largely on uncritical, un-theorised almost “essentialist” and neo-liberal models of culture and learning. Much of the understanding and practice seemed to be founded on top-down, rationalist and essentialist models of the curriculum, which all students had to fit. To put this simplistically, the dominant curriculum model, even with its rhetoric of independence, inclusion and criticality, in practice, demanded an increasingly centralised obedience to content and process, from all students. For this study, one of the key points being, that if an international student didn’t fit this model, then it was either their personal problem or the result of cultural dissonance. As outlined in the introduction, such conclusions failed to take into account, or acknowledge the responses and type of learning I perceived in my professional practice. I wanted to take the opportunity provided by this study, to assess critically the tensions between the dominant curriculum models and the experience and the learning of international postgraduate students.

As outlined in the introduction UnivX is a particularly strong research site for this study. I will make no substantive claims for the “typicality” or generalizability from the experience of Univ X apart from in the general sense of it demonstrating as with similar post 1992 higher education institutions (HEI) a readiness to adopt many of the features of the neo-liberal “massified” new university. Like all universities, it is unusual in many ways. Some of its unique features, such as location, are factors which make it attractive to many of the respondents in this research. Its history, practices, student body and organisational cultures are distinctive even in comparison with other post 1992, ex- polytechnic urban universities. Moreover, I make no attempt to compare this university with other similar institutions. It is

not a comparative study. However, I will argue that the case-study or close-up (Trowler, 2011) insider research methodology adopted in this study is intrinsically appropriate to meet the aims of the research. In making these decisions about research questions and , I have rejected others, both explicitly and implicitly. In terms of the focus of the study, there are inevitably regrets, in particular the ability to follow-up the learning of individual participants over a longer period of time, or the role of the teacher in this process. This would be too large a project for a single researcher within the time frame of the PhD. However, my professional role and interests may facilitate such an approach in the future. This and other potentially important areas for further study emerging from this work are outlined at the conclusion of this thesis.

It is also important to stress, that this study is not designed as a piece of educational action research in the traditional sense of that term, (Stenhouse, 1975) or as an attempt to provide a solution to a problem. The main focus is to capture the experience and voice of ground level actors. This is a well-travelled path (Goffman, 1952, Lipsky 1983 et al) of describing and attempting to explain and understand “what is going on here” (Alvesson, 1993). In this case, “what is going on” with postgraduate international students, a group which until recently I suggest has been under researched in this way. However, notwithstanding the emphasis on the experience of individual students, there are lessons from this research for policy makers and curriculum designers. I would hope that one of the lessons is captured through the use of the narrative process, per se. If the concept of the student voice is moved from being a rhetorical policy statement or an evaluation tool, to an intrinsic part of learning, then learning for all parties may improve. I will suggest, that the narrative approach used in this study, may be an effective way of capturing the student voice and of responding and acting on it, as a learning process, rather than simply as an evaluation tool.

The primary data for this study comes from three sources. These are written narrative, interviews and narratives as conversations in action, with the researcher. This approach raises a number of ethical issues:

The research process follows the standard ethical procedures as prescribed by the research code for the University (UnivX Code of Practice for Research, November 2014). The code covers areas of good practice in research and provides detailed guidance and core standards for good practice in research. The code has been adapted from the UK Research Integrity

Office Code of Practice for Research. It also aligns with the Universities UK Concordat to support research integrity. To support these principles and procedures, the university insists that a number of rigorous processes and procedures must be completed successfully, before commencing research. The principles which these codes are based on, of direct relevance to this study, are non-coercion; that is the freedom and confidence to say no, confidentiality; based in appropriate anonymity and beneficence. The concept of beneficence in research ethics is one warranting further comment in relation to this study. Beneficence stresses that the researcher must have the welfare of the research participant as a goal of the research study. In other words, it should benefit rather than harm the individual. The research outcomes should also lead to the benefit of others. Both factors are explicit aims of this research. On a wider scale the aim is to provide benefit through further insight and strategies to support and improve the learning of international postgraduate students. For the individual participants, emphasis is placed on the narrative method per se, to enable exploration of the hypothesis, that narrative methods of this kind with this group of participants rather than being simply an appropriate “harmless” method of data collection actually benefits the learning and development of the participants at this threshold stage of development. I suggest that the first generic aim is covered by the conventional research ethics procedures and conventions but that the second requires further consideration and sensitivity to some of the ethical dimensions of the insider researcher process.

The conventional ethical research process to ensure informed consent was completed and given approval by the University Research Ethics Committee before the research began. Briefly the process being that the participants were sent via their university e-mail account the participant information sheet for each element of the research. The information sheets are designed to cover all of the normal requirements set out in codes of practice. These include an explanation of the study, the action required of participants and whether risks were involved. Throughout the research a particular emphasis was placed on voluntary participation and the promise of anonymity. As the research was focused on participants’ current programme, I was anxious to avoid a sense of obligation; that students felt that they should participate. In other words, as the request was coming from a senior member of their university teaching staff, would they have the confidence to say no. Participation response rates were good, in the sense that there was not a universal acceptance of the offer to participate. It was pleasing that students felt comfortable enough to reject the invitation.

Some rejected the process completely and others agreed to participate in specific elements. Only individuals who had signed the consent forms took part in the research. The approach received ethical approval from the University Research Ethics Committee. I did not think, and the committee agreed, that the process would be detrimental or cause harm to the participants, as long as the guarantee of anonymity was kept. Anonymity and disclosure became an interesting element of the study. The need for anonymity was discussed at length with all participants. This was necessary as the research questions were likely to produce personal and potentially contentious answers. However, many of the participants claimed not to be concerned with anonymity and some even stated a preference to be identified, almost as named champions of particular causes. As an experienced practitioner and interviewer I chose not to follow this suggestion and as the research progressed it became even more evident that the standard procedures were correct. The identification details agreed at the beginning of the process of name, gender, age, nationality, programme, experience were reduced to age and gender to protect anonymity. Lee (2014) refers to this process as ethics in practice or micro ethics, “which describe the ostensibly insignificant ethical dilemmas faced by a researcher in the field” (Lee, 2014, p.302). She states that this aspect may be ignored when ethics applications are submitted. I am not suggesting that adopting a flexible approach to anonymity would be ignored by the University Ethics Committee however, I am using this point to illustrate the importance of an acknowledgement of micro-ethics or ethics in practice which the researcher must demonstrate.

In the case of this research cross-cultural and insider research issues have to be acknowledged and dealt with. Lee’s (2014) recent article encapsulates some of the concerns I felt, whilst completing this research. She is particularly concerned with the dynamic between insider and outsider research from a cross cultural or alternative “worldview”. As a Chinese national she claims to be a “cultural insider” (Lee, 2014, p. 299) with her research group of fellow Chinese doctoral students. In my case I am an outsider to the non-western cultures shared by many of the participants in my study, but an “insider” in relation to the context within which we are both exploring the experience of being an international postgraduate student. The point made by Trowler, 2012 and Katzell and King, 2014, that in encounters of this kind in “close-up” institutional insider research, it is impossible to ever completely be an insider or outsider is confirmed in this study. I am therefore not as concerned as Lee (2014) is with the insider/outsider dynamic however, I share her ethical concerns in relation to the purpose and

research processes we use with participants. For Lee (2014) the Western ethics code on which the research ethics code is based causes her concern, “The ethics codes and guidelines conflicted with my cultural ethics” (Lee, 2014, p.300). Her specific concerns, on one level, relate to a perceived clash of world views, but alongside this she raises the issue of the possibility of cultural dominance or cultural colonialism, created through the Western research process. Such a concern is shared by several researchers. It is an ethical concern which must be recognised and addressed in this work. The relatively current work of Gobo, 2011, Ryen, 2011 and Yang 2011 provide examples of this concern. Ryen’s (2011) work in particular “Exploring or exploiting? Qualitative methods in times of globalisation” is particularly apt to this research study as it not only concerned with international students, i.e. individuals from outside “western cultures” but is also concerned with globalisation, culture and notions of cultural dissonance.

A summary of the main arguments suggests that there are three answers or approaches to the question of the impact of world views or culture on research and the ethics of research. Briefly, views range from a straightforward conclusion, redolent of dominant views on globalisation, which is that the globalised worldview is legitimately represented and reflected in the western approach to research. This has now become the dominant world view and the consequent globalised research orthodoxy. A second, or alternative view, proposes that multiple approaches, representing alternative world views, can exist and that we can all learn from these approaches. My research adopts the third approach. The proposition here is that although national cultures exist and alternative world views exist, they are not static “in this interconnected world, views and identities are intrinsically constructed within a time and place, they are “actively constructed narratives.” (Ryen, 2011, p.450 cited by Lee, 2014, p.300). Rather than exploiting participants in this view, the research process can be a process of exploring experience between all participants in the specific, contextualised research encounters. I suggest that this study explicitly adopts such an ethically appropriate exploratory research process. One of the aims of this study is to explore whether shared narrative discourses between the researcher and participant, not only captures “data”, but can also aid learning, identity formation and development. If this is so, then rather than this being a potentially exploitative relationship, the approach may develop learning and be beneficial both to the participants and the research process itself.

Floyd and Arthur (2012) also make a number of points relevant to this study and to the research approach adopted. The specific organizational role of the insider researcher raises a number of ethical points. For Floyd and Arthur (2012) being a “cultural insider” means sharing a common organizational culture with the participants, as I do in this study. Floyd and Arthur (2012) comment on a number of ethical points which could arise from this relationship. A significant consideration has to be my organizational role, identity and age. I am a mature, male, senior member of staff, viewed and referred to as “professor” by many of the participants, even though this is not my role or designation. It is not an exaggeration to suggest that participants pay “respect” and acknowledge my “wisdom” in this setting. Commentators such as Lee (2014) are concerned that “cultural” distance from the participants may hinder honesty and dialogue. Inevitably, I must consider whether perceptions of my role and seniority, hinders honesty and dialogue. This study deliberately considers whether this is the case, or whether participants respond comfortably, based on trust and a sense that the researcher is familiar with and sensitive to, the context under discussion. This point again relates to what Lee (2014, p.302) refers to as “Ethics in practice or micro ethics” or what Floyd and Arthur (2012) refer to as internal ethical engagements.

The aim of this explicit discussion of my response to the formal ethics code, the fundamental principles of non-coercion, confidentiality and beneficence and an acknowledgement of the need for an appropriate and sensitive response to the context and micro-ethics of the research process as it emerges, legitimises the ethical approach adopted for this study.

Sampling:

The size and make-up of the sample cannot be viewed as representative of the broader postgraduate international student population of UnivX. Therefore, the findings of the study are not generalizable in the sense that they cannot be applied to different populations (Bryman, 2012). In selecting a sample of international students for research, I was guided by the main consideration, of ensuring that participants had appropriate personal characteristics required to address the research questions. Consequently, personal characteristics in terms of, gender, age, nationality, and experience became the criteria for inclusion. In terms of gender, I wanted to interview a roughly equitable number of males and females. 60 per cent of the sample is male which provides a reasonable gender balance. I also wanted to include a range of age groups. This proved less easy to achieve. The majority of respondents fit into the 22-

28 age -group, although there are some older participants within the sample. Previous experience as a student and as a worker is an important consideration in relation to the models of the globalised lifelong learner underpinning this research. I, therefore, wanted to include individuals from a variety of backgrounds and nationalities. Although this was difficult to ascertain prior to the research, I was able to work with individuals from a wide range of professional and personal backgrounds. This may have been easier in a study, such as this, based on generic professional programmes of study, rather than in very specific disciplinary subjects. One of the main reasons for avoiding a subject/disciplinary approach or a specific subject was the aim of being able to interview participants from a wide range of experience and with a range of motivations for becoming an international postgraduate student. As I was interested in responses to criticality as an explicit element and demand of a postgraduate learning programme, my respondents were also drawn from a number of programmes which either used a specific introduction to criticality module or where criticality was explicitly demanded in assessment tasks. The sample included representatives from South East Asia, United States and Europe. The aim being, not to create a comprehensive geographical or national profile, but to ensure that the sample was roughly proportional to the geographic/nationality profile of postgraduate international students in the host institution. Within their programmes, the international students learn with UK home students.

Research Structure:

Stage One: Written narratives:

Respondents were asked to produce a written account of their decision to become an international student, how they found the new experience and what worked well. Forty students were asked to participate however only nine agreed and sent their story. The sample of students who took part is indicated in the participant description table below. Anonymity was assured and although identification details such as names, programmes and careers are available to the researcher they are not included in this text to ensure anonymity.

Figure 5: Written Narrative Sample

No:	Gender	Age
1.	M	24
2.	M	26
3.	F	25
4.	M	26
5.	F	26
6.	F	32
7.	M	26
8.	F	24
9.	M	31

Stage Two: Interviews:

The interviews were designed to gain first hand focused data from a range of international postgraduate students drawn from across the university. I conducted four pilot interviews with the aim of testing and refining the research questions and the research design and developing an appropriately ethical and practical interview process. The four pilot interviewees were selected to provide a range of nationalities, experience and subject specialism.

- Pilot interview 1: Male in his late twenties.
- Pilot interview 2: Male in his early thirties.
- Pilot interview 3: Female in her early forties.
- Pilot interview 4: Male in his early twenties.

The outcomes of the pilot interviews confirmed the relevance and appropriateness of the questions and the sample. In terms of the process, the pilot approach also highlighted the micro-ethics or ethics in action point discussed earlier. The significance of the interviewer as an internal and experienced member of staff within UnivX needed to be recognised. This required an initial discussion to put interviewees at ease and to ensure that they would feel free to answer questions or provide their views on possibly sensitive areas. There is a delicate and important balance for the insider researcher to take advantage of their knowledge and

role, whilst not allowing this to dominate or steer responses from other members of the organisation and in this case participants who were students. The importance of the locale of the interview, the need for genuine informed consent, the need for privacy and confidentiality, the need to prepare the respondent in advance, the need for individual and personal skills of empathy, listening and genuine interest were all confirmed as important in the pilot process. The approach taken, which was based on good social skills, experience in interviewing, informing participants about the nature of the research, adopting a genuinely friendly and interested manner and encouraging participants to “open-up” was very successful. The keenness with which many participants engaged with the process is a significant outcome of this research and became one of the main reasons to adopt an even more interpersonal narrative approach in part three of the research process. Comments emerging from the interactive narrative processes such as, *“this has been the most English I have spoken since I have been here”* or *“thank you for listening to me and taking me seriously, you are very kind”* or *“It is so important to have someone to talk to”*, or *“I have never thought about that till I said it”* confirmed the need for the research however, as earlier commentators such as Homan (1991) point out the outcomes of encouraging respondents to open up in this way also needs careful handling. It is important to confirm that participants are genuinely happy to share their views, and comments made about them and that their identities are appropriately protected. All participants completed the rigorous consent processes demanded by the university PhD process. Most agreed to participate and agreed that they were providing fully informed consent. A small number declined the invitation to participate.

Figure 6 provides a key to the interviewees. Quotation references from the sample will contain: number, gender, age. Further biographical details of the interview sample are kept securely by the researcher. Participants in the pilot interviews indicated that adding nationality, programme of study or details of previous experience would challenge anonymity. Therefore only minimum detail appears as individual identification.

Figure 6: Interview Sample

No:	Gender	Age
1.	M	23
2.	F	26
3.	M	26
4.	M	26
5.	F	23
6.	M	22
7.	M	26
8.	F	22
9.	M	24
10.	F	23
11.	F	24
12.	F	26
13.	M	28
14.	F	24
15.	M	31
16.	M	26
17.	F	24
18.	F	36
19.	M	25
20.	F	24
21.	F	25
22.	M	30
23.	F	27
24.	M	28
25.	F	25
26.	M	26
27.	M	25
28.	M	30
29.	M	31
30.	M	32
31.	M	37
32.	F	24
33.	F	35
34.	M	29

Stage Three: Narrative or Conversations in Action:

The narratives or conversations in action were designed to interrogate and explore responses made in stage one and two. An e-mail invitation was sent to previous participants and to international postgraduate students from across the university, who had not taken part in the research. A pilot conversation was held with a previous and new participant. The outcomes of the pilots confirmed the appropriateness of the approach and the sample. The ethical principles and procedures adopted in the individual phase of the research were duplicated in this, the final stage of the research.

The third part of the research process was conducted with a smaller group of nine participants. The aim of this research process is to allow participants to develop their ideas and responses in a relaxed, flexible, dynamic conversation with the researcher. Standardised structure is provided through the use of the same general prompts related to the research questions.

The ethical issue of ensuring anonymity is even more marked in this process. In the conversations participants seemed even more prepared to disclose significant personal information, as well as personal opinion. Consequently, to maintain anonymity, personal details are kept to the minimum. Participants are identified simply by nationality and age. Extracts selected from the conversations are also edited where specific detail makes identification of the individual possible.

Figure 7 Narrative Conversation Sample

1. Chinese	24
2. Thai	24
3. German	26
4. Chinese	26
5. Indonesian	27
6. Indonesian	27
7. Thai	34
8. Chinese	24
9. Chinese	23

Generating the questions:

This research study investigates the perceptions of individuals to the experience of being an international postgraduate student within one English university. The questions were generated through engagement with issues identified in the current research literature and were formed through a process of pilot interviews, evaluation and reflection.

The Questions:

Written Narratives:

The prompt: *Please provide a written account of why you have come to UnivX and how you have found this experience.*

Semi-Structured Interview Questions:

1. Background:

Something about self:

Where from?

What were you doing before coming to University X?

Why did you want to become an international postgraduate student?

2. Why UnivX?

How did you hear about UnivX?

What reasons affected your choice?

Why UnivX?

3. How did you feel before you came?

What were your expectations?

What did you know about England?

Were your expectations met?

Any surprises?

4. Tell me about your first two weeks

What happened?

What was significant?

What was difficult?

How did you handle any problems?

5. Introduction to the programme:

How were you introduced to the University?

How were you introduced to the programme?

What was helpful?

What was confusing or difficult?

How did you deal with any difficulties?

How did you make sense of what you were asked to do?

6. Critical and Independent learning:

What do you feel about being a critical and independent learner?

Do you understand what this means?

Were you surprised?

Were you confused?

How have you made sense of this?

7. The Group:

Who do you interact with?

How do you interact?

Do you interact with the programme group?

Do you interact with fellow (national) students on the programme?

Do you interact with other LJMU (national) students, how and why?

Do you have a part time job?

When and where do you speak English?

Has your English improved since you have lived here, why?

8. The University/Faculty;

Do you feel part of the University, why?

How would you improve the university/international student experience?

Would you recommend UnivX to other international students?

9. Globalisation:

What does the term globalisation mean to you?

Do you see yourself as a lifelong learner?

What next and why?

As indicated above, the research was conducted with a group of 34 international postgraduate students, selected to represent a range of age, gender, experience, nationality and programme of study. Within this sample there were young, mature, experienced and inexperienced students. For some, this was their first experience of international travel and learning in a different context, whereas others had a variety of personal and professional experiences and some had studied in different international locations. Selection was based on providing a sample representing a range of experiences.

A conventional, semi-structured interview approach was used. This allowed the main questions to be asked and it also enabled replies to be classified and understanding to be deepened through follow up questions and reflection.

All interviews were taped, and analysed for key ideas and emerging themes. A number of significant factors emerged from the semi-structured interview process which influenced the direction and the research approach taken for the third part of this research. A particularly significant process which emerged from the interviews can be best summarised as the student voice in action. In the following section a full description and rationale for the adopted narrative approach is provided. In this section it is important to highlight the significance of what was essentially an unanticipated outcome of the interview process. Rather than the research interview process being an imposition or burden, many participants were not only positive but grateful for the opportunity to engage and talk. Participants stated that the interview was either the first opportunity to express their opinions and in some cases even the first opportunity to use their English conversation skills since they had been in England. Many valued the opportunity to talk and many took full advantage by talking at length and in detail about their experiences, concerns and aspirations. The interview seemed to be offering a platform or “stage” for the student voice and the interviewer became the audience and catalyst for the drama. This “welcoming” of the opportunity to talk, reflect and engage with an “insider” became the catalyst for part three of this research study.

Narrative: Conversation prompts/Questions:

1. Preamble:

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research conversation. All of our conversation will be treated confidentially and your identity will be anonymised. If you feel uncomfortable at

any stage during this conversation please say so and if you want to stop or withdraw your consent please say so. There is no problem in you doing this. If you are happy let us start with your ideas on

Why you become a postgraduate international student?

2. Preamble:

Thank you let us now move from a discussion of your reasons for becoming an international postgraduate student to a conversation about your experience of being such a student in this university. I am particularly interested in your views about your experience of learning and how you have been taught. I am also specifically interested in your response to being asked to be a critical and independent learner.

Tell me about your experience of teaching and learning in this university and your views on being an independent and critical learner?

3. Preamble:

Thank you, I would like us to spend some time talking about and reflecting on a very concept for this research. The concept is culture. We have talked about university policy and practices, teaching and learning practices and cultures and even local cultures and practices you have witnessed while being a student. There is another aspect of culture which is of significance to this study and your experience as an international student. This is national culture. I would like us to talk about this from a number of directions. Can we start by thinking and talking about national culture and your nationality?

How important is your nationality to you?

4. Preamble:

Thank you (unless this was discussed in the previous answer) I would now like us to locate your ideas on nationality and national culture within your experience of being an international student in this university.

Is nationality important for you as an international student?

5. Preamble:

Thank you, we are now coming to the end of our conversation but I would like us to consider the current and popular concept of globalisation. Can we start by discussing what globalisation means to you.

What is globalisation?

6. Preamble:

Thank you (unless this was discussed in the previous answer). I am now interested in your views on yourself and globalisation. Some researchers and commentators would see you as an international student as an example of a globalised learner, do you agree?

Do you see yourself as an example of a globalised learner?

7. Preamble:

Thank you, and the final question to finish off our conversation.

What next, what will you do when you finish your programme?

Process Details:

As with participants in the written narrative, the pilot interviews and in the interviews, participants in the narrative conversations were keen to maintain anonymity. As noting their previous experience made identification easier, it does not appear in the quotation reference for the narrative accounts.

I will argue that the narrative conversations provide important stories which add to an understanding of the international postgraduate experience and help to answer the question whether such students are models of the globalised lifelong learner. I will also add to the debate concerning the place of story and narrative as research tools and engage with the deliberately provocative statement made by Labonte (2011, p.154) that “All important social learning is through stories.” I will also investigate the contention that it may now be time to revisit empowering approaches to education such as those proposed by Freire (1968) and consider whether storytelling and encouraging the student voice is a vital element for

effective learning for the international student and particularly within neo-liberal approaches to curriculum. As Labonte (2011) points out an emphasis on personal experience and voice is found in empowering approaches to education. Over forty years ago Freire (1968) argued that the first act of power people can make in managing their own lives is through “speaking the world,” naming their experiences in their own words under conditions where their stories are listened to and respected by others.” (Freire (1968, cited by Labonte 2011, p.156) Within the context of neo-liberalism and neo-liberal approaches to globalisation investigated in this study revisiting empowering approaches to learning may be both timely and necessary.

Methodology:

Crafting the Research Study:

This section is an account of the theoretical and methodological positioning undertaken to provide an informed, consistent and credible research account. The temptation to locate this debate through an examination of the relevance of methods and techniques to the study is attractive. However, care is required in adopting a method driven qualitative study. Bryman (2012) for example, asserts if overly structured plans are used as the research framework this can lead to the researcher beginning the study with pre-set ideas of what they are going to find and even the possibility of making the data match preconceptions. Cunliffe (2011) expresses concern with the orthodoxy of seeing research methods even in qualitative research as having to be efficient, measurable and valid and suggests that this can lead to us “shaping our research around methodological obligations and the need to fit “data” to technical requirements, rather than being sensitive to what is going on around us.” Cunliffe (2011, p. 667). One feature of this study is the emergence, not only of unanticipated answers, but also of unanticipated outcomes of the research process itself. I suggest that allowing flexibility to respond to emerging themes and processes is an important element of this type of close-up insider research (Trowler, 2011). However, this does not preclude a concern with reliability, validity and rigour. These points have been addressed in the introductory chapter and Figures 1 and 2 and will be returned to throughout this thesis. Adopting a “crafting” dynamic and imaginative use of methods to generate and capture the data as it emerges, may provide a more convincing and legitimate way of ensuring a convincing research account of phenomena, such as those under study in this account. The “crafting” metaphor is significant, as it suggests that the researcher is skilled in using the most appropriate skills and processes to create the desired outcomes. An account of the crafting research process adopted is provided through an examination of the meta-theoretical underpinnings of the study and the research methods emerging from this account.

Cunliffe’s (2011) paper revisiting research paradigms is particularly helpful for this discussion. She does not enter into what commentators refer to as the paradigm wars. For a flavour of the “wars” see (Hammersley, 1992, Oakley, 1999, Bryman, 2008, Alise and Teddlie, 2010). Cunliffe (2011) rather provides a comprehensive overview of the significant research perspectives adopted over the last thirty years based on a summary of the theory and scholarship represented in these perspectives. She does so by revisiting Morgan and Smirich

(1980) “The Case for Qualitative Research”. Morgan and Smirich’s aim was to “offer a framework for understanding debates about rival research methods in the social sciences.” ((Morgan and Smirich 1980, p.491 cited by Cunliffe 2011 p.647). Morgan and Smirich’s work (1980) is significant to this study and to Cunliffe’s 2011 paper in their highlighting of the need for the researcher to consider carefully and explicitly their meta-theoretical position in relation to ontology and epistemology. They argue for this as a requirement, to ensure the building of a convincing and coherent research framework, leading to a convincing and consistent research account. The following section is an account of my positioning and its outcomes for this piece of research.

I, like other researchers, face the question of choice in relation to theoretical and methodological stance. Choice is not limitless, but it has increased significantly both in relation to appropriate methodology and methods. Cunliffe (2011) suggests the field of social research in the last thirty five years has witnessed major developments and has become “increasingly multifarious and contested.” (Cunliffe, 2011 p 648). Cunliffe (2011) suggests qualitative researchers are now confronted with a myriad of meta-theoretical and methodological options. In the four years since publication of Cunliffe’s article other commentators would suggest that the field continues to grow significantly through the impact of increasingly sophisticated mobile technology and communication processes. As Trottier, (2013) suggests Brannick and Coughlan (2007) were correct in their prediction, that this would be particularly so in contested areas such as learning, culture, identity and transition, which are the areas under study. Cunliffe (2011) is helpful in her suggestion that unless the researcher responds explicitly and carefully to the complexities of the subject under study, it is easy to reduce our work to choices about the legitimacy of method. This can blur the integrity of the research, by obfuscating the specific perspective taken in relation to the phenomena under study. Put simply, it is crucial to question and articulate our beliefs in the relationships between knowledge, theory and research processes when undertaking a piece of research.

Morgan and Smirich’s (1980) work highlights the need for the researcher to be clear and able to articulate their views on the nature of social reality, on “being” or ontology and the nature of knowledge or epistemology before deciding which research approach and which methods to use. It would be inappropriate now to simply join the “paradigm” wars by revisiting and rehearsing the much travelled debate between objectivity/positivism and

subjectivity/interpretivism. A simple discussion of the polarities between naïve realism and naïve relativism is inappropriate here. Views that suggest that “reality” is a shared external truth and similarly that “knowledge” is similarly real and “out there” waiting to be grasped or the alternative polarity that “reality” can be no more than the imagined expression of individual experience, fail to capture the complexities and interplays between the two positions and reality itself. However, this does not mean it is impossible for a researcher to adopt a position. However, as the following account suggests for research of this kind it may be more appropriate for a researcher to seek this position from a deliberately dynamic stance.

One of the lessons from this research study is that even strongly held beliefs and approaches may change as the researcher engages with their research process. My ontological position is located within the qualitative, interpretive, subjectivist paradigm acknowledging the importance and significance of context. However, as this research process developed a number of new and unanticipated research processes emerged, such as the significance of shared experience between the researcher and research participants. The emergence of unforeseen approaches is a recognised feature of what Trowler (2011) refers to as “close-up” insider research of this kind.

Cunliffe (2011) proposes that acknowledging the need to differentiate and substantiate our approach to research, has shifted qualitative research from being hostage to an inappropriate scientific positivist method, permitting the qualitative researcher the opportunity to more effectively meet the needs and nature of the phenomenon under study. To do so requires further development and sophistication of the binary modes highlighted by Morgan and Smirich in 1980. I will use Cunliffe’s positional tables as the framework for this discussion. She summarises the binary approach in Figure 8 (Cunliffe, 2011, p.650).

Figure 8 Cunliffe 2011 Binary Approaches to Research

Subjectivist Approaches to Social Science	Hermeneutic Text interpretation and understanding of linguistic and non -linguistic expression	Objectivist Approaches to Social Science
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Core ontological assumptions	Reality as a projection of human imagination(individuals experience & consciousness, transcendental phenomenology, Solipcism	Reality as a social construction(individuals create meanings through language, routine, symbols	Reality as a realm of symbolic discourse(meaning in sustained human action subject to both rule like activities and change	Reality as a contextual field of information (adapting and changing as information is exchanged)	Reality as a concrete process (interacting evolving contingent process	Reality as a concrete structure comprised of constituent parts, observed in concrete behaviour and activities
Assumptions about human nature	Man as a pure spirit, consciousness, pure being	Man as a social constructor, the symbol creator	Man as an actor, the symbol user	Man as information processor	Man as adaptor	Man as responder
Basic epistemological stance	To obtain phenomenological insight	To understand how social reality is created	To understand the pattern of symbolic discourse	To map contexts	To study systemic process change	To construct a positivist science
Some favoured metaphors	Transcendental	Language, game, accomplishment, text	Theatre, culture	Cybernetic, exploring regularities	Organism	Machine
Research Methods	Exploration of pure subjectivity					

Lather’s observations (2006, cited in Cunliffe, 2011) form the basis for her re-conceptualization of the above tabled positions. Lather (2006) proposes that we must move away from thinking about research methodologies on the basis of dualistic extremes such as quantitative and qualitative approaches and start by recognising the inevitable complexity of phenomena under study in the social world. On this basis Lather (2006) suggests that we should think of knowledge “problematics”. By this he means “a cross disciplinary sense of where our questions come from, what is thinkable and non-thinkable in the name of social inquiry in particular historical conjunctions” (Lather, p.206 cited in Cunliffe 2011, p. 652). Taking Lather’s (2006) advice Cunliffe (2011) presents a more nuanced typology of perspective and research methodologies which recognises the significant theory

developments in the last twenty years. Figure 9 provides a helpful framework for this research study.

Figure 9: Cunliffe 2011 Typology of Current Perspectives and Research Methodologies: Indicating Relationship to this Study

	Inter-subjectivism	Subjectivism	Objectivism
<u>Relationality:</u> The nature of relationships	Inter-relationships emerging and shifting in a dialectical interplay between ourselves, others and our surroundings experienced differently by different people: Inter-subjectivity	Inter-relationships emerging and shifting in a dialectical interplay between ourselves, others and our surroundings experienced differently by different people: Interaction	Relationships between entities in a pre-existing society, between network mechanisms and systems and information processes, cognitive and behavioural elements. Inter-network objective discourse
<u>Durability:</u> Of social meanings, knowledge set across time and space	Social experience and meanings are ephemeral, fleeting moments. Although some common sense social and linguistic practices play through our interactions.	Social realities, meanings, discourses, knowledge are contextual, constructed yet experienced as relatively stable, perceived, interpreted and enacted in similar ways but open to change.	Enduring social systems such as class, institutionalised rules, norms, practices, appropriate behaviours, traits. Discourse and networks have relative stability but are subject to resistance and change.
<u>Meanings:</u> What and where meaning is located	Indeterminate, neither fully in or fully out of our control. Language is metaphorical and imaginative. Meanings in the moment between people.	Shared meanings immanent to the “artful” practices of everyday life to discourses and texts. Negotiated and specific to time and place.	Common meanings situated in words, structures, roles, words, behaviours. Transcend time and space. Language is literal.
<u>Historicity:</u> Concept of time and progress	We are inherently embedded and embodied in historical, cultural and linguistic communities. Time is experienced in the present in living conversations with others.	<i>Time and place are subjectively experienced. Progress as a situated human accomplishment potentiality.</i>	Time is experienced sequentially and universally, progress is linear, recursive or emerging over time.

<u>Mediation:</u> The place of the researcher in the research	<u>Reflexive Hermeneutic:</u> <i>Research as a dialectical interplay between research participants. Focuses on experiences between people. Embodied and embedded research.</i>	<u>Double Hermeneutic:</u> <i>Research is embodied in the world, shaped by and shapes experiences and accounts, mediates meanings of actors</i>	<u>Single Hermeneutic:</u> Knowledge and researcher are separate from the world. Researcher observes, discovers facts and discovers and develops predictive theories. Experience of the world, detached sometimes critical researcher.
<u>Forms of Knowledge:</u> Epistemology	<u>Pragmatic Knowing:</u> <i>In situ, knowing from within. Transitory understandings and within. Transitory understandings and witness thinking (Shotter, 2008) Micro level focus, Research as embodied and embedded</i>	<u>Pragmatic or Syntagmatic:</u> <i>Common sense knowledge, naturally occurring actions, interactions, conversations, mundane activities, non-replicable knowledge, situated validity. Micro and Macro level focus.</i>	<u>Syntagmatic:</u> Independent or dependent relationship between structural or linguistic elements. Sequences, replicable or shared knowledge leading to the accumulation of knowledge and social progress or emancipation: Macro Level Focus.

Key: Bold italics indicate positions adopted in this research.

Therefore this research study adopts a position on Cunliffe's (2011) continuum between inter-subjectivity and subjectivity. Arriving at this position has been a fascinating and enlightening part of the PhD process. It is worth accounting for this decision in detail, as it sets the parameters for the final research approach and data analysis. As a precursor to this account, it is necessary to explain what Cunliffe (2011) means by subjectivism and inter-subjectivism.

Cunliffe (2011) describes her subjectivist problematic as being located within what might loosely be called the symbolic interactionist perspective. She proposes that symbolic interactionism is best explained through a synthesis of a number of well-established, related but nuanced perspectives (Goffman, 1959, Sachs, 1963, Garfinkel, 1967) which propose that social reality is constructed through individual engagement with symbols, processes and social engagement with other "actors". Research studies based on this perspective are concerned with how individuals make sense of their experience through reflection, agency and in an almost literal sense through action and "acting".

A development of actor theory (Latour, 1991) and symbolic interactionism can loosely be described as social reality being seen as the product of social constructivism. The focus in this perspective is placed more firmly on language. Social constructivists are more interested in exploring how individuals use language to shape their reality. As Watson 2001, cited in Cunliffe 2011, p.663) points out people use language both creatively and routinely to “shape and enact social realities, identities and action in their everyday conversations and actions”. Research methods associated with this perspective include the research methods employed within this study such as ethnography, autobiography, semi-structured interviews, narrative analysis of text and talk, recording of conversations. As will be discussed later, my initial temptation of employing a more specific dramaturgical approach was replaced by the process outlined later used in this study. The shift was largely due to recognition of the importance of context and relationality to reality formation. In this view, social reality is fundamentally relative or relational. It lies within the individual, their experiences, reflections, feelings and accounts rather than simply the words they use. Cunliffe (2011) is again helpful. She summarises the relational contextual constructed nature of social realism by highlighting the nature of this perspective as the need to recognise that “relationality lies in people rather than language per se and accounts are written to include participants feelings and reactions rather than variables or mechanisms because *meanings are contextual, evocative and negotiated*” (Cunliffe, 2011, p. 663) (Bold italics author’s emphasis).

Although this research study is firmly located within Cunliffe’s (2011) subjectivity /inter subjectivity problematic, it is important to stress, as indicated later in Figure 11, that the barriers between positions and perspectives are permeable. It is interesting that Cunliffe (2011) uses the image of intersecting clouds to demonstrate the permeability of the perspectives rather than columns used in the 2011 article which suggest permanence. Elements of this research study also lie within the final perspective on the continuum of the inter subjectivity problematic. Briefly, Cunliffe (2011) argues that within the inter subjectivity problematic the ethnographic interactive is even more pronounced. Here the researcher is involved directly in the sense making process through direct engagement with the research participants and reality construction as well as with the more common post research reflexive process. The researcher, therefore, is performing within the process and acknowledges their role as an actor in the sense making process with the research participants. In this research study this perspective is adopted and considered more fully through the use of

narrative techniques described by (Georgeakopoulou 2006) as conversations in action and others such as Reissman (2008) as performative narrative analysis and Taylor and Littleton (2006) as narrative discursive analysis.

Figure 10: Cunliffe 2011 The Inter-Subjectivity Problematic

Inter-subjectivism			Subjectivism		Objectivism	
<div>←──</div>						

Cunliffe's (2011) work has provided a significant template for this research study. By replacing the simplistic subject-object, qualitative-quantitative, positivist-interpretivist dichotomies she has provided for qualitative researchers, a framework or continuum to base their research in from an informed critical perspective. It is not simply a tool for locating research within a tradition but one which allows the researcher to reflect on their practice not simply from a question of method but from an engagement with a wider philosophical base. As Cunliffe (2011, p.666) proposes "we need to be able to situate and legitimate our work within the broader field of scholarship." Through the knowledge problematics she draws our attention to the need for the qualitative researcher, such as myself, to do what Lather (2006, p.47 cited by Cunliffe, 2011, p.666) proposes that we locate ourselves in "the tensions that characterise fields of knowledge..... marked by the multiplicity and competing discourses that do not map easily onto one another." The following section outlines the crafting process through which I have engaged with contexts and competing discourses which impact on the subject under study and the processes and conclusion arrived at. The position will be summarised after the account with Figure 11 a version of Cunliffe's (2011) knowledge problematics related to this study.

Definitions of ethnography and ethnographic fieldwork demonstrate and confirm the links between the aims of this study and ethnographic approaches to research. The recognition and location of the researcher within the research process is a much discussed feature of ethnography (Pritchard, 2011) and one which is highlighted through Cunliffe's (2011) framework. Pritchard (2011) suggests that "being there" by which she means being involved is one of the distinctive features of ethnographic research. She suggests that whether this is in the classic anthropological sense of attempting to be part of the community under study or as in the case of this research actually being a participant in the community under study. Participation by the researcher is an intrinsic feature of ethnography. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) in their text on ethnographic principles and practice suggest that "ethnography usually involves the researcher participating overtly or covertly in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through informal and formal interviews." (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.3.). Being there as insider researcher is an explicit feature of this research study. This research suggests that positioning the researcher, almost in an anthropological way, within the data creation, as well as the data collection, is significant in developing a rich and detailed

and emerging account (Geertz, 1983). In this case, as will be discussed later the ability of “being native rather than going native” provided by insider research of this kind adds a potentially further level of detail to the account. However, such an approach is not without its critics. Pritchard (2011, p. 231), for example, proposes that the ethnographic researcher’s presence has become more “self-conscious as both methodology and method have come under increasing scrutiny.” As Pritchard (2011) suggests there has been a comprehensive and reinvigorated challenge to the neutrality of the participant researcher. This is particularly the case with “insider research” such as in this research. Particular concerns range from “methodological angst” (Yarrow, 2009, p.186 cited by Prichard 2011, p.230) with the insider researcher’s apparent nervousness about the legitimacy of “being there” to the increasing difficulty of “being there” in a conventional ethnographic sense in an organisational environment such as that of the international student where life is increasingly flexible, fluid and in transition (Pritchard, 2011). I do not share the angst or nervousness described by Pritchard (2011) in relation to being there and being part of the process. This certainty is not based on misplaced confidence in my research methodological experience, but rather in my ontological position and through engagement with the growing body of research, which supports the researcher as actor within narrative and the narrative, interview research process.

De Fina and Perrino (2011) confirm within the qualitative research paradigm that the interview has been given an increasingly prominent place. However as Pritchard (2011) suggests, this research method still is the subject of extremes of confidence and criticism. One view is that it is both desirable and possible to eradicate the interactive interview, so that the interviewee can access their “natural” behaviour. This position is captured dramatically in Potters (1996) argument that research should be able to pass a conceptual “dead scientist test”. In other words the data should be based on an unbiased, untrammelled process with no interference or interaction from the researcher, “the process would have taken place in the form that it did had the researcher not been born or if the researcher had got run over on the way to the university that morning.” (Potter, 1996, p.135). At the other extreme is the view of conversation analysts that creating this unsullied interview is so far from a natural setting that the outcomes will be inauthentic and the data artificial. This debate seems to suggest, that the use of interviews in qualitative research has become a problem to solve, rather than a real communicative event, with its own features and outcomes, which can lead to significant research outcomes. I intend to examine the interview as a topic in itself throughout this

research study. The aim is to consider whether the interview/dialogue process as a real communicative event, can do more than simply generate and capture “unsullied” opinion.

There is an increase in the use of personal experiences and personal accounts and narratives in research in the social sciences. However, as De Fina (2011) argues, much of this research has been content or outcome orientated. The emphasis is placed on the data which emerges from the interviews. This research study is also “outcome orientated”. It uses interviews and narratives to generate data outcomes. However, as De Fina (2011) points out, little attention has been paid to both the context in which the interview narratives have been produced and even less attention been given to the interview as a topic in itself. The aim of this research study is to add to the research on “the interview as topic” through the final research objective:

R0 4: To consider whether narrative research approaches able to both capture and develop experience and learning.

Rapley (2001,p.304) summarises the distinction leading to this approach, “In the interview data –as –resource approach, the interview data collected are seen as (more or less) reflecting the interviewees “reality outside the interview”, while in interview-data-as topic the interview data are seen as (more or less) reflecting a reality jointly constructed by the interviewee and the interviewer.”. De Fina (2011, p.6) cites Atkinson and Delamont’s (2008) explanation that the linkage between narrative talk with self-expression of “facts” and “real” events comes from the neglect of the performance aspects of the interview as a communicative context. This point is of particular importance to the ethnographic research outlined throughout this research study and in particular to the fundamental question of the insider researcher mentioned earlier. Modan and Schuman (2011) argue that the relationship between interviewer and interviewee, rather than being a problem or liability is both a valuable site for analysis and also provides a sociolinguistic encounter which can provide positive outcomes for the research process. For example, sociolinguistic interviews and interviews as conversations (Georgeakopoulou, 2006) can allow respondents to take on an “expert status” and create opportunities for them to talk about topics which may be taboo or tacit in everyday conversations. As Schuman (1986) cited by Modan and Schuman 2011, p.14) suggest “in other words interviews afford “tellability” that may otherwise be restricted.” The dynamic between the researcher and respondent may be of particular significance to this study which deals with issues in a context where both players have expertise and experience. Grand claims will not be made for the interviews and narratives in this study as having

“therapeutic outcomes” but a proposal that talking in this way can and should explicitly be part of learning and lifelong learning is interrogated in this study.

Erickson (1988) proposes that discourse analysis has shown that the positions adopted by the interviewer-respondent or teller and audience cannot be simply broken down into a static speaker and listener relationship. This point has been developed through the work of scholars such as Denzin, 1997, De Fina, 2011, Modan and Schuman, 2011, Brannen, 2013. These scholars attempt to demonstrate the significance of the dynamics of the interview relationship through interrogating for example the concept of the participant framework in interviews (Modan and Schuman, 2011) in order to understand the dynamics, ideology and power in display in interviews of this kind. As De Fina (2011, p.29) demonstrates in her detailed studies of research based sociolinguistic interviews, it is impossible to ignore the role the interviewer plays as a “catalyst for the coalescence of a variety of phenomena related to identity negotiation and language use.” De Fina (2011) argues that storytelling is a prime location for identity creation between the individual and the researcher. She makes this telling point that, “the kinds of identities that people present critically depend on who they understand their interlocutors to be.” De Fina (2011, p.30) Questions raised in this research include what role I played in the process of learning as a catalyst through my “senior insider” role, allowing me to share a number of commonalities with the respondents and through my “outsider” engagement with them as members of different cultures.

As indicated earlier I have found the PhD process liberating. Being able and expected to engage with an extensive literature has enabled me to revisit significant texts and to reflect on significant questions. With my personal background being originally in the arts and later in the management sciences, being able to reconsider fundamental ontological questions and research positions has been fascinating. One such position is the tension or dynamic between the arts and science and their place in social research. Plummer’s work (1983, 2001, 2003, 2011) on narrative, life story, critical humanism and the positive liberating influence of research and learning have had a fundamental influence on the methodology, design and purpose of this work. Plummer is part of an established sociological narrative or story telling tradition which can be traced to Thomas and Znaniecki (1918) seminal work: “The Polish Peasant in Europe and America”, to outputs from the Chicago school (Bulmer, 1984) and to anthropology and I will argue “literary writers and theorists” who attempt to shed light on the question of “what is this all about?” through engaging with the “art” of capturing and

reflecting on experience. They do this in what I will argue is both an artistic and scientific approach to research firmly placed within narrative approaches.

The possibly unwarranted divorce or at least separation between science and art in the social sciences is well established. Nisbet (1976, p.16), for example, considered sociology as an art form and proposed, “how different things would be if the social sciences at the time of their systematic formation in the 19th century had taken the arts in the same degree they took the physical sciences as models.” Becker later (2007) develops this argument suggesting that there is no ideal way to research and talk about society rather a number of approaches which we can choose from, “There is no best way to tell a story about society. Many genres, many methods, many formats- they can all do the trick. Instead of ideal ways to do it, the world gives us possibilities among which we choose. Every way of telling the story of a society does some of the job superbly but other parts not so well.” (Becker, 2007, p.285)

The choice taken for this research is insider research, using interviews and narrative. In Part One, written narrative accounts do the job of capturing short reflexive and structured perspectives of a small number of respondents. The semi-structured interview approach in Part Two allows a more engaged and iterative process with a larger number of respondents and Part Three the narrative conversations allows participants to recount their views and experiences with the researcher in longer stories and accounts through a deliberately “intersubjectivity-relational approach” (Cunliffe, 2011) The aim here being to develop and capture rich, deep learning for all participants (researcher) and participants in the narrative process. Even though, as indicated earlier, (Sparkes et al 2009) there is a growing interest in narrative it is still often neglected in orthodox approaches to social research yet stories are usually critical to every stage of the human social research process (Plummer, 2011). I agree with Plummer’s (2011) assertion that narrative and story play a critical role in shaping personal lives, political change and the choices we make. The aim of this research is to investigate the experience and choices made by international, postgraduate students. To borrow again from Plummer (2011) this research will study the individual “stories” people tell, will connect these personal stories to the wider stories of the specific context and the wider “world” and ultimately will be presented as a social “science” story within the PhD conventions. I will argue throughout this research that the narrative approaches adopted here are the most appropriate ones for this research study.

Human beings are narrators, we tell stories and the contexts or societies we create are “homes” for our stories and catalysts for our identities both personal and public. “This is what fools people; a man is always a teller of tales, he lives surrounded by his stories and the stories of others, he sees everything that happens to him through them: and he tries to live his life as if he were (recounting it) telling a story” (Sartre, 1960, cited by Strawson, G., 2014, p.18.). One of the fundamental aims of this study is the attempt to make sense of the specific experience of being an international postgraduate student and to do so by making sense of the stories told by participants.

To do this, consideration must be given both to the texts, i.e. the words and the realities or contexts which link the stories to wider social functioning or roles, relationships, history and cultures. With my arts/literary background a real temptation was to adopt a discourse analysis approach. However, I felt that this might lose or minimise the importance of other factors affecting the story and its importance such as context and actor significance. As Reissman (2008) suggests, having decided to adopt a narrative method it is obviously important to then choose appropriate methods to create and analyse the data. Thematic and structural analysis has been adopted but with the codicil of the need to highlight the importance of the dynamic between context, actors and actions which I argue is particularly significant to this research. I decided to use what Reissman (2008) and others such as Georgeakopoulou (2006) refer to as “dialogic performance analysis” and Taylor and Littleton (2006) refer to as a “narrative-discursive” approach to research. Such approaches include elements of structure and thematic analysis, where appropriate, but the focus in this approach is directly on narrative as being the product of talk between individuals in dialogue, in performance, in context. As Reissman suggests, “This one requires close reading of contexts, including the influence of investigator, setting, and social circumstances on the production and interpretation of narrative.” Reissman, (2008, p.105). This analytical approach is attractive for a number of reasons. As indicated earlier in the introduction to this study, my earlier academic interest was in the arts and particularly drama. Analysing narrative as performance highlights many of the central tenets of literary approaches to language, interpretation and expressions of “truth”. It also provides a sociological analysis of the narrative allowing consideration of the social processes affecting the stories such as roles, cultures, time and place. It is influenced by and develops symbolic interactionism and is influenced and explicitly develops the work of Goffman (1976) on identity and reality construction through interaction and performance. On a personal level

over, twenty years, ago I moved my academic interests from literature and drama to management and organisational studies and have completed previous research on institutionalisation and change management. Goffman's seminal texts; "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life" (1959) and "Asylums" (1961) provided the theoretical framework for much of this work. This study has allowed me to revisit and engage with current developments within this paradigm. Having completed this study I find that I still agree with Goffman's (1974) powerful statement about the intrinsic connections between communication, performance, and identity: "What talkers undertake to do is not to provide information to a recipient but to present dramas to an audience. Indeed it seems that we spend more of our time not engaged in giving information but in giving shows." (Goffman, 1974, pp. 508-509). Or as Goffman wrote earlier that; "This self itself does not derive from its possessor, but from the whole scene of its action..... this self is a product of a scene that comes off, and not a cause of it. The self then, as a performed character is not an organic thing that has specific location... (the individual and his body) merely provide the peg on which something of a collaborative manufacture will be hung for a time. And the means for producing and maintaining selves do not reside inside the peg." (Goffman, 1959, pp. 252-253.)

As Kivisto and Pittman (2007) argue what is crucial for an understanding of Goffman's theory of the self is that talking about the individual as some sort of autonomous or "unsullied" agent is wrong. In this view, the individual must be thought of in relation to their "social whole". For Goffman, consequently, the basis for social analysis is the "team". He writes "a team mate is someone whose dramaturgical co-operation one is dependent upon in fostering a given definition of the situation" (Goffman, 1959, p.83.) The point Goffman is making is that the process of how the "team" interact and cooperate to foster "reality" is based on a complex system of interactions including roles, customs, cultures, symbols and actions. I will argue in this research that the interaction between researcher and researched in this study share the features of Goffman's team and "reality" is created through this relational intersubjective encounter (Cunliffe, 2011)

Reissman (2008) is also helpful in developing Goffman's identity theory in relation to narrative and theatre. She cites Young, "to put it simply, one can't be a "self" by oneself; rather identities are constructed in shows that persuade. Performances are expressive, they are performances for others." (Young 2000 cited by Reissman 2008, p.106). Young's final

sentence is particularly important for this research study in its recognition of the significance of the audience in narrative and identity formation. Including the researcher as audience and active participant within narrative methods requires a shift in methods away from the quest for the objective interviewer, found within many approaches to qualitative research (Bartlett and Burton, 2009 and Silverman, 2013). I am not suggesting that objectivity is misplaced within qualitative research but I have argued and demonstrated that within narrative approaches objectivity may not only be a challenging approach but may fundamentally ignore the reality of the narrative process. This takes me back to the earlier discussion of ethnography and the place of the insider researcher as a player and audience. As with Goffman 1974, Young, 2000 and others I believe that social or human “truth” like an individual or a character is not an objective or unsullied thing unaffected by time, location, roles or action. Rather human truth is a product of all of these factors. If our research into human experience, such as the phenomena under study, is an attempt to gain understanding of the truth, then it will be to recognise and work with all of these interlocking factors. I will propose throughout this work, that truth is “situated” and that a narrative ethnographic approach is an appropriate way to gather and make sense of this truth.

However, before leaving this overview of my journey with methodology and before returning to Cunliffe’s 2011 framework with a final statement of the methodology adopted I would like to highlight one final attractive element of dialogic/performance dramaturgical analysis. Dramaturgical performance analysis as Reissman (2008) claims is explicitly informed by literary theory. From my perspective returning to an interest in literary theory is not simply a personal/biographical indulgence. For this study, it is much more important than that. Literary theory complicates common sense views about language and challenges the view found in some approaches to qualitative research that language in carefully constructed interviews simply conveys accurate and transparent meaning. Reissman (2008) highlights the work of Bakhtin to make this point and she could have chosen many alternatives. However, Bakhtin is a good choice. Reissman (2008) proposes that Bakhtin’s literary theory is of particular significance to narrative enquiry in the human sciences in his claim and powerful argument summarised simply here as all “text” includes many voices. “A given word, Bakhtin argues, is saturated with ideology and meanings from previous usage; analysts never encounter a word from a “pure” position, it is not a neutral repository of an idea. An utterance carries the traces of other utterances, past and present, as words carry history on their backs.”

(Reissman, 2008 p.107.). Words carrying history on their backs is a powerful metaphor which should encourage the “social/ human science” researcher to interrogate words and be sensitive to texts in a wider sense, for example, to listen to other voices not explicitly speaking, to be sensitive to mood and irony and to recognise the impact of settings and of cultures and roles on words.

It is important in the final comments in this methodology overview, to briefly return to culture. As discussed earlier, culture is a major issue investigated in this study both in relation to behaviour and identity but also within the concept and practice of narrative approaches. Narratives and stories are always embedded in culture. Cultures provide the social reality of narratives. As indicated in Chapter Two through reference to the work of Taylor and Littleton (2006) narrative may be one way of capturing the essence and nature of culture. The narrative process itself may also be a vehicle for change and improvement. This takes us back to the earlier discussion of research ethics and the need for beneficence and betterment as a result of research. This point is developed in this study through an engagement with the notion of the student voice and narrative. Listening to and responding to the student voice is possibly a way of ensuring fairness and improvement. I share Plummer’s fundamental belief that one aim of research is to be concerned with the bettering of social worlds. Schafer and Smith (2004, p.234) propose that there is “a powerful argument for the efficacy of storytelling in advancing the ongoing and constantly transforming pursuit of social justice.” The student voice could then be a vehicle for transforming practice and pursuing best practice for the international postgraduate student.

The stories contained in the student accounts in this study demonstrate the power of stories in personal lives as they shape identity, set cultural boundaries, engage with political and moral issues and set strategies for personal and social development. The student stories resonate with Plummer’s (2011) seven significant and inter-related social stories of:

1. Searching for meanings
2. Going on journeys and transformation
3. Being different
4. Experiencing suffering and troubles
5. Facing contests and conflict
6. Living relationships
7. Achieving consummation: “we have a dream.”

These social stories will become part of the framework for analysis of the student narratives.

This is an appropriate point to return to Cunliffe's (2011, p.666) proposition that as a researcher "we need to be able to situate and legitimate our work within the broader field of scholarship." Therefore it is necessary to explicitly consider theory. The above methodology and approach needs to be theorized and linked to an epistemological version of the truth. I have indicated my perspective throughout this discussion it is now timely to be more explicit.

One of the "pleasures" of the literature review has been an engagement with a wide and increasingly eclectic range of theories and with argument about the nature and purpose of theory. I have been tempted by grand theory. Postmodernism and Marxism, for example, appear implicitly and explicitly throughout this work. It was tempting to use both as theoretical "catch-alls" or frameworks for this work. Neo-liberalism also appears throughout this work as does a number of other middle range and micro theories (Merton, 1949). The major question for me became not what theory to use but why and how to use theory in this research. As with other educational researchers I was initially guilty of adopting an approach identified by Trowler (2012).

"Tooley and Darby also criticise the tendency of educational researchers to defer to a small number of theorists (Bourdieu is mentioned) for no good reason other than the fact that others do likewise and these theorists are considered 'eminent'. There is, they argue, 'adulation' of great thinkers (pp.56-62). Ball (1995) refers to this as the 'mantric' use of theory and Dale (1992) theory by numbers'. Eminence-based practice in educational research is certainly a problem and it includes the use of poor theory and ill-defined concepts (like 'habitus' and 'culture' as well as the substantiation of argument simply by reference to the (theoretical) work of such people." (Trowler, 2012, p.278).

I was guilty of many of the crimes identified by Trowler and even "adulation" of the specific writers he refers to. At the early stages of this work I was blithely quoting Bourdieu, habitus and field and referring to numerous cultural theorists, in other words "theory by numbers" to substantiate argument. The moment of truth came from my original supervisor's strident critique of my naïve use of Wenger's (1998) community of practice theory. His demolition of the basis of the theory and the uncritical adoption of it within educational research ironically echoed my initial concerns about adopting populist essentialist theories in educational

practice. When this was quickly followed by a similar critique of Bourdieu 'habitus and field' theory (1984) and its use in educational research, it was time for me to move away from the adoption of uncritical eminence-based practice and to explicitly question theory and how I will use theory in this research. Trowler's (2012) publication highlights the choices researchers have to make in relation to theory and data specifically in relation to what he calls 'close-up' research. As Trowler argues 'close-up' researchers are often "insiders" such as in my case. They are often adopting a single case-study approach, again as in this case. Trowler suggests "In fine grained qualitative research, knowledgeability and sense-making are foregrounded because explanation is sought more than correlation." (Trowler, 2012, p.276.) My aim is to use the outcomes of this research in the spirit of attempting to explain and understand the phenomenon under study within its close-up context and also through "linking it to the broader social structures that condition it and create it" (Mills, 1959 cited by Trowler, 2012, p.276). Again as Trowler (2012) argues theory can take research beyond description to explanation. My ultimate aim is to use the data which has emerged from this research to describe and explain the experience of postgraduate international students and to suggest that the outcomes of this single case research can move from the particular to the general through theory. Hopefully, I will avoid the trap identified by Trowler (2012) of a lack of integration between the micro and meso and even macro levels of analysis and by doing so move the research from the particular to the more general. Finally, I hope to maintain the critical reflexivity that both Trowler (2012) and Hammersley (2012) propose as a requirement particularly for 'close-up' insider researchers. I was further reassured in my eclectic use of theory as an explanatory tool within close-up case study research by Clegg's (2012) comments about similar higher education practice based research.

"My own theoretical repertoire of concerns comes from within sociology and an activist's engagement with ideas from feminism and Marxism. This is generational. I was intellectually formed before the dominance of postmodernism and I have maintained a critical distance from it, while benefitting hugely and drawing from its theorists (Hey, 2006). Such intellectual mixing creates its own problems as does combining theory at different levels but as I have tried to show, the intellectual process of sense-making appears to demand a degree of flexibility." (Clegg, 2012, p. 416).

I echo Clegg in adopting a repertoire approach to the use of theory within this study. I also echo some of her generational observations. I too am of the generation preceding the acceptance of postmodernist orthodoxy and accept its ideas with I hope a healthy dose of scepticism. I too am influenced by Marx and sociology but my activist's engagement comes from ideas from literary, dramatic and more recently organisational theory. I hope to show through this research that this flexible, explanatory use of theory will shed light and make sense of the subject under study.

Finally Trowler (2012, p.280) is again helpful in his proposition that this type of research needs "thoughtfulness and decisions made that are contingent on particular circumstances not algorithms". To maintain reflexivity throughout this research I have used Trowler's questions as a framework for reflection:

1. What work am I asking theory to do in my research?
2. Whose perspectives and interests are privileged, who's occluded?
3. What levels of analysis are foregrounded by my theoretical approach?
4. What other flaws exist in the lens I am using?
5. What are the most beneficial relationships between theory and data in my work

(Trowler, 2012 p.281.)

This takes me to the final crafting and statement of my approach in this research study. Again I have adopted Cunliffe's (2011) work to Crafting the Research Study: my final version of her table related to my work encapsulates my ontological position and hopefully demonstrates the legitimacy of the methodology and methods used.

Figure 11 : The Crafted Research Study: (Cunliffe 2011) Version of the Knowledge Problematic Revised in Relation to this Study

	Inter-subjectivism	Subjectivism		
<div><i>The position taken for this research is positioned along this continuum</i></div> <div>←──</div>				

Collecting the data:

As indicated earlier in this chapter I decided to adopt an eclectic data analysis procedure which has many of the features of that proposed by Reissman (2008) as “dialogic performance analysis” or a “narrative discursive approach” (Taylor and Littleton, 2006). In such approaches the interlocking elements of structure, context and narrative as product of talk within a specific performance are highlighted. This approach also allows and forms the structure for effective thematic analysis. The inevitability and importance of interaction between all participants within this form of narrative dialogue has been discussed throughout this chapter. It has, therefore, to take centre stage within an overview of data analysis procedures for this type of insider research.

The term insider research was first coined by Evered and Louis (1981). Their work investigates the qualities of inquiry from the inside and inquiry from the outside. Almost inevitably the advantages and disadvantages of insider research were initially debated from binary positions. However, more recent commentary suggests that a researcher can never be completely an insider or an outsider. In a work, such as this, which investigates the researcher’s own institution the reality of the mixed insider/outsider role is clear and evident (Trowler, 2011). The researcher is part of the host case study organisation. As such, I am clearly an insider and in a privileged position of as highlighted previously “being a native rather going native”. This practical experience has helped to identify the research needs of the phenomenon under study within the organisation and provide easier access to participants. However, I am also clearly an outsider. I am not an international postgraduate student, studying at this institution. Writers such as Alvesson (2003) discourage insider research if the researcher is too personally involved or has a direct stake in the outcome of the research. However, this is not a piece of action research commissioned by the host organisation and the outcomes have no direct impact on my professional status within the organisation. As outlined in the ethical commentary section rather than the insider position being problematic it has allowed me careful and ethical access to participants for the research and some shared experiences with the participants allowing conversation and dialogue to develop in the semi-structured interviews and narrative conversations in particular. It also encouraged informed consent. Participants were able to volunteer after a long period of dialogue and conversation with the researcher. Some may have agreed to participate simply to be helpful, however most saw it as an opportunity to voice their concerns and several derived a real sense of purpose in

having their voice. Significantly and pleasingly many also felt sufficiently confident to say no. Over twenty years ago Hutchinson et al (1994) identified the benefits of taking part in research interviews as possibly offering catharsis, providing a sense of purpose, increasing awareness of the value of the self and personal experience, healing and being offered a chance to be heard. As suggested earlier this research study will not claim therapeutic outcomes for the respondents but the forthcoming chapters will highlight many if not all of the benefits identified by Hutchinson et al (1994). Healing is an interesting concept here. I will not claim specific therapeutic or healing outcomes from this research process but I will suggest that the dialogues and conversations do provide a voice for the participants and being encouraged to use their voice is potentially empowering and potentially part of learning and of a lifelong learning process.

Corbally and O'Neil (2014, p.34) neatly summarise the need for explicitness in the research design and application process, "Clarifying and making explicit the assumptions underpinning methodology and method, and the methodological choices made throughout the research are core features of credible, robust research (Seale, 1999, Cote and Turgeon, 2005)." The aim of this chapter has been to provide such an account as the foundations for a convincing and credible account outlined in the following chapters. I would also suggest that the same explicit rigour is required in relation to data analysis procedures particularly in the case of the qualitative data and interpretive processes used in this research.

One approach designed to provide robustness in this study is the deliberate mix of data collection techniques adopted. Three approaches are used; written narrative accounts, semi-structured narrative interviews and narrative conversations. Each is designed to add a different emphasis and consequently to build a full picture of the experience under study. I agree with commentators such as Corbally and O'Neil (2014) that many methods even within the interpretive paradigm fail to fully account for the historical, psycho-social and biographical dynamic of individual experience. I propose that the use of one single method is likely to exclude important data and that a "symposium of methods" is more likely to paint a fuller picture.

In wishing to investigate individual experience, biography is a logical and tempting approach. As such I carefully considered the work of Wengraf (2001 and 2004) and contemporary versions of this approach such as that in the work of Corbally and O'Neill (2014) in their

recent introduction to the biographical interpretive narrative method. Here an emphasis is placed on the need to ensure that the research uncovers what the participants want to say and how they want to say it, not what the researcher wants them to say, which as Bryman (2008,) argues may be the case if the narrative is driven by set questions such as in semi-structured or structured interviews. Wengraf (2001, 2004) suggests that this unwanted interference can be avoided by using a “Single Question (aimed at) Inducing Narrative (SQIN). Here participants would be asked to respond to an open ended question such as “As you know I am researching (topic), I understand you have some experience of this, tell me about it.....” There would be little engagement from the researcher and the participant would consequently be able to reflect and provide the text they felt significant. The account is recorded and then analysis completed through a rigorous process of thematic analysis and presentation to a group of fellow researchers who also analyse the text. I adopted a similar approach in part one of the study that is the written narrative accounts. In this approach I was keen to avoid where possible researcher influence as identified by Bryman (2008). I was also keen to provide participants, who are mainly English as second language speakers, time and space to reflect and construct their account. A written narrative format would provide the space and time for reflection and construction of a formal account. A small number of participants readily agreed to do this. Evaluation later confirmed that one of the main attractions of this approach was the quiet, reflection time provided. There was no requirement to “perform” in another language and there was time to change and correct the script. Several participants felt that this process of reflection and correction allowed them to construct the story they wanted to tell. They felt this would not be in the case in an interaction process, such as an interview or conversation in a second language. This is a significant point, which contradicts the experience and evaluation of a large number of participants, who both welcomed interaction and claimed to have learned and developed through the process. This apparently contradictory outcome, may confirm the legitimacy of adopting a number of linked but different narrative methods to capture the complexity of the issue and also the differences and complexity of the participants engaging with the process.

The second phase of data collection was conducted through a series of semi-structured interviews. Questions were set but the structure was deliberately loose with participants being encouraged to respond to the prompts in dialogue with the researcher. In this phase the interviewer, although in the background, was deliberately and explicitly part of the dialogue.

Features identified by Hutchinson (1994) emerged from this process. There are examples of participants explicitly valuing the dialogue, of learning through the conversation, of feeling empowered and of benefitting from having an opportunity to have their voice heard. This somewhat unanticipated outcome led to phase three where a smaller number of participants were invited to develop their thoughts through a conversation with the researcher as participant, i.e. a narrative conversation in action. Outcomes which will be discussed in detail in the following chapters include examples of individual learning and growth through the process as well as the generation of specific data relevant to the research questions.

After the conversations it became important to review the emphasis I had initially placed on dialogic performance analysis (Reissman, 2008) and a narrative discursive approach (Taylor and Littleton (2006). What emerged from the conversations were different versions of life stories or mini-biographies. My experience of interviewing in this study and in previous work is similar to Brannen's (2013) experience where we both have found that semi-structured interviews dealing with significant experience and transitions can generate extended narrative and how the open narrative conversations can equally either be enthusiastically adopted, avoided or rejected by respondents.

I have outlined some of the debates about narrative methods in this chapter and it is not necessary to revisit them here. However, as indicated earlier since the high points of interest in the 1930s with the Polish Peasant autobiography, narrative as a research method has been consistently contested by advocates and opponents. Some of the more recent opposition provided by writers such as Atkinson (1997) must be addressed in this study. Atkinson (1997) criticized some narrative researchers for having a simplistic tendency to treat narrative as a tool for empowerment and therapy for respondents. In a later work Atkinson (2009) argues for the necessity of "problematizing" the "Romantic" notion of narrative and proposes the need to move beyond informant testimony and the idea of bearing witness to what happened as a simplistic reflection of the truth of lived experience. This point resonates with Hammersley's (1989) earlier argument for the need of care with expecting research respondents to define or even adequately explain or fully understand the context in which they live. Whilst accepting these points and the need for care with naïve claims about the power of narrative I concur with Brannen's (2013 6.4) conclusion that "spaces need to be left for the researcher to produce a sociological narrative and to engage with what Giddens, (1993) termed the "double hermeneutic." This research will consider whether conversations

provided through narrative can create a double hermeneutic for the respondent and researcher as the conversation narratives unfolds. It also, hopefully, responds to Atkinson's (1997) insistence on the need for rigour and the need to recognise context as well as, if not more than, the dialogue and language used in the encounter. Hence the shift to performance narrative analysis and narrative discursive approaches rather than the original focus on dialogic narrative analysis (Reissman, 2008)

The term "narrative" used in relation to all parts of the data collection process and to the narrative conversations in particular refers to the activity of respondents telling a story about their experience. Following Atkinson's (2005) advice life stories or narratives should not only be treated as individual accounts as they contain generic contextual qualities and properties which can reflect shared cultural connections and processes. The "life stories" told in these accounts are like all life stories partial and selected. They are influenced by the context of the experience, the context or stage of the research encounter, the researcher's interests and emphasis and the role the researcher plays as audience and participant. As Brannen (2013) proposes narrative life story conversations of this type create a co-constructionist approach to storytelling; "I concur with Burgos that the interviewer while acting as the initiator also acts as the social medium or catalyst for the telling of the story given several conditions." (Brannen, 2013, 3.11) Brannen goes on to outline these conditions. They provide a useful template for analysis and will be used in this way in this study. The conditions stipulated by Brannen, (2013) are firstly that the interviewer provides and encourages autonomy for the respondent to share their own way of viewing the experience, in other words, the interviewee is allowed and encouraged to tell their version of their story. Secondly, the interviewee is convinced that what they have to say is important not only to themselves but to a wider audience. Finally, which is a point of importance to this study, the narrative performance is part of a process of dealing with or making sense of a rupture or turning point in the respondent's lives.

Case Study: Some final thoughts on case study:

As indicated earlier, this research adopts a case study approach. At this point it is important to make explicit the nature of the case study approach adopted. It is deliberately a multi-layered embedded case study. As such it allows study of the international postgraduate student experience with reference to three linked analytical levels. The first is the macro level of international policy and provision for international students within the neo-liberal,

globalisation model and the public policies which emerge from it. The second is the meso-level of institutional and sector policies and practices which impact and determine aspects of the experience. The third is the micro or individual level of the biographical journey of the individual student. Taking these different layers of context into account as Brannen and Nilsen (2011, p.604) propose helps to avoid depicting people as if they live in the “Timeless realm of the abstract.” (Nisbet, 1969, quoted in Elder and Giele, 2009, cited by Brannen and Nilsen 2011). The research data will be analysed within these three linked analytical levels.

Data Analysis:

As indicated throughout the overview of methodology, this research study is structured within the qualitative/interpretist paradigm. As Vaismoradi, Turenen and Bondas (2013, p. 398) assert qualitative approaches share a similar goal “in that they seek to arrive at an understanding of particular phenomenon from the perspective of those experiencing it.” An account has been provided of the chosen methods to gather data from the perspective of those experiencing the phenomenon. An account now needs to be given as to the data analysis methods chosen to make sense of and share the outcomes of these methods and the data. A range of complimentary methods are used to analyse the data including thematic analysis, performance narrative analysis (PNA) and narrative discursive research approaches.

The most common form of analytical tools for the qualitative descriptive researcher appears to be content analysis and thematic analysis. However, as Sandelowski and Leeman, (2012) suggest they often seem to be used in rather unspecified ways and often employed interchangeably. Significantly, much of the qualitative descriptive research outlined in articles read for the literature review, have used thematic analysis. However, as Vaismoradi et al (2013, p.400) suggest thematic analysis “is either described as something else such as content analysis or simply not identified as a particular method.” In this study I will use three named methods: thematic analysis, performance narrative analysis and narrative discursive research approaches.

Thematic analysis and content analysis share the aim of analysing and interrogating narrative materials by breaking down the content of text into smaller discrete units and then analysing them. Manen’s (1993) seminal text on researching lived experiences provides a useful approach to thematic analysis. Manen’s (1993) work highlights the need for a sensitive and creative approach to analysing data relating to life experiences. His artistic leanings are attractive to the approach taken in this study. He argues that thematic analysis is an

appropriate tool for uncovering ideas, motifs and themes which occur frequently in a text. However although he stresses the need to respond to frequency (content analysis) he insists that effective analysis of this form of data requires more than a simple counting of words or phrases. The requirement for an artistic or interpretive response as suggested by Manen is what may make thematic analysis distinct from content analysis. For Manen (1990) ideas are embodied and “dramatized” in narrative. It therefore then becomes the researcher’s task to respond to the drama of the text. Manen goes on to propose specific approaches to support this process of “seeing” meaning. For this research his suggested approach of “selecting and highlighting” seemed to be the most appropriate. Here the researcher reads the narrative carefully to identify or highlight what appears to be particularly relevant to the research question. For this study on the advice of supervisors and an external reader a deliberate and a “real hands on” approach was taken at this stage. The discipline of actually listening to the recordings, reading the transcripts, making written notes and using highlighter pens to manually code themes even in this IT/digital age was instrumental for this researcher in creating a thorough critical engagement with the text.

Clearly other digital technologies could be used to perform or complement this process. I did engage with TAGCloud which generated dominant themes but did so simply based on frequency of words used. There is a place for this for this although I would suggest that approaches such as this and the more sophisticated NVivo programmes which were considered for this research fall within the content analysis process which can provide rigour through triangulation but I would argue do not replace the need for a creative and imaginative response to the data.

Bergin (2011) proposes there is much debate for and against the use of qualitative data analysis software. I have engaged with this debate. As someone who tends only to use software for word processing and for electronic access to data I was reluctant to take the plunge. However, in the spirit of learning through experience, lifelong learning, working within current academic conventions and of trying to ensure rigour with data analysis “the plunge” was taken not only with TAGCloud but also with the more sophisticated and challenging NVivo 10 programme. In relation to software applications for my study I am in a privileged position. I came to the software applications having collected the data manually and having completed manual transcriptions and having coded manually for both content and theme. The privilege comes from having training days provided by my institution and also

having colleagues who were passionate and willing to share their expertise in software applications with myself as novice. Realistic and pragmatic discussions made NVivo accessible but I decided ultimately to maintain the thematic and performative analysis techniques outlined. As a final comment and without wishing to discuss in detail points which will be addressed in the conclusions and within the identification of emerging research, I have found that the mix of manual and technology based analysis tools may in the future be very helpful. In future work I will consider using NVivo in a more sophisticated manner. For example, I would use this software programme to import, play, analyse and transcribe all audio files. In particular I intend to use video files to capture and analyse more transparently the drama and the performativity witnessed in encounters such as those described in this study. In written narrative accounts such as those produced in this study, the visual drama can only be alluded to. I can see significant uses for technology based research applications. I am a convert but not evangelical yet to the exclusion of the more laborious process of listening, reading and hands on manipulation of the data. As indicated in my earlier comments on theory this could be a generational issue but I have still found the laborious process of manual coding and thinking essential for me to make sense of the data.

The importance of context within this study also requires an analytical tool which supports analysis and interpretation of the impact of context. For this study performative narrative analysis (PNA) (Reissman, 2008, Smith, Collinson et al (2009) provides an appropriate analytical framework. According to Smith, Collinson et al (2009) performative narrative analysis involves close reading and a sensitive response to the context and the setting which has produced the text, “including the influence of the researcher and the socio cultural circumstances on the production and interpretation of narrative within a certain situation, such as the interview setting. This analysis allows the analyst to ask “who” a comment may be addressed to “when” and “why” as Reissman (2008) argues cited by Smith, Collinson et al 2009, P.346) “ a performance analysis thus shifts from the “told” to the events which the language refers to include both the “doing” and the “telling”. I propose later in this work that such an approach is particularly helpful and pertinent to a study of this kind which by its nature examines actions in transition and within specific contexts.

The final analytical model used is that proposed by Taylor and Littleton (2006) as a narrative discursive research approach. Taylor and Littleton (2006) work has been influential as it both mirrors approaches adopted in this study and also provided a framework of analysis

which is of particular use to this study. Their subject in the 2006 paper is an exploration of identity formation for novice students in the creative fields. Their target group, although different, share many of the characteristics of the group of postgraduate international students in this study. There are clear similarities between the international postgraduate group in this study and the novices in the creative field study. At a basic level both groups were willing to complete an expensive and demanding programme of postgraduate study and even more significantly “were therefore at a threshold point appropriate to our interest in exploring their identity work as novices in the sense that they are constructing and claiming a new identity.” (Taylor and Littleton, 2006, p.27). They were therefore at a similar point and in a similar higher education postgraduate context as the international postgraduate students in this study.

Taylor and Littleton’s (2006) approach is firmly and explicitly located within the interview process. Their choice of the interview is made not simply out of convenience but as the outcome of a convincing review of the use of interviews as data collection and data production processes. It is inappropriate to rehearse these arguments again here. However as one of the main research questions and outcomes of this study is to examine the effectiveness of the narrative interview or conversation “with a purpose” as a vehicle for learning it is useful to an understanding of the research approach adopted in this study to consider some of Taylor and Littleton’s (2006) conclusions which are of specific relevance to this study. They deal with concerns over the artificiality of the interview convincingly through reference to significant texts such as Atkinson and Silverman’s 1997 work. They engage with Kundera’s literary work, his novel “Immortality” to suggest with Kundera that rather than being artificial the “interview/conversation” is now in Western society at least, a context in which identity is structured and formed. Taylor and Littleton (2006) also refer to Shakespeare’s work (1998) in which she adds a further emphasis on the “naturalness and acceptability” of the interview in her salient point that the research interview now has its own conventions which are familiar and recognisable to participants. The research interview rather than being artificial is potentially therefore a known, accepted and consequently a safe environment for the research encounter. Taylor (2001) cited by (Taylor and Littleton, 2006) reinforces this point in her assertion that a research interview may be an attractive proposition which encourages participation as the life circumstances of the individual may match the specific concerns of the research. They, therefore, may not only have something of relevance to say but may want to say it. Taylor and Littleton (2006) also suggest along with Redman (2005)

that in these circumstances an interview can consequently become a suitable setting for talk. This proposition is interrogated in the process and outcomes of this research.

The thematic analysis approach adopted in this study allows the researcher to look for patterns across the conversations and also to look for and examine what Silverman (2000, p.107) refers to as “deviant” cases. Such a response can be of significance if the deviant or contrasting response is also acknowledged by the participant. It may, for example, demonstrate a “revelation” or self-awareness of a response to a “normative expectation” (Woofitt, 2005, p.61 cited by Taylor and Littleton, 2006) where the speaker is either expressing acceptance or rejection of the expected behavioural norm. The thematic analysis used throughout this study and through the use of the discursive narrative approach specifically is deliberately and explicitly illustrative and analytical. It does not claim any numeric robustness for patterns or repetitions produced by content analysis for example as discussed above. However, it does as Taylor and Littleton (2006, p.29) suggest allows the use of “established discursive” analytical resources. Taylor and Littleton (2006) identify three such resources. The first is the recognition and use of “interpretative repertoire” as outlined by Edley (2001). Interpretative repertoire is defined by Taylor and Littleton (2006, p.30) as the identification of relatively coherent ways of talking about objects and events in the world. Secondly Bruner’s (1987) seminal work on narrative and identity provides the canonical narrative perspective. This suggests that narrative is often an individual’s account of their stories within established, generally accepted stories relating to the phenomenon. The third analytical resource is provided by identification of “trouble” or examples of conflict and tension between normative expectations and individual response. These three frameworks will be used for analysis within the discursive narrative approach used in the following data presentation and analysis chapter.

Validity and Reliability and Rigour:

As indicated in the introductory chapter, the aim of this chapter is to provide an account of the process of crafting the research study to ensure its appropriateness to meet the aims of the study. A rationale for the ontological, methodological approach and methods has been discussed in detail in this chapter. Again as outlined in the introductory chapter questions of reliability, validity and rigour must also be addressed explicitly. The approach adopted in this study is discussed and captured in Figure 1 in the introductory chapter. Briefly the qualities

ensuring reliability, validity and rigour appropriate to the paradigm represented in this study are:

Confirmability:

The extent to which the findings are the product of the study:

Dependability/Consistency/ Auditability:

The extent to which the study could be repeated and variations understood

Credibility/ Truth/ Value:

The degree to which the findings can be trusted or believed by the participants

Transferability /Applicability /Fittingness:

The extent to which the findings can be applied in other contexts or with other participants

Analytical or Theoretical Generalizations:

The extent to which the outcome of the research process rather than solving a problem forces the researcher to recognise the need for further research, possibly including alternative research including triangulation through amore large scale study.

The following chapters demonstrate how the study responds to the categories identified above to ensure rigour, “reliability” and “validity” within its specific paradigm and methodology.

Chapter 4: The Data: Presentation and Analysis:

This chapter starts by signposting the research objectives and highlighting the underpinning concepts and practices interrogated through this research. It then presents an analysis of the data from the three linked research activities of: written narratives, semi-structured interviews and narratives as conversations.

The research Objectives (RO)

RO1. To explore why individuals choose to become postgraduate international students

The first objective seeks to illuminate the motivation for what, for many individuals, is a significant event, a liminal period or even a “rupture” demanding personal change, commitments and expense.

RO2: To examine the nature of globalised lifelong learning within the higher education sector

The second objective examines the concepts of globalisation and lifelong learning within the higher education and political context. It places the experience of the respondents as /globalised lifelong learners within the macro contexts of economics, politics and philosophy.

RO3: To study the significance of culture, cultural experiences and nationality on identity and learning

The third objective interrogates the relationship between models of culture, national cultural models and models of learning and identity.

RO4: To consider whether narrative research approaches are able to both capture and develop experience and learning?

The fourth objective considers whether narrative approaches to research can do more than capture data.

It is important to make explicit again, the implicit or tacit questions at this point as they, with the research, questions form the basis for analysis and interpretations. The implicit or tacit questions underpinning the research objectives are:

TQ1: What effect does national culture have on learning?

TQ2: Are international postgraduate students “entrepreneurs” of the self?

TQ3: Do higher education pedagogical models reinforce or challenge dominant political models?

TQ4: Are international postgraduate students, agents or victims of learning?

TQ5: Do higher education programmes meet the expectations of postgraduate international students?

The tacit questions capture the multi layered nature of the experience under study and suggests the appropriateness of the multi-layered analytical approach adopted. Embedding the research within this case study, permits analysis linked to three levels. Analysis can be made of the impact and influence of the macro level of international political and economic policy, which drives provision for international postgraduate students within the largely neo-liberal globalisation and lifelong learning model. The meso level of sector and institutional policies and practices which impact on and determine aspects of the student experience, can also be identified. Finally, the micro or individual level of the biographical journey of the individual student can be interrogated through this process.

As indicated in the introduction and throughout this work, the research questions lead to a number of subsidiary aims and questions designed to paint a more substantive portrait of the international postgraduate student experience.

The subsidiary aims (SA):

SA1. To investigate what individual postgraduate students do outside their formal learning programmes

SA2. To explore the individuals view of the significance of national culture and their sense of identity

SA3. To give attention to a specific university (the case study) which during the timeframe of this research process experienced a significant shift in its policy and practice, in relation to internationalisation and the student experience. Through the first part of the study 2009-2012 UnivX had an explicit and self-proclaimed unique selling point (USP), of developing employability in its students. Throughout this research UnivX was actively engaged in creating a “ground-breaking” industry/employer led approach to integrating higher education

learning and the world of work. The project was not simply a strategic or a rhetorical claim, but a rigorously implemented policy demanding all undergraduate learning modules to be mapped against employment skills and insisting that all students and teaching staff engage in this process. Exploring postgraduate international students as models of the globalised lifelong learner within this context, adds to the research on what role higher education should play in employability. Significantly in 2012 UnivX replaced this strategy with a strategic framework highlighting the university as a civic university committed to providing an international experience for all of its students. Although employability is still aspirational, it does not have the same USP or emphasis as in the previous strategy. Significant internal and external factors impacting on this shift and its effect on the international postgraduate student experience will be considered in this work.

As indicated throughout the study, the data has been collected in three forms: written narrative, semi-structured interviews and narrative conversations in action. Data emerging from these methods will be presented separately and a synthesis of emerging outcomes will be outlined as a precursor to the discussion chapter and conclusions.

A note on the extract process

The research processes generated a significant quantity of rich and appropriate data. I needed to make difficult and important decisions about what to include, exclude and emphasise. It was also important to structure the data presentation coherently, while giving priority to what I considered the most significant responses to the most important issues. The final choice represented in the following data presentation accounts is made on the basis of where the data speaks most loudly, clearly (Trowler, 1996) and most accessibly about the issue from the perspective of the student. Inevitably some of the richness of the data may be lost in this selection process but this is inevitable in a study of this kind where the word count is set.

The written narratives:

Respondents were asked to produce a written account of their decision to become an international student, how they found the new experience and what worked well. Forty students were asked to participate only nine agreed and sent their story. The range of students who took part is indicated in the participant description table below. Anonymity was assured and although identification details such as names, programmes and careers are available to the researcher they are not included in this text to ensure anonymity.

Written Narrative Sample:

No:	Gender	Age
1.	M	24
2.	M	26
3.	F	25
4.	M	26
5.	F	26
6.	F	32
7.	M	26
8.	F	24
9.	M	31

Note on programmes:

All participants were completing a full-time version of one of the following programmes

- MA Sport Development Management
- MA Business Studies
- MBA
- MA Tourism Hospitality Management
- MA Education Management
- MA Special Educational Needs
- PhD

Experience:

A small number of participants joined their programme on completion of their undergraduate programme. However, the majority had prior experience in one of the following areas:

- Sport: professional sport player or professional role within sport development or administration.
- Family business.
- Hotel: hotel manager/supervisory role.
- Guide: professional tour guide.
- TV production: television and film production company/media roles
- Public Relations.
- Fitness: managing fitness centres
- Arts: arts administration- visitor centres, museums.
- Tours: manages ethical tour company.
- Business: entrepreneurs
- Air transport: airport supervisory role.
- Sport public relations: management in sport franchise.
- Higher education: Lecturer in higher education institution.
- Education: Teacher

Note on language:

All of the written narrative accounts have been proof read by the researcher. Any significant grammatical or syntactical errors have been removed to provide ease of reading. The content and sense of the accounts have not been changed in any way.

The Research Objectives:

RO1. To explore why individuals choose to become postgraduate international students

The Data: Thematic Analysis:

A number of significant themes emerge from the written narrative accounts describing reasons for becoming an international student, choosing UnivX and evaluating their experiences as an international student. The major themes emerging from the written accounts include: family influence, cultural links with England and the city, transnational attractions notably sport, music and football, responsibility to family, career development and change, new direction, transition and rupture, agency, ease of access to postgraduate programmes and satisfaction.

Note on extracts:

The following selection is made to support the identified emerging themes. The account from **Student 1** is used as an example as the data here “speaks most loudly about the issues under study” Trowler (1996). Almost without exception the respondents introduced themselves by name, nationality and location. Basic biographical details were followed by statements suggesting that family ambition, support and influence were instrumental in their decision to become an international postgraduate student. The family influence is substantial in most accounts and also complex. In some cases such as with the selected text from **Student 1** family narratives seem particularly significant in influencing the individual’s decision to develop a passion for English and also in seeing the MA qualification as a way of not only changing career but also as a type of payback for family support. In this case the social and cultural influence of the mother seems of particular importance

Extract One for illustration:

“To illustrate my journey to UnivX and becoming a postgraduate, I am afraid that I have to mention my personal life history and family background a little bit. I was born in a typical Chinese family where I was the only child in the family and parents are both factory workers. However, since I was young, my parents especially my mother, who was the great fan of literature from the West but unfortunately deprived the chance to develop her potential through formal education at that time, instilled me the importance of education and helped me to form a serious attitude towards my study in school. I have to say, I am not a smart student intellectually but I studied diligently and proved myself a good student almost in all my schooling. Therefore I am indebted to my mother for setting up a good attitude to my education.” (Student 1)

A sense of obligation, debt and need to show respect also emerges as an issue from the data. **Student 1** shares his family commitment and sense of obligation in a comment about his initial career choice:

“So I become the tour guide which was dramatically different from my ideal career I had imagined before. But I was not disillusioned with previous effort for school because I gained a good command of English and developed an acceptable manner. Without that, I cannot make good progress in my career and brought some positive change for my family within a relatively short time.” (Student 1)

He goes on to describe the tensions he faced and his responsibilities while deciding on his “study abroad plans”.

“After nearly four year financial preparation through working, I was beginning to consider my plan for study abroad. But it is not an easy and straightforward decision as I thought before. With more established reputation at work, well-formed friendships and traditional family responsibility, I began to show the hesitation and even scepticism towards my study abroad plus a lot of uncertainties in a new country, a new school. At this time, I talked to my friends and my mother but got very mixed suggestions. Even sometimes they became ambivalent towards their own suggestions. I strongly feel that I should ask myself what I really want. After serious considerations, I knew if I did not come out of the current financial and emotional comfort zone, I would never get the chance to make a breakthrough of my career and future life. I would probably end up with a job which limits or fails to realize my full potential. To get a degree from a renowned university will give me a chance to find out a job or career which could offer me a chance to prove or realize my covert potentials.”

(Student 1)

Parental support and influence on the decision to become an international student take different forms in the accounts of several participants.

Age and Maturity:

A feature of the group is age and maturity. A deliberate decision was taken to focus on the experience of mature, postgraduate students which may further complicate the family and parental relationship as a motivator for international study. As the respondents highlighted above suggest, direct influence, support and desire to please parents and family is one reason for taking on international postgraduate study. However, for some of these respondents their rationale is more pragmatic, including travelling and living with partners. Romance and relationships are also highlighted as reasons for choosing to become an international student. Following partners to maintain a relationship is mentioned by a number of respondents.

Cultural links with England and the City:

A desire to experience England and English culture and also the cultural traditions and attractions of the specific city location of UnivX were stated by several respondents as motivators for wishing to be an international student and for selecting this university. As

indicated in the account from **Student 1** western cultural links are hinted at as a significant reason for coming to England as a student. Others participants have personal and professional interests in English culture. UnivX is located in a city with a particular popular music history. It is recognised internationally as the birthplace of the Beatles. The city has invested in building its future as a visitor attraction centre on this and other specific heritage features. For several participants this is the major attraction and the major reason for becoming a postgraduate student in the city.

Sporting links: Football:

An equally powerful motivator for several of the respondents was the attraction of a specific football club. It may seem a surprising driver for such a potentially major experience but the narrative accounts of several respondents are unambiguous.

Career Development:

The postgraduate qualification and experience is recognised as a significant reason for completing this experience by several of the respondents. **Student 1** makes a very specific comment sharing his belief that an international qualification of this type will improve his career possibilities and provide an edge in the fiercely competitive Chinese job market:

“There is nothing wrong with my seriousness and diligent work for education. The problem in my case is the lack of a chance to enter a respectable school. Of course, to go to a good university also depends on personal ability. However, it does not mean the students who for some reasons failed to enter a decent university are inherently inferior in their capability than then supposed to bar from a better career and life. A lot of my classmates in my university are quite smart and hard-working but they did not go to a better university simply for financial issues. But they are condemned a harsh or even hostile situation for their future career at the beginning of their study. Unfortunately, this is the reality in China where one job position is usually competed from over 100 candidates. In that circumstance, the place where you graduated becomes the first threshold to keep us from the short list.

Therefore, I was determined to change my education history by entering a more renowned university and by studying a respectable university in western country is the best way. Instead of giving up my further education for some financial reasons, I set up a goal to continue my study with the plan that my tour guide work could materialize my ambition in the near future.” (Student 1)

Agency and involvement in learning:

Involvement and agency is demonstrated throughout the written accounts. Evidence of agency, range from pre programme statements made by **Student 1**. *“To get a degree from a renowned university will give me a chance to find out a job or career which could offer me a chance to prove or realize my covert potentials. If my study abroad does not realize my objective, I have no regret and at least I had acted upon it and not just sit and talk.”*(**Student 1**)

Change of direction, space, transition, rupture:

The most consistent and powerful theme emerging from the written narratives was the claim made by participants that the most important reason for joining their programme was that it allowed space for a number of personal changes. The subheading for this section refers to change of direction, space, transition, rupture. These concepts capture the sense of what individuals expressed in their responses. **Student 1** account makes a number of powerful points in relation to significant career and personal development opportunities provided by the international study period:

“Therefore, I was determined to change my education history by entering a more renowned university and by studying a respectable university in western country is the best way. Instead of giving up my further education for some financial reasons, I set up a goal to continue my study with the plan that my tour guide work could materialize my ambition in the near future.”

This tension of struggling for independence from a secure environment is not shared by all the participants, but they all, without exception, see this postgraduate learning programme as an opportunity to learn, develop and possibly change or even, as in some cases, providing a final adventure before settling down.

The University, ranking, reputation, access:

A range of formal reasons were given for the selection of UnivX. **Student 1**, for example, is direct in outlining his reasons for choosing this particular university:

“After confirmed my plan, I began to choose the potential university. Compared with choosing a Chinese university, I feel more empowered because there is not too much restriction upon personal qualification. More specifically my qualifications from my previous school and working experience are highly appreciated by universities here in the west. In

other words those embarrassment or barriers assumed by Chinese education institutions and society are recognized as a positive and an advantage in their foreign counterparts. My qualifications allow me to choose the best school for the subject I am interested in. This is impossible in China. I feel proud of myself and respected by the foreign university which never happened to me from the university on my homeland.” (Student 1)

Recognition of previous professional experience as well as academic qualifications was highlighted as an attraction to UnivX by several participants. Other significant comments related to the nature of the programme, in particular the promise of work experience and of working with other experienced managers as students. Other participants highlighted the location of the university and the nature of the programme as reasons for joining the programme.

Satisfaction:

Finally, most respondents expressed ultimate satisfaction with their choice of university, programme and with their time on the programme, however for most the experience was not without problem. There are impressive accounts in the written narratives of individual students demonstrating agency to ensure that their programmes met their needs and expectations.

Some final thoughts on the data emerging from thematic analysis:

The written narrative accounts allowed a number of respondents to critically reflect on their reasons for joining the international postgraduate programme and to evaluate their experience. The accounts largely followed a conventional narrative format with a personal introduction followed by a detailed reflection and a final conclusion. What emerged from the narratives are accounts of the complexity in reasons for taking on their period of international study. Almost without exception reasons are multiple and complex. For example, there is no simple or direct statement that the qualification as an occupational necessity is the primary motivator. On the whole, respondents were satisfied with their experience, but again almost without exception, satisfaction came from their agency. There is very little evidence of passivity in these accounts. The most powerful theme emerging from this data is the sense that this experience is viewed by respondents as a key transitional period both in their careers and in their personal lives.

Performative Narrative Analysis:

“Performative Narrative Analysis” (PNA) (Reissman, 2008) conceptualises narratives or texts as stories. PNA attempts to analyse why a text has been constructed in a particular way to tell a particular story to a particular audience. The analytical factors used by PNA focus on the context and contexts of the story, the situation, discursive patterns and regularities and on how the story legitimises and critiques particular norms or patterns of behaviour.

A performative narrative analysis of the written narratives provided for this study, adds to the analysis produced through thematic analysis by making the context, situation, discursive practices and patterns of critique more transparent.

Embodiment: Context, audience, narrator:

The scripts were produced either during or at the end of a period of postgraduate international study. They were written voluntarily in response to an email request from the researcher. The researcher, an insider, was known to all of the potential respondents as an experienced member of staff in the case study university with expertise and knowledge of their programmes. Respondents were familiar with reflection and with research ethics and research processes. All had received a participant information sheet outlining the nature of the research, ensuring anonymity and withdrawal from the process at any point. Potential respondents were also made aware that there would be alternatives to the written narrative if they wished to take part in other approaches. They could, for example, choose to take part in interviews and conversations with the researcher.

The physical context is a large post 1992 English university, located within the north west of England. The researcher is an experienced senior member of staff with extensive experience and interest in postgraduate learning and international students. All of the participants are mature, aged 24 plus and are international students, either international in the university sense of being non-European or for this research in the sense of being non UK citizens.

The participants are international students who are aware of their audience. They are writing for an informed audience and are aware of this. Therefore the context embodies the narrators and the audience as experts in their own experience and as shared expert users and providers of the postgraduate international student experience under research.

Interestingly, the language, structure and presentation of the written accounts are all set within a very conventional and formal narrative reflective structure. This was not requested,

yet all respondents have provided a narrative which adopts a conventional form of introduction, structured account and conclusion. Inevitably all the written accounts are monologues and contain points which could and should be developed and interrogated through discussion. The comment from **Student 3**, for example, cries out for further questioning and development:

“I have lived in many places and this is one of the most beautiful and most friendly. However, it is not easy to find a job here as a non-resident and dare I say it a non-white Muslim woman. I have never been badly treated or insulted but even with my experience, languages and confidence I was unable to find a job in any industry or even in the two airports in the area.”
(**Student 3**)

As do the specific remarks about a member of staff made by **Student 5**:

“Most of my teachers were very helpful apart from one who seemed very angry and not like the others.” (**Student 5**)

Or the revelation produced by **Student 4**.

“My problem was writing English. I thought I was good but my teachers thought it was very hard and I had a big problem with it. My teachers asked me to check English carefully and read a lot to improve. I did this a lot but I didn’t really improve. I failed some assignments and was really worried as this course was for my life and many people had helped me to be here” (**Student 4**)

Performance Narrative Analysis (PNA) with its focus on the context was helpful in identifying both the advantages of the chosen written method but also possibly more significantly the weaknesses in this approach. Encouraging respondents to tell their stories but being unable to interrogate and develop responses confirmed the adoption of the other research methods in this study.

Performative Narrative Analysis also helps the researcher/analyst to focus on why the story has been performed or told in its particular way. It encourages the analyst to look for “discursive regularities” what has been included, what is occluded or what seems to be excluded. In the written accounts provided by these participants, a number of discursive regularities appear and tend to confirm the original thematic analysis. For example, the

complexity of family ties and responsibilities appear in several stories. An equally similar discursive regularity is that of the international experience providing individuals with time and space to make a new decision. Transition regularly features in the accounts. The reverse side of considering what has been excluded is also significant. Nationality, possibly surprisingly, gets little mention in most of the accounts apart from as a statement of identity. Culture shock in all of its many potential manifestations gets almost no mention in the stories. Finally, individuals expressing a direct relationship between their decision to study and their career is mentioned but in a general sense. Career and culture shock are well documented as being of particular significance in other research accounts of the international student experience. This may suggest that either this research method is not producing this discussion, or that the experience of these students does not match these accounts of the international student experience. Whichever may be the case, one of the outcomes of the PNA for the written accounts was confirmation of the need to provide alternative methods to further interrogate the experience of the international students within UnivX.

Plummer's work (2011) on stories was highlighted earlier in the methodology chapter. After analysis the student stories captured in these accounts resonate with Plummer's (2011) seven significant and inter-related social stories.

In particular the stories of going on journeys and transformations, experiencing sufferings and troubles, facing contests and conflicts, living relationships and of course achieving consummation through graduation are reflected in all of the international postgraduate stories.

Part Two:

Semi-Structured Interviews:

The second part of the research was conducted with a group of 34 international postgraduate students, targeted to represent a range of age, gender, experience, nationality and programme of study. Within this sample there were young, mature, experienced and inexperienced students. For some this was their first experience of international travel and learning in a different context whereas others had a variety of personal and professional experiences and some had studied in different international locations. A conventional whilst deliberately flexible semi-structured interview approach was used. This allowed the main questions to be asked and it also enabled replies to be classified and understanding to be deepened through

follow up questions and reflection. All interviews were taped and analysed for key ideas and emerging themes.

Semi-Structured Interview Data Presentation:

The data is presented in the following way: the question, prompts and comments on the aim of the question, identified themes which emerge from the responses and a small number of selected extracts to support the identified theme

Note on language:

All of the spoken narrative accounts have been transcribed and proof read by the researcher. Significant grammatical or syntactical errors have been removed to provide ease of reading. The content and sense of the accounts have not been changed in any way. Non-verbal communication apart from pauses and laughter, have been removed. It was felt that attempting to record non-verbal communication such as facial expression, pitch and tone of voice, hesitations, gestures, physical stance and actions, eye contact, proximity and so on within a written transcript would fragment the text and lead to confusion. However, it is important to recognise that this decision although sensible and informed does reduce the sense and reality of the interaction. As identified in Chapter Five in future work other technologies will be considered to capture and present research encounters of this kind. Extracts selected from the interviews are edited where specific detail makes identification of the individual possible.

Note on Extracts:

The semi-structured interview narratives produced such a volume of data that attention has to be given as to what to select as an extract in the text. The following careful selection is again based on the point made earlier (Trowler, 1996) that this data speaks most loudly in relation to the questions and an acknowledgement of the word length requirements of the PhD thesis.

Question on Background:

Something about self:

- Where from?
- What were you doing before coming to University X?
- Why did you want to become an international postgraduate student?

The aim of this question and associated prompts is to encourage participants to relax, to reflect on their experience and to make statements about themselves.

Thematic Analysis: Emerging themes:

Identity and Nationality:

A number of points emerged from this request for simple biographical details. Almost of the participants answered the question to describe themselves with a simple opening statement of name, age and nationality. First names were interesting for the Chinese student participants. Many had assumed English first names. Since so many had described themselves with English names a logical response was to ask why? Responses ranged from:

“It is easier for the English to say my name.” (Student 1)

To: *“I was taught to do this by my English teacher. All of my friends had an English name in my English class. We had to use our English names in class. I do not know why we were asked to do this.” (Student 10)*

To: *It is easier and I like my name (laughs) I chose it (laughs). I do not use it with my Chinese friends or with my family. Everybody thinks it is very strange and some think it is very funny.” (Student 11)*

Or *“It is much more convenient for the English and for our professors. Even many of our professors seem to find our names difficult to pronounce. Some do try to pronounce our*

Why University X?

- How did you hear about University X?
- What reasons affected your choice?
- Why University X?

The aim of this question and its associated prompts is to investigate the range of reasons why the case study university was chosen. It is designed to develop and interrogate the responses identified in the written narratives.

Thematic Analysis: Emerging Themes:

Access to information and university representatives:

Participants commented on the importance of published information such as prospectus, guide, British Council, University marketing materials: all the participants used “on-line”

searches and information to learn about the awards, programmes, the university and to a lesser extent the city and the UK:

“I read the reviews on line and I also read the university and course outlines and publicity. I also read all the league table information. We all do this now. It is the most reliable information and unbiased information we can find as international students. My university isn’t high in the table but my subject is top of the two most important league tables. That was very important for me and for my parents.” (Student 20)

Influence of the city/history/image:

The majority of the respondents, over 85%, had heard of the city before they arrived. For a number of respondents the specific city setting was the main attraction either for its sport/music or cultural attractions. A more specific attraction for tourism postgraduate students was the recent European capital of culture status and the rebirth of the city through tourism. It provides students with a working example of urban regeneration through tourism and cultural investment. It was identified by several participants as a unique selling point for the university and its tourism and events and sport programmes in particular. However, there are some mixed responses to this prompt, ranging from familiarity to ignorance.

Music/Rock/Cultural attractions:

A number of respondents highlighted the specific cultural attractions of the UnivX setting as their prime motivation for application. The first respondent in this selection is very specific in identifying her reason for joining UnivX, the birthplace of the Beatles;

“This is the main reason I came to study here.I was determined to live in this city.”
(Student 12)

Personal reasons/family/partnerships/romance/love:

Personal rationales based on romance and relationships play a significant role for several of the participants. The extract makes this point powerfully:

“As I said earlier I know the city quite well and may have come here for my masters degree but my reason what really made the decision easy is that my boyfriend, my partner, sorry (laughs) is finishing his PhD here at (another city university). I would have moved here to be

with him but I can complete the masters programme which I want to complete at the same time. So this is a very good solution.” (Student 14)

How did you feel before you came?

- What were your expectations?
- What did you know about England?
- Were your expectations met?
- Any surprises?

This question is designed to provide an opportunity for the participants to reflect and articulate their feelings before they embarked on their international programme of study. The prompts used included asking the students to reflect on their feelings, what they anticipated and what their expectations were before arriving in the United Kingdom. The simple question starting the discussion was “How did you feel before you came to the UK?” Responses and emerging themes ranged from; excitement, trepidation, insecurity, adventure, concerns in relation to practical issues and academic demands- a mix of known and unknowns.

Excitement, Trepidation, Adventure, Concerns:

This student captures the excitement of the new experience:

“I was very excited. It is a new phase, a new part of my life. I have worked full-time for three years since graduation. I have a very good job, well paid and exciting. I know that I was very lucky to get it. Working in sport management and PR at my age is very difficult. I really like it but I wanted to try other things before I settled down in a proper job, relationship and everything else (laughs). My company (named) have sponsored me to complete my masters in sports development and public relations to work with sport companies and brands and then to come back to my job. I am very lucky. This is a wonderful chance for me to make new friends, have new experiences, get paid and still have my job to go home to.” (Student 25)

Travelling with an established group of friends reduced concern and trepidation for some of the respondents. Others were less informed but felt that an experience in England would improve their language skills and international employability. Whereas other student’s prior knowledge and experience was challenged when they lived in the city. Knowledge and preparation for the period in England is highlighted in the following extract which also recognises disappointment with a lack of engagement with English culture and experience;

“All my life I have seen many things about England in the media. England has been very important in (named home country). I also learned about England in school and of course in English lessons. So I think I was well prepared before I arrived. In fact I wanted to compare what I knew and what the reality is like. But I have spent most of my time with English (home nation) families. I have learned much about England from them. I don’t have a real alternative as they are my only real friends here.” (Student 19)

Were your expectations met? Were there any surprises?

This question provides participants with an opportunity to reflect on their experience and to evaluate their expectations before joining the programme. The themes which emerged include; a lack of certainty, confusion, many surprises, lack of engagement with the local community/English non student community. Inevitably all the narrative responses are unique. The following selections are made to give a general overview of the responses.

Lack of Certainty, Confusion, Surprises, Lack of Engagement with Local Community:

The following selections demonstrate the range of response.

“Yes, I think overall they have been met. I was told before I came here that English people are very polite, very kind and that they care for you. The English professors, staff and university staff and representatives I met before I decided and applied for my course were kind and very helpful. It has been like this since I have been at university. So far everybody I have met and spoken with has been lovely. So those expectations have been met.” (Student 6)

A succinct comment makes a similar point: *“Everybody is so kind and helpful.” (Student 28)*

Other respondents are more explicitly disappointed with their experience and evidence the strategies they have employed to meet their personal expectations and aims. Expectations and perceived broken promises affect the experience for some students:

“One of my main expectations was an internship. I really thought that I would have work experience at least if not a full internship. I now know that I wasn’t promised or guaranteed one as my programme leader showed me this in the programme handbook and marketing. It says something like our aim is to provide students with appropriate work experience. I can see that it is not a guarantee but it sounds like one to me.” (Student 17)

Or the demand for independence and lack of class contact is a major problem in meeting expectations. Even more specific issues with programme content and focus caused dissatisfaction and a sense of non-fulfilment:

“I thought that the programme would be interesting and very relevant to my future career (hotel management). I was told that this city had recently established numerous new hotels including 4 and 5 star hotels as part of its regeneration through tourism..... Overall it has been a good experience in general. The biggest problem or disappointment for me has been that my course has been too general and not really concerned with hotel management. I was always encouraged by my teachers to specialise in hotels for my study and for my assignments. I did this and wrote my dissertation based on research into 4 and 5 star hotels service in the city. I feel that I had to do all of this independently. I expected to be taught hotel management and not have to do all of the specialised work. I did not expect that.”

(Student 26)

Did you encounter any surprises?

The aim of the question is to further interrogate perceived differences between expectations, prior knowledge and the experience. The question provided an opportunity for humour, laughter, surprise to be shared.

Emerging themes and outcomes ranged from: the local accent and the difficulty in understanding it, English customs and practices particularly in relation to food, hospitality, leisure, indifference to politics and political processes such as voting; more specific surprises related to the nature of the programmes and specific logistical and location issues.

1. English Customs and Practices, Programme Issues:

The first comment selected mirrors a sentiment shared across the respondents:

“We were warned about the local accent before we came to England. That the accent here from the local people would be difficult to follow and to understand. It is worse than we were warned. Sometimes I can’t understand it at all. I am not sure that it is really English (laughs). At first I thought that I would get used to it but not really I haven’t.” **(Student 3)**

Specific pedagogical approaches surprise some of the participants:

*“I was very surprised by many things. One thing is the size of my class. In (named home country) classes are very big. Even for postgraduates in TEI (**Technological Educational Institutes**) I studied in classes with over 400 students. It is the same at university. My class here has only 12 students. It can be good. I know all of my class, well some and others not so well. Most of my lecturers know me and some know my name. That is good but I always feel under pressure. It is hard. I think that the group is too small for a class and too small for social and friendships.” (Student 33)*

Tell me about your first two weeks; what happened? What was significant? How did you handle any problems?

The aim of this question was to encourage dialogue and reflection, and to build narrative accounts of the key induction and settling in period. Stories and narratives emerging included accounts of; support, excitement, culture shock, good practice and poor practice.

Support, Excitement, Culture Shock, Good and Bad Practice:

Surprise and satisfaction with support is a common theme:

“My first memory was on the trip from the airport to the city. Everything was so green and so small (laughs). My city (named city in China) has 15 million people. I first thought that all cities in UK are so small and (city) is small. This city has only 500,000 people so my city is thirty times bigger. (laughs). The first two weeks were very good. We didn’t have to do any study (laughs). My accommodation, my apartment is good. It is expensive but it has everything. It is in the city so I can walk everywhere I want to go to, other students, internet everything is fine. I was taken to the apartment with my other students and friends and everybody helped me to settle in.” (Student 3)

However, the first two weeks of the programme were not a happy time for all:

“It wasn’t a good time. I was very lonely. Nothing happened until my classes started. I stayed in my room and used the internet.” (Student 8)

How did you handle any problems?

The question is designed to interrogate individual strategies and agency in making sense of and solving problems faced in their programmes. A range of strategies are mentioned

including; using formal systems, programme leader, national group as friends. A major theme emerging is the level of individual agency participants demonstrated in their encounters.

Agency and Strategy:

Support from the programme leader is a relatively constant comment:

“I don’t have any serious problems with my course. I have asked the programme leader when I was unsure. He has always been available to help me. I did this a great deal at the beginning. He was very patient with me.” **(Student 6)**

Support from the university international office and programme team is identified and welcomed by an individual who had experienced significant problems:

“My first two weeks here were a nightmare. My apartment was burgled and most of my things were taken PC, photographs, jewellery, some money. The university international office was very good. They helped me with the police and with my insurance claims. They helped me to find a better flat. I moved into student accommodation for the first semester.” **(Student 12)**

To a more common statement identifying loneliness and the need for fellow national students:

“I didn’t know anybody here. Before my course started I was very lonely and really not sure what to do. I made friends with some other (national) students in my accommodation. This helped me and I know they felt the same as I do.” **(Student 22)**

To a general strangeness in a new city:

*“I don’t remember too many problems with the course when we started. We had a good induction and we knew what we had to do. The problems were because we were new to England and the UK. Finding our way around was a problem. It was difficult. There are no maps or signs, or not many (laughs) in this city, not like in my city. At first we did not want to ask the local people. We were shy and at first shy to speak in English. We were helped by our church **(Roman Catholic Church)** and our priest who has been so helpful to us. We have been very lucky and blessed. We are OK now. We know what to do, how to get where we need to be and what we can eat (laughs).* **(Student 29)**

Introduction to the Programme and Induction:

The aim of this question was to investigate the effectiveness of formal introductions and induction programmes as part of the transition process to the UK University. The implicit aim was to identify examples of passivity or agency. Prompts included how individuals were introduced to the university and the programme, what was useful and helpful, what was difficult or confusing, what strategies did individuals employ to deal with difficulties.

Thematic Analysis: Emerging Themes:

Themes and points emerging from the participants included the following mix of responses to formal processes and examples of personal agency. The formal university induction received a reasonable response. However this was often missed due to problems with timing and arrival. For some of those who attended it provided a sense of belonging to the institution, however there was a mixed response with some not always feeling part of the university but from the start of the programme a sense of being at the margins. The programme induction formal processes, handbooks and staff introductions were seen as appropriate with some concerns expressed about group work and introductions to fellow students. Interestingly some anxiety was expressed over the ethnic/nationality of the groups and the style and approach of some lecturers. Yet on the contrary particularly positive responses related to the friendliness and care demonstrated by the programme leader. All thought that a group meal in the city as an icebreaker was very good event, although not all found this process easy.

A mix of nationalities is seen as important to this student;

“I remember being with a very large group of international students from all programmes across the university, we were undergraduates and postgraduates. I was surprised to see how many Chinese students were there but I was also pleased that there were many other nationalities as well. I asked about this before I applied to the university. I did not want to be only with other Chinese students. I had read and heard that some universities do this, recruit and teach students from one country, usually China or India as one group. I did not want this experience so I was pleased to see the other students. I did like being introduced to the university and the city in this way.” (Student 7)

Critical and Independent learning:

Prompts:

- What do you feel about being a critical and independent learner?
- Do you understand what this means?
- Were you surprised?
- Were you confused?
- How have you made sense of this?

The aim of this question is to explore individual student reaction to a core element of their programmes which is the demand to be an independent and critical learner. Prompts used to develop responses included; were you told about critical and independent learning? Did you understand what was meant by these terms? Were you surprised? How did you make sense of critical and independent learning?

This was a particularly interesting part of the semi-structured interview process. Students were keen to talk about this issue and provided a range of complex answers. Responses and emerging themes included some surprising and some more conventional statements. Interestingly all were informed of the concept of criticality before starting the programme. Some understood the concepts and associated pedagogical processes. This was notably the case for those who had completed a pre-masters programme when the concept had been discussed and explored. Most felt they understood the notion of independent learning, although some were concerned about the level of independence and the balance between support, independence and abandonment. The concept and expectation behind the notion of criticality was more challenging. There was a mixed response to this question with participants either ignoring it in the belief that it would make sense eventually or disappear. Some were anxious as they were not sure or convinced that they could respond to the request appropriately. Some became angry particularly when it became clear to them of the emphasis being placed deliberately on them to apparently “manage and manufacture” their own learning. Comments such as there are no right answers caused concern as several respondents were certain that they were here to receive answers from the experts. Students dealt with this through a range of strategies including; trust and following expectations and requests, completing a module which addressed and provided experience of the approach and its outcomes. However, some individuals demonstrated significant levels of agency through developing dialogue, discussion and complaints with module leaders and demands for action.

Confusion was also experienced when asked to work in groups, read extensively and be critical and then to be warned and sanctioned for collaboration and plagiarism which some felt were the inevitable outcomes of the approach they were asked to adopt. The following selection of extracts provides a sense of the diversity of response.

“Independent and critical learning was mentioned in our programme and module handbooks and throughout our induction. Some of the lecturers talked about this a great deal, one in particular (named) whereas others never mentioned it or possibly said something once. I was a little confused and concerned about this at first. I did work independently and in groups and completed an independent research based dissertation for my undergraduate programme. I was therefore a little anxious and confused about how this would be different for my postgraduate major. (laughs).” (Student 10)

An insightful response is provided in the following lengthy extract which highlights the difficulty in communicating and constructing criticism in a foreign language:

“I didn’t really listen very carefully to this at the beginning of the programme. I was more concerned with listening to all of the practical points. It was part of the induction. It did become more important and clearer when we started our modules. Our first module was about criticality, it is called critical (named module). The module leader was passionate about criticality and reading and asking questions. My friends and I were unsure at first. It is very different to our experience in (named European country). None of us had experienced this before and some of my friends had completed masters programmes and a PhD in (named European Country). In (named European country) our professors often tell students what we must do and then they instruct us, we listen and then try to do what they have asked us to do. We can be critical but not of our professors or their theories (laughs). What we have to do is listen and work hard. Here, on our programme, we were asked to continually ask questions, of ourselves, what we are reading and our professors and continually join in and make contributions. Some of our professors became upset when they thought we were “too quiet”. I don’t think that they realise we are not used to doing this. It is also very difficult to be critical and ask questions in English. I would be more confident to do this in my own language.” (Student 33)

To a comment highlighting engagement and agency in dealing with the issue:

“I was very angry about this part of my Masters programme. I am very happy now but this was not always so. I am the student representative and the group were very angry and upset during the first module and modules. The module leader was very strong and I remember him telling us that “there are no right answers in this subject, only incorrect ones.”(laughs). I was very upset about this and so were most of the students. I was asked to see him to discuss our concerns. I went to see the module leader in his office. He listened and smiled and said that he was pleased we felt like this (laughs). Again I was not happy. He listened and explained. He outlined his argument about arguments, about questions, the importance of asking questions and of being critical. I remember saying that I expected my professors to have the answers. He said that he did have some important answers and that was one of them. That this is one of the most important lessons. I have always remembered that answer. He promised to explain this to the group. He did this. He also said he enjoyed discussing this with me. He did this and asked us to be patient. When we finished the first assignment it would be clear. I think it was and we did, all of us.” (Student 7)

Who do you interact with? What relationships do you have while on the programme?

Prompts:

- Who do you interact with?
- How do you interact?
- Do you interact with the programme group?
- Do you interact with fellow national students on the programme- how and why?
- Do you interact with other UnivX students? How and Why?
- Do you interact with local people?
- Do you have a part-time job?
- When and where do you speak English?
- Has your English improved since you have lived in England?

The aim of this question and the associated prompts was to provide participants with an opportunity to reflect on and discuss their experience inside and outside of the programme. It is important to add this dimension in order to achieve a sense of the full experience of being an international student. Inevitably a range of responses was provided matching the personal

experience of the individual participant. Notwithstanding the individual replies, a range of themes emerge from the answers.

General emerging themes include the importance of individual friends and friendship groups. Such groups would normally consist of fellow nationals although this was not exclusively so. Partners play a significant role in this group. Possibly as postgraduates individuals are more likely to have built more longstanding relationships. Classmates are for many participants their significant out of class friends, although this is not always the case. Students in UnivX tend to live in large private sector student apartment blocks. For some this became an isolated experience whereas for others the mix of different nationalities within the apartment and events held there developed more extensive friendships. There is evidence of some interaction with local people and a small number of local UnivX students, but overall it is very limited and unusual for the participants to have spoken to or built relationships with the local community. Overall, this is a great disappointment to the international student. A number of participants have travelled extensively while on the programme. They have met and developed friendships through personal travelling encounters rather than through the UnivX programme experience. The response to the development of English language is particularly interesting. Almost without exception there were no statements which recognised that being in England and being immersed in English language and culture had improved English proficiency and confidence in speaking and using English language. On the contrary where participants made detailed comments in relation to this question their experience was disappointing and in some cases even detrimental.

The most common response to the question of who do you interact with is “friends”. In some cases friends are fellow students they came to the UK with from their home town or country. Shared accommodation provides an opportunity for interaction and friendship development. Established partnerships and in some cases a desire to find a partner or romance is a feature of this postgraduate group.

Responses to the question about the development of English language are interesting. It is impossible to find one comment which states that English has improved either as a by-product of the formal programme or as a consequence of living in England. The prompt was largely ignored or “skirted-over” by many participants apart from those who were willing to

share their narratives of disappointment. The following extracts provide a sense of the range of concern. In the first case expectations were not met:

“I was very disappointed that there were no additional classes or even cultural classes. There were English study skills and basic skills but I thought it would be of a higher level. I didn’t think they would be part of my programme. I knew that they weren’t because I had seen my modules and programme before I came. They could or should be something extra which I could choose to, even English culture classes. Everything we do has to be part of our modules.” (Student 20)

A point is made by several participants that they have little opportunity to develop English either in or out of class. The following comment made by one participant makes this point powerfully:

“This (the interview/research process) is the most I have spoken in English since I have been here. Before I came here I spoke English (pause) properly (pause) every day to many different people.” (Student 7)

What does the term lifelong learning mean to you?

The aim of this question is to discover what the term lifelong learning means to the participants and whether there is an explicit understanding of the concept and practice.

Responses to the question range from certainty to uncertainty. A number of logical, if uniformed, answers in the form of literal translations are made. Some participants provide more nuanced views capturing the process of lifelong learning as the need to be proactive in learning, to ensure that learning is current and relevant. The need for professional updating and evidence of a commitment to lifelong learning as being attractive in career and job application process is also provided as a response to this question.

What does the term “Culture” mean to you?

The question is designed to allow participants to interrogate the concept of culture and to relate their ideas to a number of contexts. The following prompts were used to develop responses with the participants;

- What does the term culture mean to you?
- How important is national culture?
- Does your university have a culture?
- Are you part of this culture?

Thematic Analysis: Emerging Themes:

Difficulty with definitions, to academic definitions, to common-sense, to critical responses:

Several participants had difficulty in coming to a definition and asked and took time to reflect before attempting an answer. Significantly, for this group of postgraduate students many had studied or were studying culture in their programmes and consequently were more confident in their answers. The easier “common-sense” replies identified nationality, language and appearance as the elements of culture. The more critical and informed answers came from the students who were familiar with conceptual arguments and definitions of culture. For the management and business students a frequent response was the informal definition of culture being “what we do around here”, To a more detailed response using the context of the new international student perspective “Everything has its own rules, expectations and traditions, cultural differences are easy to observe as part of this experience of being an international student in a new culture.”

National culture was seen as very important to all the respondents. Many viewed national culture as providing themselves and others with symbols of their identity through physical appearance, language and other explicit symbols of nationality. The links between nationality and identity and perception were identified by a number of respondents as recognition of the expectation that their behaviour should mirror cultural stereotypes. What may be particularly important for this study is the often expressed view that national culture and national identity seems to have an increased rather than decreased status in the international arena. Many individuals felt that they are categorised into their national groupings by individuals by

systems and then ultimately by themselves. For several participants this was viewed negatively as they had hoped that international travel and studying would reduce the importance of national cultural stereotypes and labels. Equally several participants were able to identify the use of national cultural stereotypes both as a strength and as a defence. A smaller number talk about hybridity or a sense of self which could be described as hybrid. This tends to only be the case when their engagement in the host country is longer and more complex than that afforded by international study. Overall national stereotypes were not challenged by this experience of being an international student.

The prompts enquiring about university culture were also interesting and complex. Just as with the general question on culture many of the management and business studies students were informed and confident to equate university culture with versions of corporate culture. Others answered the questions by identifying cultural features or descriptors of the institution using terms such as it is “youthful” or concerned with its “students”. More nuanced and sophisticated answers questioned whether there was one culture by suggesting that their friends in other parts of the university experienced and did things differently. A small number identified symbolic events such as VC welcome and graduation in particular as demonstrating the university culture.

The prompt asking whether they are part of this culture as an international student received a range of mixed and more complex answers. However, all with few exceptions would recommend UnivX as their “Alma Mater” to family and friends. This seems a fascinating outcome and one which warrants further investigation in the next part of the research.

How important is national culture to you?

This prompt produced a range of interesting and diverse answers, ranging from concerns with nationalism to the explicit link between nationality and identity and language:

“I think nationality is very important. It is important to me. It is who I am. When I am seen I am always seen as a Chinese man before anybody meets me or gets to know me. Therefore my nationality is important. My identity is Chinese. I am proud of it, on the whole, (laughs) But I am more Chinese here than I was in China.” (Student 7)

The following response from an English speaking student develops the point about national stereotypes and expectations:

“Nationality, (pause), I am American. You know that and everybody knows as soon as I talk, everybody recognises my accent and knows that I am American. So even if I wanted to avoid my nationality or pretend I was something else it’s is not going to happen (laughs) (Student 12)

A more complex answer is given by an individual who has been resident in the UK for over 10 years:

“It is important and you can’t avoid it .When you meet someone and you are clearly not from here, or you don’t look as if you are, almost always the first question I am asked is where are you from? Which means what is your nationality? When I say Thailand they are surprised, because of my accent, which is a mix of Northern English and Welsh and Thai (laughs). I must look Thai as nobody ever challenges me or seems to be surprised. It is important to me and to other people. I’ve lived here for almost ten years since I was a boy. Sometimes I am not sure what my nationality is now. I am a mix of many things (laughs) but it is very important to everybody else what you are when you live in another country.” (Student 5)

Does your university have a culture and do you feel part of its culture?

This prompt generated a range of answers relating to the university culture and the place of the international student within its culture. Answers ranged from critical yet positive to the identification of specific cultural factors seen as unique to UnivX but not necessarily available to the postgraduate international student in particular access to UnivX “Unique Selling Point” its “World of Work” programme. Some participants identified local and national stereotypes as being significant both for the institution and the individual. Whereas other participants relate institutional culture to modularisation:

“I am not sure how to answer this question. (pause) Obviously it has cultures and a culture but I cannot say simply what it is. I may not be answering like you want but something which seems so important here, it effects almost everything are modules. Our programme is modules, everything we do in the university has to be part of a module or we can’t do it. (Student 9)

Other participants see UnivX simply reproducing university sector cultures, summarised in comments such as *“like all other universities.”*

Do you feel part of the university culture?

The aim for this final question/prompt is to bring the interview to a close by asking students to locate themselves and their international postgraduate learning experience within the concepts of culture and practice interrogated throughout the interview process. A number of important points and themes emerged from responses to this prompt. They were influential in designing and carrying out the third part of the research process, i.e. the conversations to further explore points emerging from the interviews.

A desire to feel part of the university was expressed by many participants with a number of identified qualifications and disappointments:

“I am as a student. When I started here and when I was welcomed and introduced to the university by the Vice- Chancellor I felt very proud and part of the university in the city.We are proud to be students at (UnivX) but we also feel outside the university and part of a special group of international or even for us Chinese students. But there isn’t a Chinese or international student society or association here.” (Student 9)

To a sense of only being a student at UnivX:

“I am a student at this university. I have a student card, go to all of my classes, work in the library but that is all I do. I went to the student union but did not feel welcome, I did try to join world of work which is important but I was told that I could not do it as I am an international student. This was very upsetting. I do not feel part of any culture only being a student here.” (Student 6)

To an even more frank response:

“No I am not part of a university culture. International students are not part of the main university. Technically I am not technically an international student. I am Greek, European and then technically a local or normal student. That doesn’t make a difference. We are simply with other students most of the time from our own country and our own language. I have made some friends with the English students in our group. I know that this isn’t normal. I do not know of any events or clubs which we have been invited to attend or be part of the university. I am a (named profession). There is nowhere in the university where I can develop or share these skills with other students. Personally, it is not a major problem for me. I am a mature man with other friends and family and a small training business. It could be

difficult for international and European students who need to be in a university culture.”
(Student 33)

Agency is demonstrated by several participants to provide their own extra-curricular activities as part of their international experience:

“No I am not part of the main university culture. We are isolated as one of my friends said in English we are foreigners. We are not treated badly but we are treated as foreigners. We spend all our time together as a group of Chinese students and friends. I do not like, dislike my university (researcher prompt: why?) because it is good and everybody is helpful. We have travelled a lot since we have been here, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, France, Italy and we will travel more. People have been lovely with us everywhere. I have made friends with a family from Scotland. They say that they have adopted me. It has been a good experience but this is outside of our university. My friends all wish there were other things we could do in the university. I am happy to be with my friends from China but I know that some of my friends are unhappy with this.” (Student 6)

However, this sentiment is contradicted by the following response:

“I do feel part of this university and its culture. The university welcomes international and I think professional students. That is me and I have been warmly welcomed here. It is an interesting question that I would like to think more about it. I do, however, wonder what the university culture is.” (Student 18)

The importance of language and confidence in becoming part of a culture is highlighted in the final extract:

“I am not shy (laughs). Some of my new friends call me the pushy American, (laughs) how dare they? I am here to have a good academic, personal and professional experience. I have a great work experience, exactly what I wanted, I am one of the international student reps on the student union, I have attended conferences and events in London and Paris as an international rep. I have made a lot of friends, mainly English friends but some Americans, Irish and Greek, some international friends. The university encourages us to be mature, independent and confident, it encourages students to do the things I am doing, to be independent and confident. I am happy here as it matches my personality.” (Student 12)

Performative Narrative Analysis:

It may appear unusual to use PNA in relation to semi-structured interviews. However, for this study a deliberate attempt was made to use the interviews as a vehicle for discussion and development of ideas, rather than simply as a means of recording statements from the participants. A standard structure is provided by asking all participants the same questions and by using the same prompts but participants were encouraged to think, talk, change their mind, laugh and enjoy the interview as a focused conversation with the interviewer. Most of the participants welcomed this opportunity with several indicating that this was “the most they had spoken in English since their arrival” and others asking to meet with the researcher outside the research process. The need and the desire to talk confirmed the decision to complete the research with a more flexible research conversation in the final part of the study. The rationale and outcomes of both approaches will be discussed more fully in the following discussion chapter. As with the performative narrative analysis of the written accounts a performative narrative analysis of the semi structured interview narrative accounts adds to the analysis produced through thematic by making the context, situation, discursive practices and patterns of critique more transparent. As indicated in the methodology chapter some consideration was given to viewing the interview as performance and theatre. However, for this analysis it was decided to adopt a more conventional approach which suits the textual rather than visual nature of the study.

Context: Time and Place

The institutional context is the same as for part one, the written narratives, that is a large post 1992 English university, located within the north west of England. The physical context, setting or stage is the researchers work location which is a private office. It is a comfortable private setting. The location, furniture and privacy afforded by the office are appropriate factors for the interviews. The office provides a safe and private setting where there is little possibility of interruption. Symbolically holding the interview in this environment helps to further place the interview within the context of the case study setting and creates a conventional stage for an encounter of this kind. It is what most of the participants wanted and expected as an appropriate and relevant location.

The interviews were held either during or at the end of a period of postgraduate international study. They were completed voluntarily in response to an e-mail request from the researcher.

The Actors/Participants:

The researcher, an insider, was known to all of the participants as an experienced member of staff in the case study university with knowledge and expertise of their programmes. The researcher is an experienced senior member of staff with extensive experience and interest in postgraduate learning and international students. The participants are mature, postgraduate international students who are aware of their interviewer as actor and audience. They are responding to an informed, insider audience and are aware of this. Therefore the context embodies the narrators and the audience as experts in their own experience and as shared expert users and providers of the postgraduate international student experience under research. All of the respondents are mature, aged 22 plus and are international students, either international in the university sense of being non-European or for this research in the sense of being non UK citizens.

The Discourse: Action/ Script, the Drama:

The action revolved around a formal script, i.e. the semi structured questions and prompts which were given to all participants. Within this semi-structured approach discourse patterns were inevitably different to the conventionally structured written accounts. A significant discourse pattern emerged from the interviews which in many cases became interactive conversations. A regular feature of the interview was the development of a conversation between the interviewer and participant. Often when this occurred reflection and learning was produced.

Narrative Discursive Approach and the Interview:

The nature of the interview as an appropriate method for data collection and more importantly as a “conducive context for conversation” (Taylor and Littleton, 2006, p.27) is evidenced through the experience of the researcher and the participants in the majority of the interviews. Positive, unprompted comments during the interviews such as “ *I have really enjoyed talking with you, like this*” or “*This is the most English I have spoken since I have been here, thank you.*” Directly confirm that the interview, if conducted appropriately, can provide a safe, appropriate and dynamic environment for discourse development. The fact that almost all of the interviews exceeded their time limit was not due to poor interviewing

skills but to the enthusiasm and need to talk demonstrated by the participants and the researcher's skill and confidence in allowing their narrative accounts to emerge. The need to narrate may be significant for this "mature" group. A safe environment may be necessary and helpful for individuals reflecting and making sense of themselves, their identity and future direction. It may therefore be an appropriate context to capture and develop the "voice" of the student at this key point in their learning. This point will be returned to and discussed in the following chapter.

Many of the established narrative positions discussed in the methodology chapter appear in the individual narrative accounts provided in these interviews. The participants employ definable interpretative repertoires (Taylor and Littleton, 2006). That is they use coherent, established, identifiable ways of talking about their experience. For many the accounts adopt a very conventional, temporal, biographical structure. The account is normally structured through an account of school, family, university and work to an outline of their rationale for being an international student, their current situation and hopes or plans for the future. In some cases this is highlighted and developed through recounting significant personal experience such as physical injury, pain, or romance. As indicated earlier family support, expectations and conflicts form the structure of many accounts. Transition and change is a powerful element in most of the participant's interpretations. How individuals make sense of the experience is captured in their accounts. The physical and psychological space provided by being an international student for many is a deliberate and conscious act. The space seems to allow either confirmation of previous decisions or it provides an opportunity to change direction. Within the change or threshold context there are examples of individuals dealing and managing "trouble" in the sense of either the rejection of the expected or conventional norm or a search for something different.

The accounts also demonstrate the use of Bruner's (1987) canonical narratives. Here the accounts are structured within and use elements of established, accepted stories such as family influence and expectations, romance, partnership, commitments, growing up and changing direction. The use of canonical narratives and other conventional interpretative narratives in many of the account confirm the appropriateness of the argument proposed by Taylor and Littleton (2006) and within Bourdieu's "Habitus and Field" construct. Identity is influenced by and constructed within established larger narrative contexts. The data in this study seems to suggest that individuals come to this key, transitional stage of development,

not through an unblemished, creative and reflective process of free will. The data rather proposes that transition, identity and direction are constrained. Constraint can come from very practical factors such as wealth or poverty or through connections and personal qualities such as confidence and energy. These substantive points will be discussed in the following chapter.

Outcomes:

The outcomes of these interviews produce a number of findings relevant to the research questions. As indicated in the Methodology Chapter analysing the data through the three linked micro, meso and macro layer helps to avoid depicting the participants in this study as if they live in “The timeless realm of the abstract” (Nisbet, 1969, quoted in Elder and Giele, 2009, cited by Brannen and Nilsen, 2011). In the spirit of this advice the following summary of outcomes adopts the three layer approach.

Micro level: the individual level of the biographical journey of the individual student

First, the large variation in response to the question asked as to why complete a postgraduate programme as an international student suggests that there is no clear answer to this question. A simple and straightforward desire to develop a specific career was not evident. Reasons ranged from a desire to travel, have new experiences, excitement, expectations from parents, relationships and romance, change of direction. The complexity of individual motivation to become a postgraduate international student is evident. It is necessary to acknowledge that the context the question is being asked in is also important. Several of the participants suggested context may influence the response. As one respondent suggested if he was having this conversation with a prospective employer at home in China the answer to this question could or would be very different. Whilst accepting the significance of context it is important to recognise that the demographic of postgraduate international students is likely to be mixed and not always made up of students engaged on a clear career pathway. The data suggests that for many individuals the element of uncertainty and transition is a fundamental reason for their decision to become a postgraduate student. Thus marketing programmes and structuring learning on a one-size fits all model may be inappropriate. A way forward might be to recognise the complexity of motivation to learn and ensure that postgraduate programmes offer sufficient support and flexibility to meet individual needs.

Second, most of the respondents had used the Internet, league tables or university ranking agencies as part of their selection process. It would appear from this study that league tables and rankings do matter. However, it is also important to consider how individual participants used this type of information. Many demonstrated a keenness to look under the headlines of institutional league table positions to programme status and any evidence of student satisfaction. The truism of the importance of word of mouth marketing was reinforced in this research. In keeping with conventional marketing wisdom external factors such as the location of the university, its cultural and sporting profile and cost of living were highlighted as important considerations. Without wishing to be facetious romance and relationships played a key part in respondent's choice of the university under study. Obviously this could be a unique feature of this university's intrinsic charm or more seriously a consequence of the more mature postgraduate group under study.

Third, all the interviewees expressed surprise rather than shock in relation to their first encounters with England. The surprise had a broad focus ranging from food, customs and practice. Drinking excessive amounts of alcohol as a "local custom" surprised many. The size of cities, distances, accessibility and friendliness of staff and local people and the climate were highlighted by many participants. In this research the closest to shock identified by most respondents was the local regional accent. Most had been warned in advance but still found the local accent difficult to deal with. When questioned on the relatively smooth transition experienced by many participants some suggested that an engagement with the internet, films, TV, sport and popular culture had prepared them for England. Some even made an explicit link between transitions and globalisation. To this extent then these respondents do demonstrate some features of a globalised increasingly borderless student found in some of the current literature. On a more practical level many respondents had completed a pre-masters programme in country before travelling to the UK with this preparing them for the country and programme content and approaches to delivery. Good practice in university staff meeting students at airports, providing transport, induction and social events and ongoing accessibility to named staff all helped to make the transition effective.

Meso level: the institutional level of practice and sector policies and practice

The same level of satisfaction is not always evident in relation to institutional levels of practice. Concerns ranged from anxiety over the focus and approaches used in some teaching

and learning strategies. The lack of recognition that English is a second language for the majority of participants and a lack of “language and cultural” development rather than technical language support was cited by several participants as a sector as well as institutional issue. This specific point is endemic of a wider view that many participants stated which may be best summarised as of them being victims of a deficit model. In this view problems whether they are related to language, engagement, critical confidence and acumen are seen as the fault of the international student rather than problems in teaching and learning. The almost total lack of extra-curricular activities and in this case extra-modular activities was a major problem. Being a student by simply attending a small number of modules and completing assessments was felt inadequate as a model for international student experience. A common disquiet was also expressed by participants in relation to promises, guarantees or at least expectations of work placements and internships as part of their programme and wider international experience. The significant point expressed by many participants about being at the margins and not part of the university culture or practice is an issue warranting further action.

However, on the contrary there were a number of very positive comments made in relation to aspects of institutional practice. The support and sensitivity demonstrated not only by teaching and programme staff but by all UnivX staff is noteworthy. Participants were also positive in relation to the university and faculty cultures. Several described UnivX as young, dynamic and part of its local environment. Many expressed pride in being students of UnivX and would recommend their new Alma Mater to family, friends and prospective students.

At sector policy and practice level student concern with placements, internships and wider engagement with the host community is significant. The expressed difficulty of engaging either with local students, the local community and English people in general appears to severely restrict the “internationalisation” of the experience for many participants. In the worse cases the postgraduate international experience rather than being a new liberating, cosmopolitan experience became a restricting experience through an over dependence on fellow national students. A more specific sector point alluded to by participants is their disquiet with the dominance of modularity on postgraduate programmes. For many participants modularity was seen as restricting learning not only in limiting content but also in fragmenting learning. Some insightful comments also drew attention to a practice which

seems to explicitly exclude any learning, behaviour or experience if it wasn't directly modularised, assessed and formally awarded credit.

Macro level: the level of international policy and practice for international students within the neo-liberal, globalisation and lifelong learning models and the public policies and practices which emerge from this

A number of important findings emerge at the macro level of analysis. The underpinning neo-liberal model discussed earlier and specifically its focus on the learner as being an “entrepreneur of the self” receives a complex response in the interviews. Several accounts recognise that postgraduate qualifications are now the expectations and requirements within many competitive employment contexts. However, there is only very limited evidence that the participants in this study are committed to their demanding and expensive programmes of study to meet a specific, identified career requirement. Motivations to study are more complex, individual and idiosyncratic. Future career prospects as a direct outcome of completing the programme is at best part of a complex of rationales.

Globalisation as the unfettered liberalisation of travel and international engagement and exchange is not always evident from the experience and make up of this group of international students. The dominant model is still largely that of one way travel with students travelling from East to West or from developing to developed countries as in the case of Australia. There are a number of American and European students in this sample. However, the numbers are small and technically the European students are not designated as international students. Most of the participants expect to return home or possibly travel back to the “East” on completion of their studies.

Narrative accounts in relation to the more sophisticated issues of culture, identity and change within the international student experience provide a number of interesting outcomes. There is little evidence to support the significant but contested modernist identity formation theories of Giddens et al. Whilst the postgraduate international student experience does provide space for some participants to consider and change direction what emerges from the data in this study is that decisions which are made are heavily influenced by existing cultural phenomena or constraints such as nationality. Nationality rather than being minimised or reduced in the

experience of many participants in this study is strengthened and reinforced. Other societal narratives such as family, personal commitments, relationships, religion and wealth are also clearly evident as constraints as well as triggers for action, change, identity and learning.

Part Three: Narratives as Conversations:

As indicated in the introduction and methodology chapters the third part of the research process was conducted with a smaller group of nine participants. As with the approaches used in parts one and two all participants were international postgraduate students. Some had taken part in the earlier processes and were keen to revisit and develop their earlier contributions whereas others only took part in the final process. The aim of this research process is to allow participants to develop their ideas and responses in a relaxed, flexible, dynamic conversation with the researcher. Standardised structure is provided through the use of the same general prompts related to the research questions.

The ethical issue of ensuring anonymity is even more marked in this process. In the conversations participants seemed even more prepared to disclose significant personal information as well as personal opinion. Consequently to maintain anonymity personal details are kept to the minimum. Participants are identified simply by gender and age. Extracts selected from the conversations are also edited where specific detail makes identification of the individual possible.

Conversation Narrative Sample:

1. Male	24
2. Male	24
3. Female	26
4. Male	26
5. Male	27
6. Male	27
7. Female	34
8. Female	24
9. Female	23

Prompts were provided in advance and a minimum of two hours was set aside. Conversations were recorded on audio tape. The data is presented in the following way: the conversation prompt is provided, a brief comment on the aim of the prompt, identification of the theme

which emerges from the conversation and selected conversational extracts are provided to support the identified theme. In contrast to the previous data presentation examples of the conversation or dialogue is provided. The structure used is a conventional conversational script of researcher (R) and participant (S) for student.

Note on Language:

All of the spoken narrative, conversational accounts have been transcribed and proof read by the researcher. Any significant grammatical or syntactical errors have been removed to provide ease of reading. The content and sense of the accounts have not been changed in any way. Non-verbal communication apart from pauses and laughter, have been removed. It was felt that attempting to record non-verbal communication such as facial expression, pitch and tone of voice, hesitations, gestures, physical stance and actions, eye contact, proximity and so on within a written transcript would fragment the text and lead to confusion. However, it is important to recognise that this decision although sensible and informed does reduce the sense and reality of the interaction. In future work other technologies such as Nvivo will be considered to capture and present research encounters of this kind.

Notes on Extracts:

Where possible extracts have been selected which demonstrate the conversational discursive nature of the encounters. Each conversation produced an average of between 20,000 - 40,000 words. The extracts included in this data chapter are selected as significant responses to the issues under study and the emerging themes. As with the responses in the semi-structured interview narratives responses are individual, idiosyncratic and relevant to the subjects under study.

Thematic Analysis:

Prompts:

Narrative: Conversation prompts/Questions:

“Why did you decide to become a postgraduate international student?”

The aim of this prompt is to allow the participants to reflect on their motivation to undertake a period of international study. The intention was to discuss more personal and general

reasons for becoming an international postgraduate student rather than specific reasons for selecting UnivX as their destination.

Emerging Themes:

A number of themes emerge from the responses to this prompt. Responses can best be summarised as complex, dynamic, idiosyncratic reasons, transition and change. Some reference is made to career development but this is almost always couched in terms of potentiality rather in meeting a definitive career plan.

Extracts from the conversations:

Key: R = Researcher S = Student

A number of participants indicated that change in relation to their motivation had taken place during their time on the programme. The chosen extract makes this point explicitly:

Extract:

(Student 1)

S: *“When I reflected on this I thought it was an obvious answer. The Masters qualification would help me in my career and in my future.”*

R: *So have you changed your mind?*

S: *Yes a little but possibly I haven't changed my mind but I have thought more about it. My qualification is still very important for me. If I decide to go home and work in the same career I will be in a very competitive market. As you know there are many Chinese students with Masters and PhDs who are all competing for jobs. I will work as hard as I can to get the best mark that I can. I must get a distinction. If I get a good mark for my dissertation I will get a distinction. There are many things involved in getting a good job in China. A good qualification is only one. The reputation of the university is so important. Univ X has an excellent reputation for my subject area. It is number one in the Times League Table. I checked this and everything else I could find before I came here and before I accepted this offer. Univ X does not have such a high position in the league table, it does not have this high status. Many people in China will not have heard of it. It may not help me even if my subject has number one status.*

R: *That is very interesting, so the obvious question then is why did you decide to accept the offer and come here?*

S: *Mainly, because my degree is not from a high status university. I did not think that a high status English university would accept me. When I met staff from this university in Beijing they were so kind and helpful. If I accepted a place here I would be given a very good bursary*

(Pause)

A good qualification is so important for my future but it is not enough. You may have heard of “Guang Xiou?”

R: *Yes (laughs) we have discussed this before.*

S: *I know but it is very important to know the right people, I think more than in England, to have the right contacts, for your family to be in a very good position. I do not have such a family or such contacts. Since I have been in England my ambitions are changing. I am now not certain that I want to return to China after the programme to do my previous job again. It has been very significant to me to be away. I have never lived like this before in a new country and completely independently. I have had a chance to think and consider different options for my life. I feel that I may now be able to be successful just on my ability. (pause and smiles) (Student 1)*

Prompt 2:

Preamble:

“Thank you let us now move from a discussion of your reasons for becoming an international postgraduate student to a conversation about your experience of being such a student in this university. I am particularly interested in your views about your experience of learning and how you have been taught. I am also specifically interested in your response to being asked to be a critical and independent learner.”

The aim of this prompt was to allow students to reflect and comment on their response to being asked to be independent and critical learners as an explicit element of their programmes. It is noteworthy that all of the participants had either completed or were soon to complete

their programme. They had therefore a story to tell of their initial responses, their experience and their conclusions.

Emerging themes:

A number of significant points and themes emerge from the conversations. They can be summarised as initial confusion to hostility, concerns over unrealistic expectations set for the demonstration of critical and informed learning, to an attraction to the programme based on the sense of liberalisation and maturity required and demanded. Significantly no participants mentioned culture or a cultural dissonance between learning models. On a policy and practice level participants who had completed a UK led pre-masters programme felt equipped and confident in meeting the learning needs of their programmes. A number of participants indicated that change in relation to their motivation had taken place during their time on the programme. The chosen extract makes a number of comparative points suggesting that approaches to teaching and learning may not be as culturally/nationally bound as some commentators suggest. These points are interesting as the participant has witnessed Thai schooling and UK based Further Education and UK University undergraduate learning prior to joining the postgraduate programme.

Extract:

S: I was not surprised at all about how we were asked to learn or how we were taught on the programme. I remember when I first came to England and went to college I was 15. I was surprised and pleased at first. In Thailand the teacher in school was much more direct. In school anyway, I haven't been to college or university in Thailand. My friends in Thailand tell me college and university in Thailand is more similar to the UK.

R: OK but what did you mean when you said teachers were more direct?

S: (laughs) In Thailand when I was in school the teachers would tell us what to learn, if we learned it we would pass our course and do very well. It was very clear and direct.

R: Thanks, I understand let us go back briefly to when you were in college in England.

S: When I first came most of my lessons were English lessons with other footballers then when I started college properly in Wales I was doing my BTEC. My teachers have all been interesting and more open. They wanted me to discuss and do group work and learn from

experience. We call this active learning. It suits me I enjoy doing things. I found it unusual at first but I remember that most of my friends, Welsh and English felt the same. It was much freer than school for all of us. I enjoyed being at college, playing football, having trials and partying. When I went to university it was mainly the same. I got some very bad results, low passes and fails. I felt very bad, ashamed. I spoke to my father in Thailand. He told me that I was a man and must act like a man and do what is right.

I remember my teachers, one especially (named) told me that I should be reading, to read everything and anything. My English would then improve and I would know more. I took their advice. I read everything and I still read everything. I have been called a voracious reader. I am proud of that (laughs). I am always reading, academic journal articles, sociology, psychology are two of my passions, books, pamphlets, anything (laughs)

Culture: Preamble:

“Thank you I would like us to spend some time talking about and reflecting on a very important concept for this research. The concept is culture. We have talked about university policy and practices, teaching and learning practices and cultures and even local cultures and practices you have witnessed while being a student. There is another aspect of culture which is of significance to this study and your experience as an international student. This is national culture. I would like us to talk about this from a number of directions. Can we start by thinking and talking about national culture and your nationality?”

How important is your nationality to you?

The explicit aim of this prompt is to allow participants to reflect on the significance of nationality and national culture(s) to them and their sense of identity. The implicit aim is to use these reflections to interrogate globalisation and its impact on nationality for international learners or globalised learners. A number of themes emerge from these conversations. As with the previous prompts complexity and conflict or contradiction describes the general response. Views on nationality and national culture range from pride and certainty to uncertainty and concern with the growth of nationalism. A number of specific outcomes such as the sense that nationality is reinforced rather than diminished as a product of the programme are of particular interest to this study. Cultural hybridity is also identified by

some participants as a product of their international experience. However, as the participants state hybridity is often a self-image or identity rather than one shared by host communities.

The chosen extract makes a number of these apparently contradictory points.

Extract:

The following extract is taken from an account of a participant who has lived and studied in the UK independently since the age of 15. He makes a number of significant points about nationality, culture, cultural identity and notions of cultural hybridity.

S: It is a very important question and very difficult to answer for me. I have thought about it a lot over the years and reflected on it again for this interview. As you know I am not the normal international student. I have lived here either in (named city) then Wales and then back here since I was fifteen.

After my injury he (surgeon) told us, my dad and me, that I wouldn't likely ever be fit or strong enough to be a professional footballer but there was a slim chance if I wanted to take it as I was so young and still growing. I came back when I was fit again. As you know, we talked about this in my other interview, I spent the next years in college in Wales, having trials, playing football at lower levels but good standard, then Uni and now here.

I have been in England well the UK for many years now, I have grown up here. Most of my friends are English, my family friends are English, my girlfriend is English. I work in fashion for English people who are friends of my family in Thailand. I speak quite good English with a Thai and Northern accent (laughs).

R: (laughs) I agree you are quite unique and have a very interesting story to tell, so what nationality are you and does it matter to you?

S: I am Thai on the surface, I look Thai and sound Thai, I have a Thai passport, Thai nationality. I am not sure whether I could claim resident status now. Up until now this has not been a problem while I am a full-time student but it might become a problem with the Border Agency soon. I will have to look into this. I must be Thai but many time now I know that I don't always think or act like a Thai man. My ideas and attitudes are different. I would feel very strange if I went home to live in Bangkok again, too many Western ideas and beliefs and experiences now. I am not sure, I am not confused but if I was asked to be honest I would

have to say that I was a mix of cultures within my first and formal nationality. This question made me think about this a lot and say things even to myself which I hadn't said before.

R: OK so let's take a break for now and let you have some time to relax, we can come back later and pick up on this point (Break Taken)

S: I would like to stay in England. It would not be impossible to go home but difficult. I'd feel that I have failed and do not want to return until I have achieved something. All of my friends and my life is here. Again I am not worried about it but it may be that friends or people in Thailand might not be very pleased to see me coming home, not necessarily a warm welcome.

To be honest, I am now no longer certain who I am (laughs). I find this very interesting. I think to everybody else even my friends I am Thai. It is who I am. They see it as my identity. I know what being Thai is and I know that I no longer am just Thai in my beliefs and what I do. To everybody else I am Thai. I look Thai, I have an English accent but still sound Thai or foreign to everybody else, what do you think? (laughs)

R: (laughs) I understand what you mean by the accent, can you tell me a bit more about your sense of identity?

S: I have thought about this and studied it as part of my sociology and psychology courses. The conclusion that I have come to now is that there are different identities. The identity I have been given by everybody else is that of a young Thai man. That is how they see me. To some extent I see this and obviously this is part of me but there are other parts of me now which I know are not Thai and possibly more English and maybe even Northern English. I don't feel part of London for example when I am there but I would like to so I may do this next.

I still play football, work in an English fashion shop, go to an English university, like English food, and support Manchester United (Laughs) but then again so do millions of Thais.

Seriously, I often feel very Thai, I believe in Karma. I think my injury was Karma that has led to other positive outcomes. My girlfriend thinks I am very Thai (laughs) sometimes I think not.

I guess I sometimes do not know really who I am now, being Thai isn't always that important to me, I want to be seen as me and my nationality is only a part of me but most people see me as Thai even when I don't. (Student 2)

Prompt: Globalisation

Preamble:

“Thank you, we are now coming to the end of our conversation but I would like us to consider the current and popular concept of globalisation. Can we start by discussing what globalisation means to you. Some researchers and commentators would see you as an international student as an example of a globalised learner, do you agree? And before we finish I would like us to talk about what next, when you finish the programme?”

This prompt was set as a direct question to develop ideas previously considered in this conversation or in earlier parts of the research for those students who had participated in earlier parts of the research process. As with the other prompts participants had received the question in advance. It became obvious that many had thought and read about globalisation before the research conversation. The aim of the question is to provide participants with an opportunity to reflect on and to place themselves within models of globalisation. A number of fascinating and potentially significant responses and themes emerge from the conversations. One transparent feature is the level of academic and sophisticated response to the question. Many participants had encountered the concept of globalisation as an element of the programme. They were no longer novices with the concept but confident and able to argue and respond to argument. As with the earlier prompts complexity, idiosyncratic responses and uncertainty are features of the responses.

Extract 1:

(Student 1)

S: Globalisation is a term which I have studied and read and thought about before this meeting and I have thought about it again before we met today. I can give you some academic definitions or just my own (laughs).

R: I'd like both please (laughs)

S: *It can mean that the world is becoming one world, where we share information, economics and progress together. This is a common and often uncriticised view. It is overly romantic and deliberately modernist. The suggestion is that there is a process emerging which will bring people together in a state of progress. Unfortunately this does not match reality. This is simply a political construct promoted from one perspective, the capitalist almost American model of progress. It is not surprising or accidental that all of the images of internationalisation and globalisation are American and maybe European and market driven. It is a very specific form of culture and economics which masquerades as globalisation.*

R: *Good you have obviously have thought about it and read about it, I think. Are these comments yours or the academic definitions you mentioned?*

S: *A mix of both (laughs) probably but ultimately they are my views based on my experience and my thinking. I do believe it is very important, possibly the most important issue that my generation needs to address. (Student 1)*

Extract 2:

(Student 2)

S: *Yes, globalisation, yes I have thought about this and studied it and read extensively about globalisation as part of all of my courses. Is it ok if I bring this back to my personal experience?*

R: *Yes (laughs) I hoped you would.*

S; *Thank you, my story is interesting because I think I am an example of globalisation and that football for example and sports are mechanisms or things which create globalisation. For example, you know I am a sport development student, if we think about the Olympic Games as an example most nations and most people from across the world or globe will watch the Olympic Games or take part. Even watching on TV I argue is taking part in the global event. When they were in Beijing in 2008 more people watched this than any other event and when they take place here in London the figures will be even bigger. Football which is my sport is very similar, if you take the World cup as an example. My sport is now fast becoming globalised. I am from Thailand and football is the most popular sport and most watched event, not Thai football but English and European football. I think it is only America*

and Canada and possibly Australia which need to be more involved and they are beginning to take part.

My personal and individual experience shows how international and or global sport is becoming. It is very powerful for some individuals such as myself. As you know and I won't go into this again when I was 15 I won the (Named Premier League football team) trial in Bangkok. I won a scholarship to their academy. When I arrived I was with boys from Brazil, Argentina, Europe and Africa. It was very international and very global. Before I came here I was a Manchester United fan. I knew everything about Manchester United. Most people, I am not exaggerating, or at least people in the cities such as Bangkok are experts on European football.

Extract 3:

(Student 3)

S: Globalisation is obviously a very controversial term. I have read and thought about globalisation a great deal. It is an issue that I feel very passionate about. I studied globalisation as part of my degree and I have focused on elements of globalisation in Masters programme. I am committed to the notions and practice of ethical behaviour and company responsibility and political sensitivity to working with people in developing economies. I have written papers on CSR which is of course, corporate social responsibility for the tour operator industry and I am updating my work in this area for my Masters dissertation. It is also the area I want to work in for my future career, although I am not sure whether I can call it a career.

R: That is excellent so you should have lots to tell me about globalisation (laughs) we will come back to your very interesting comment about career later so please let's talk about your views on globalisation?

S: Yes but I will try to keep it brief (laughs)

R: No, please take your time.

S: OK, in my opinion (laughs) and it is not just my position but a very dominant view in the critical literature (laughs). Globalisation is a process. It is a process by which the dominant powers in the West, notably the United States and its European allies but mainly

the United States dominate the economic status and practices and at its worst the cultures of other less powerful or less developed countries. Even the term developed in this context is political. It means, I think, how close are these countries to the dominant capitalist model. It is simply at its worst a process of dominance, control and homogenisation by the West. If you look at the worst examples you see countries struggling in their development, elites benefiting from investment and local people becoming poorer. This is one of the many reasons why globalisation isn't a simple one way process. There are many examples of countries adopting or readopting traditions and religions, for example as an opposition and response to globalisation. This is not always a positive thing.

(Extract edited here)

Performative Narrative Analysis:

As indicated throughout this study, a conscious attempt has been made to use the research methods as a vehicle for discussion, dialogue and development of the issues under study rather than simply as a means of recording statements from participants. The final phase of the research, the narrative conversations is the most pronounced and deliberate approach designed to achieve this outcome. Briefly, the approach taken was to provide participants in advance with the prompts. The intention to hold an informed conversation about the points under consideration was highlighted along with the suggestion that some preparatory reflection would improve the dialogue and its outcomes. The rationale and its outcomes will be discussed in the forthcoming chapter. The focus in this data and data analysis chapter is to add to the thematic analysis by making the context, situation the discursive practices and patterns of critique more transparent.

Context: Time and Place:

The context, time and place are essentially the same as outlined in the semi-structured interview process. The conversations were held either during or at the end of a period of postgraduate international study. They were completed voluntarily in response to an email request from the researcher.

The Actors/Participants:

The participants knew the researcher either as a senior member of staff and/or through participation in earlier phases of this research study. Several welcomed the opportunity to

revisit and enhance earlier contributions. The participants are mature, postgraduate international students who are aware of their interviewer as actor and audience. They are responding to an informed, insider audience and are aware of this. Therefore the context embodies the narrators and the audience as experts in their own experience and as shared expert users and providers of the postgraduate international student experience under research. In some cases participants were also operating as informed former actors and audience in this research production. All of the respondents are mature, aged 24 plus and are international students, either international in the university sense of being non-European or for this research in the sense of being non UK citizens.

The Discourse/Conversation: Action/Script, the Drama:

For this final part of the research a conversational discourse pattern was sought. Consequently the researcher is actively involved in the conversation, adding prompts, questioning, probing and encouraging participants to reflect and develop their ideas. Unlike the second part of the research study, the semi-structured interviews where examples of change, development and learning emerged the aim here is to deliberately encourage learning through conversational narrative.

Discursive Narrative Analysis:

A deliberate conversational approach was adopted in part three of this research both to generate relevant data but also to explore whether such a research approach is appropriate.

A number of points emerged from the conversations process. In relation to the research process it is evident that the structure for this group of mature, confident learners was conducive to a conversation with a purpose (Georgeakopoulou, 2006) and that learning was a consequence both for the researcher and the participant:

Also the conversations demonstrate the use of Bruner's (1987) canonical narratives to describe and explain behaviour. Comments on identity building are placed within larger societal contexts and patterns. Although the comments are linked to the same personal and external factors such as wealth, income and relationships found in the interviews these responses tend to be more informed and perceptive.

There are similarities between the semi-structured interview narratives and the conversational accounts. Where these differ markedly tends to be in relation to questions or prompts where learning and reflection from academic programmes or experiences can be used to support the dialogue. To put this simply adopting a conversational research approach between “experts in their fields”, in this case the “expert postgraduate international student” and the “expert postgraduate university tutor” can be an effective method of generating data and generating learning. This substantive point and its link to the concept and practice of the “student voice” are discussed in the following chapter.

Outcomes:

Micro level: the individual level of the biographical journey of the individual student

As with the semi-structured interviews there is no clear universal answer to the question of why did you decide to become a postgraduate international student? The complexity of individual motivation is reinforced in these accounts. The conversations suggest that for many individuals the element of uncertainty and transition is a fundamental reason for their decision to come to the UK. A point which does emerge is that change in motivation and direction during the postgraduate programme is a common feature of the student experience.

Completing the postgraduate award as a career or occupational requirement is only stated by two sponsored participants. The other participants either implicitly or explicitly view their postgraduate experience and qualification as being significant for career development and important in making them more experienced and hence more attractive to prospective employers. A desire to travel, have new experiences or change direction in career were dominant rationales for taking the international postgraduate programme. Relationships and expectations were also identified as significant factors.

Individual lengthy responses to teaching and learning approaches, specifically independent and critical learning mirrored the responses in the semi-structured interviews. However, the more nuanced and personal responses developed in the conversations highlighted the high levels of agency and commitment displayed by participants in relation to their learning. The biographical accounts contained in some of the conversations demonstrated passion leading to action and change. Stereotypes of the passive indifferent international student are challenged in these narratives. Familiarity and confidence with teaching and learning approaches encouraged several participants to act as informal tutors or at least as support for

their colleagues. Equally, participants were prepared to offer informed and sensible strategies to their university to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Overall, agency and commitment is evident in relation to approaches to learning and teaching.

The individual conversational narrative accounts in relation to nationality and identity provided a similar range of responses. In general, all participants viewed nationality as being largely immutable and significant in identity building. Many expressed the view that the international student experience rather than reducing highlighted and reinforced nationality. They felt that they were always identified or referred to as an example of their nation or occasionally as an international student from that nation. Almost all felt that they were at the margins of the university and at the margins of the local communities. Where contact was made with local communities it was due to their agency rather than the involvement of the university or programme of study.

Inevitably, individual accounts differ and some differ markedly. For example, a small number of individuals challenged the durability of nationality. Individuals who had lived in the UK for a number of years expressed some confusion over their national identity. Hybridity was a term used by some of the participants. However, even in these cases participants believed the nationality would remain their dominant identity, at least externally.

The linked discussion on globalisation and identity generated a number of fascinating responses. It is noteworthy that most participants had studied the concept of globalisation as part of their programmes or had spent time reading and considering the concept before this research conversation. Consequently conversations often revolved around academic and theoretical discussion related to their personal experience. There are clear echoes of the traditional tutorial encounter in these conversations.

Finally, at the micro level participants did see themselves as possible examples of the globalised learner if the features of the globalised learner are travel, new experiences, disruption and the breakdown as well as the reinforcement of national barriers. Interestingly some felt that this globalised dynamic was part of the expectations and script for their generation.

Meso level: the institutional level of practice and sector policies and practice

Some of the concerns expressed in the interview accounts are repeated in the conversations. Concerns over teaching and learning methods are expressed. The lack of extra-curricular activities offered by UnivX was noted however, the emphasis in the conversational accounts was more directed towards the strategies individuals employed to engage with wider communities. Throughout these stories evidence of agency and engagement proliferate. The message for institutional and sector concerns is that it would appear that not only are institutions failing their students but they are also potentially losing a valuable resource in their students. It is at this point that the student voice should be revisited and acted on. One way of helping individuals to develop their full potential during their international programme would be to provide learning space through dialogues with tutors and other “local” communities such as those provided by the research processes in this study.

Macro level: the level of international policy and practice for international students within the neo-liberal, globalisation and lifelong learning models and the public policies and practices which emerge from this

A number of important findings emerge at the macro level of analysis. As indicated in the earlier micro level comments the underpinning neo-liberal model discussed earlier and specifically its focus on the learner as being an “entrepreneur of the self” receives a complex response in these accounts. Future career prospects as a direct outcome of completing the programme is at best part of a complex of rationales.

Globalisation receives a number of significant and informed responses. There is recognition of the political context of many views of globalisation and disquiet with their apparent dominance. The response as to whether these participants view themselves as globalised learners is mixed. What seems to be the consensus is that they recognise the expectation that they should perform many of the features of the “globalised learner” such as travel and communication and global engagement through technology. The recognition that the globalising dynamic is the issue for their generation to engage and deal with it is an outcome warranting further discussion in the following chapter.

Narrative accounts in relation to the more sophisticated issues of culture, identity and change within the international student experience also provide a number of interesting outcomes. As

indicated with the interview outcomes there is little evidence to support the significant but contested modernist identity formation theories of Giddens et al. Whilst the postgraduate international student experience does provide space, a threshold even a fracture for many participants in their learning and personal development, what emerges from the data in this study is that decisions which are made are heavily influenced by existing cultural phenomena or constraints such as nationality and wealth. Nationality rather than being minimised or reduced in the experience of many participants in this study is strengthened and reinforced. Other societal narratives such as family, personal commitments, relationships, religion and wealth are also clearly evident as constraints as well as triggers for action, change, identity and learning.

Findings:

Research Objective 1: To explore why individuals choose to become postgraduate international students. The first objective interrogates the motivation for taking part in an experience which may demand personal change, commitment and expense.

Findings: The rationale or motivation for choosing to become an international postgraduate student is likely to be complex, idiosyncratic and emotional. Economic, employment and career development is part of a complex mosaic of rationales for individual learners. Models of learning which are too closely aligned to neoliberal, human capital models of learning may not meet the complexity of learning needs demonstrated by the participants in this study.

Research Objective 2: To examine the nature of globalised lifelong learning within the Higher Education sector. The second objective is designed to examine the macro context of globalisation and lifelong learning within the higher education setting.

Findings: The globalisation model driving the curriculum models under study during the timeframe of this research 2009-2015 is still largely an East to West model. International students are expected to fit into the existing western UK practice. If international students find this difficult or inappropriate they

are viewed as in deficit. International students are at the margins of practice and at the margins of the institution and the local community. International experience and satisfaction with personal learning and development is largely brought about by individual agency rather than the formal university processes.

Research Objective 3: To study the significance of culture, cultural experiences and nationality on identity and learning? The third objective examines relationships between models of culture, particularly essentialist national cultural models and approaches to identity formation and learning.

Findings: Identity is not static, it is permeable and context, such as the multiple contexts provided by the experience of being an international student, can have significant influence on identity and behaviour. However, nationality is significantly more constant and immutable. A particularly significant finding is that the postgraduate international experience reinforces rather than diminishes the perceived importance of nationality.

Research Objective 4: To consider whether narrative research approaches are able to both capture and develop experience and learning? The final objective considers whether a narrative based research approach is capable of not only capturing experience but also of developing experience and learning.

Findings: Narrative approaches to research can capture experience, attitudes and feelings. They can therefore capture and provide a rich account of experience. However, findings from this study also confirm that narrative approaches such as those used in this study can also become part of the data creation process. Findings confirm and reinforce co-constructivist approaches to knowledge creation.

The themes emerging from this data and analysis are now discussed in relation to the literature, theory and research discussed in the earlier chapters.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusions:

Chapter Five presents and discusses the main findings of the study in relation to making sense of the international postgraduate student experience from the perspective of the individual and higher education within a globalising world. Issues are examined through a discussion of what the findings suggest in relation to the concepts outlined in the literature review of: the political and pedagogical context of international higher education, globalisation and lifelong learning, culture and identity. Narrative within the process of learning is examined both as a research method and also as a collaborative learning approach to support and develop individual learning. The outcomes of the discussion lead to a set of logical conclusions and an identification of emerging research.

The Political and Pedagogical Context:

RO1: To explore why individuals choose to become postgraduate international students.

As indicated in the introduction, the extended five year period of this study has provided me with the time to be able to stand back from my own position and prejudices and take a longer and wider view on international higher education. The political and pedagogical context of the study is dynamic. Changes have taken place within policy and practice throughout the five year period of this study. Research and critical responses to the purpose and practice of international higher education has mushroomed during this period. The space and time afforded me by the PhD process have allowed me to make an informed response to and understanding of the dynamics of the international postgraduate student experience. To echo the point made in the introduction to this study being able to research, reflect and engage with an issue from an informed and research based perspective is as Burke (2009, p.5) suggests “distinctively the academic perspective.”

Adopting an academic perspective in relation to the political and pedagogical context of international postgraduate learning, lead to a critical engagement with a range of interconnected and conceivably profound views on the nature and purpose of education. It also prompts an exploration of the responsibility of higher education to the individual learner as well as its obligations to wider society.

As indicated in the literature review the timeframe of this study 2009-2015 witnessed a period of lively change and stubborn stability in relation to approaches to international higher education. A new strategy for internationalisation has been operationalised within UnivX (2013) for example which reflects some of the desire to change the dynamics of the student experience and higher education practice in relation to internationalisation and global engagement. Within the UK higher education sector the recent publication of the Higher Education Learning Academy (2014) Internationalisation of Higher Education provides a framework for significant sector transformation in practice. Some changes have occurred in relation to the postgraduate international student experience. Therefore, changes will be highlighted in this chapter. However, the outcome of the analysis of the data emerging from this study will lead to a conclusion which suggests that whilst change in policy and practice is advocated, most of the constants which have influenced the experience of postgraduate international students in English higher education practice over the last twenty years remain. One of these constants is the level and numbers of recruits and the consequent economic importance of international student fees to UK universities.

Statistics provided by the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) for 2013-2014 update the figures discussed in Chapter Two. The figures continue to demonstrate the economic and in some cases, notably postgraduate taught programmes (PGT) such as those in this study, dependence on the recruitment of international students. The figures and commentary provided by The UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) last modified 18 May 2015 is helpful in providing an accurate picture of the current enrolment picture for international students. It points out that the first statistical release from Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) 2013-2014 shows a slight 3% increase in the number of students from outside the UK. The figure for 2013-2014 is a total of 435,000. The number of Chinese students continues to exceed any other nationality at 87, 895. Indian students are the next largest cohort, at 19,750 although this figure represents one of the few significant drops on the previous year of 2012-2013. The top twenty institutions recruiting international students also follow the same pattern as in 2010-2012. University College, London continues to attract the largest numbers of international students. Anxiety about a fall in recruitment across the sector expressed in 2008-2009 seems misplaced. Business and administrative subjects continue to be the most popular (38.7% of students in this subject are international) with Engineering and technology second (32.7% of students in this subject are international)

and Law is third (25% international students). There is no significant difference in gender of non-UK students coming to the UK with 50.9% female and 49% male.

The recent (2014) Universities UK publication *International Students in Higher Education: The UK and its Competition* identified a slight decline in recruitment and income in the period 2013-2013. However, even during this period UK higher education sourced 1/8 of its total income from international student fee income. The publication paints a more positive picture from 2014. Data provided to University UK in spring 2014 from 100 UK higher education institutions provides optimism. Universities UK report that a significant growth in international student numbers is more likely than a decline. Whilst recognising the intensification of competition Universities UK (2014) makes what it claims is a realistic prediction that the number of international students is likely to grow by 15% -20% in the next five years. It may seem an ambitious target but interestingly UnivX has identified this exact figure as its target for international recruitment in the same time frame. This could be seen as an ambitious target from a current position of 4% international students in the institution.

The HESA statistics and the UKCISA commentary confirm the ongoing financial importance of the international student across the sector and even more significantly to the postgraduate portfolio. International students are obviously welcomed into the sector for the economic benefits they bring to institutions, local communities and the national profile. However, this is not the only justification provided for the interest in recruiting high and increasingly higher numbers of international students. Universities UK (2014, p.3) statement summarising the importance of international students to the sector makes a number of interesting points.

In the academic year 2013-13, around one in eight students enrolled in UK higher education institutions was outside the EU. International students bring many benefits to the UK, which have been well articulated in recent years: ***they bring diversity to campus life and enhance the student experience for “home students”*** (bold italics, authors emphasis), they support the provision of certain subjects, particularly at postgraduate level and they provide a valuable source of income to universities and to local economies via expenditure on and off campus. (Universities UK, 2014, p.3)

The outcomes of this research study and the experience of the participant students confirm the economic and financial support provided by international students. However, it is the more nebulous process factors highlighted in the statement of “bringing diversity to campus

life and enhancing the ‘home student’ experience” which are contested by the student accounts in this research study. These outcomes add to the work of current commentators such as Killick (2012).

It is difficult to comment on what University UK (2014) mean by the term ‘diversity’. Obviously it can simply mean that there is a benefit in having a range of different nationalities on campus. However, unless the students are actively involved in their learning processes and university student life and cultures then the ‘diversity’ produced might be at best cosmetic. Unfortunately, many of the participants in this study felt that their involvement in the host institution and the host local community was at best marginal and for several almost non-existent:

“I have been very disappointed with my experience here at the university. I expected and wanted to do many things. I really haven’t been able to do many or I have had to do them by myself (pause, prompt by researcher). Basically I thought that I would improve my English language skills talking and writing, particularly my oral skills. My English is good (very good – researcher prompt). I assumed that I would talk to many different people, for example, my teachers, my students at the university and obviously English people. I spoke to many English people in (home country) and many English speaking nationals from Europe, America, Australia, even people whose first language isn’t English usually could speak good English. I expected it to be like that in this university. It isn’t there are no clubs or societies or even an international student society here. I have tried very hard to build my relationships and knowledge, I want to learn and get as much as I can from this experience. This has not happened yet and unless I do something about it like joining another university societies it will not happen. This interview is the most English I have spoken since I have been here. You have listened to me more seriously than anybody else. I am very frustrated ...very frustrated..... I did not work so hard, save my money and even get help from my family for this experience.” (Student 7)

Some of these highlighted points will be interrogated later in this chapter in relation to pedagogy however, at this point of meso sector analysis comments from leading sector bodies such as University UK (The Voice of UK Universities) must be addressed.

Diversity and engagement with learning and local communities for many of the participants in this study, is an explicit concern. A small number of individuals found succour and

security in sharing their international learning with fellow nationals and friends. However, the majority of participants want a new experience and several state an unfulfilled aim of developing relationships with fellow UnivX ‘home students’ and local communities. Other participants identify disconnection between their experience as an international student and the home institution. Several examples are highlighted in the data. The formal cultural ceremonies of entry through induction and exit through graduation are recognised as examples of the rare occasions when these international students felt at the centre rather than the margins of the institution. Distance from the university is attributable to a number of reasons which will be interrogated in this discussion. However, before leaving the point of international students “enhancing the home student experience” (University UK, 2014), it is important to highlight the frustration felt by participants in relation to a structural barrier leading to non- engagement with home students. In all of the programmes used in this case study the majority of participants were full-time international students and a small number of part-time home students. The home part-time students tend to be professionals with families and domestic commitments. As several participants stated this meant that apart from a coffee break they would have no opportunity to meet and develop relationships with these busy professionals who would always leave and go home immediately after a teaching session. As several programmes were marketed on the basis of providing engagement with local professionals this lack of contact was identified as a major disappointment. Several participants even felt guilty in holding back the home students, some stated this as a reason for non-involvement and the reluctance to ask questions and engage in class. There is little evidence here of the possibility of mutual enhancement of either the ‘home’ or ‘international’ student experience in the experience of the participants in this study. One outcome of this research suggests therefore that whilst diversity on the campus may be beneficial the claim that international students enhance the ‘home’ student experience (Universities UK 2014) from this study appears at best to be aspirational.

A significant issue in literature and policy initiative throughout the period of this study is a concern with internationalising the student experience for ‘home’ western university students. To some extent, the enhancement of the home student experience through engagement with international students can be seen as part of this internationalising process. As indicated in Chapter Two the beginnings of this concern in the UK context is captured in Bone (2008) *Report on Internationalisation of HE, a 10 Year View* and operationalised in the Higher

Education Academy (2014) *Internationalising Higher Education Framework*. UK student mobility is a fascinating subject which apart from its links to globalisation and glocalisation in particular is outside the scope of this study. However, what the current internationalisation concern highlights is that the well-established east-west direction of travel is still the dominant pattern. Initiatives to increase the number of western and UK students having international or globalised experience are gathering some momentum (Leask, 2013) but the number of UK students completing undergraduate programmes in an international context is still relatively small and accurate numbers are difficult to find. If the concept and practice of internationalisation is going to shift from this model then not only will institutional sponsorship as in the case of De Montfort University quoted in Chapter 2 be needed but closer learning relationships between home and international students, discussed later in relation to “Glocalization” will also need to be addressed.

A number of significant findings emerge from this research in relation to curriculum and pedagogical practice. The literature review concluded with the proposition that neo-liberal views of the economy still underpin views of the nature and purpose of education and learning within higher education. The outcomes of exploring the international postgraduate student experience in this study confirm the explicit links between human capital based approaches to learning and curriculum. As demonstrated throughout this study UnivX, like many similar higher education institutions, readily adopted processes which mirror the essence of education being viewed as a tool of human capital development. Fundamental strategic initiatives in UnivX reflect this approach. For example, from 2007-2012 the self-proclaimed unique selling point for UnivX was its ‘World of Work’ programme. The programme encapsulated its mission to ensure employability as an “intrinsic” part of higher education. The term intrinsic warrants further consideration. In the case of UnivX the aim of having employability as an intrinsic part of higher education was taken seriously. Apart from investment in staff and buildings for a designated centre the “World of Work” process was operationalised as an intrinsic part of learning. All programme modules were redesigned to include world of work learning outcomes. Students would be provided with “world of work” awards on successful completion. Although UnivX unique selling point was replaced with a new strategic framework in 2012 with its aim of being a new civic university and a reduction on employability being an intrinsic element the pedagogical and curriculum models like those in most UK universities have not changed. They remain based on neoliberal principles

(Caruana, 2014). What is of major significance to this research is that students consequently are viewed as informed, rational consumers or customers of a product. Therefore students “become” rational, informed customers who know what they want, what they are buying and why they are investing in the purchase. They are also seen as having the consumer voice, economic power and flexibility to “shop” elsewhere if dissatisfied. One of the aims of this research in its exploration of the postgraduate international student experience is to interrogate whether individual postgraduate students see themselves as logical informed customers and buyers and possibly even more significantly whether they actually have the economic tools and power to operate within higher education as they would as “shoppers” or consumers in conventional buying and selling contexts. Again the outcomes of this research provide a mixed and conflicting response to the international postgraduate student as informed consumer of a product. The range of taught Masters programmes taken by the study participants in tourism, leisure, hospitality management, sport development management, business studies and business administration all share the dominant features of the modular credit accumulation curriculum models introduced into English higher education in the 1990s. It represents the dominant curriculum model still used in many English higher education institutions such as UnivX throughout the period of this study 2009-2015. It is worth repeating here some of the earlier critical comments on the implementation of the credit framework such as Scott who argues that “there is a powerful dynamic, both organisational and ideological, which binds these apparently eclectic innovations together” (Scott, 1995, p.156). What this dynamic may be is dramatically proposed by Duke (1992) in the view that the credit accumulation framework moved higher education into a new paradigm and a new role in the wider community from “finishing school” to “service station”. Duke’s (1992) image of the service station is resonant with the stated experience of many of the participants in this study while the finishing school or “grand tour” metaphor matches the experience of a smaller number of participants. Comments from participants highlighting the perceived mechanistic and inflexible approach created by this curriculum are redolent of Duke’s (1992) image:

“I expected to enjoy my lessons, learn from them and pass my programme. I think, well I know that I will pass and possibly even with distinction. I did expect to do more while I was here. I know that I am an adult and an independent learner as my professors highlights. I was very disappointed. I have only two evening classes a week for my course, nothing else is

provided by the university. I expected to be much busier. I have been very bored. I only use the internet and go to the library. I did not expect this. I could do most of this at home.

(Student 2)

When the more expansive “finishing school” model is evidenced it is linked specifically to individual agency and wealth allowing a grand tour of higher education rather than the processes of individual programmes:

The experience of the participants in the study suggests that neo-liberalism is not “just out there” (Peck and Tickell, 2003 cited by Ball, 2012, p. xiii) but fundamentally still underpins and directs our approaches to learning. If research is fundamentally a process to discover “What is really going on” then any attempt to find out about the international postgraduate student experience must be viewed within the still dominant neo-liberal paradigm which provides the theoretical and operational underpinning for the curriculum models under study. The human capital development theory approach is underpinned through the expectation that individuals will have a logical, career and economically focused rationale for joining the programme. What emerges from the data and the analysis is that motivation from this group is unique, individual and only occasionally directly related to career development. For these students reasons are more likely to be linked to change, travel, excitement, romance or specific local attractions related to sport or music.

Before leaving this point the “liberal and liberalising nature of neoliberalism” needs to be discussed. A number of earlier commentators such as Rose (1999) theorised neo-liberalism and identified a significant irony. The irony in this view being that neo-liberalism produces docile individuals who are strictly governed yet see themselves as being liberated by the process of neo-liberal practices. Modularisation of programmes may be one instrument which in practice has created in practice a lack of choice within programmes which are designed on the principles of individual customisation. Robertson (1994) and other advocates of modularisation propose that constructing a programme on the basis of free standing modules allows the student as customer and consumer to build a programme of learning suitable to their needs. They felt that the process would shift the balance from provider to consumer. It would therefore be empowering and liberating. Individuals would be able to demonstrate agency in relation to the design, content and outcomes of their programmes. Many of the narratives provided by participants in this study contradict this view. They recognise the

centrality of the module in their learning programmes but not always as a positive or liberalising factor. There appears to be little flexibility or choice available in their modularised programmes. In essence there is little opportunity to take options or develop skills and knowledge outside the strict parameters of their individual modules:

“I was very disappointed that there were no additional classes or even cultural classes. There were English study skills and basic skills but I thought it would be of a higher level. I didn’t think they would be part of my programme. I knew that they weren’t because I had seen my modules and programme before I came. They could or should be something extra which I could choose to, even English culture classes. Everything we do has to be part of our modules.” (Student 20)

This point is reinforced in a number of ways. Ironically, as the neoliberal work emphasis is so dominant in rhetoric and curriculum design, the most common explicit complaint about the programmes under study relates to work placement and internship. Participants felt cheated in the perceived promise of a work placement and the reality of it being their responsibility to arrange. To contradict Rose’s (1999) comment on “docile individuals” many participants and their programme leaders demonstrated high levels of individual agency to make up this deficit but agency was individual and performed outside the formal parameters of the modular programme and was not a consequence of a liberalising and developmental curriculum.

An exploration of the impact of technologically driven communication processes on the globalising process was also identified as points to explore from the experience of these international participants. As with other related points it has proved to be beyond the scope of this study to fully interrogate the impact of what might loosely be called digital communication technology on the international student experience. However, it would be errant not to recognise that the period of this study 2009-2015 has witnessed unprecedented development in digital communication technologies. However, the outcomes of this study do not match the almost apocalyptic view of writers such as Kenny, Rouvinen and Zysman (2015) of the impact of global technologies who suggest that they have “induced an ongoing societal transformation that may prove to be as significant as the original industrial revolution.”(Kenny, Rouvinen and Zysman 2015.) Participants in this study demonstrate engagement with communication and social media which was unprecedented at the beginning

of this study. Many participants value the borderless and timeless engagement this provides for them. Their expressed frustration is that curriculum and pedagogical approaches in Higher Education do not appear to have kept pace with technology and do not make best use of their personal tools. How to harness such technology to learning is a well-established research issue which again is confirmed as an outcome of this study.

The original stimulus for this research study was a concern with “cultural dissonance” (Tran, 2008). As discussed earlier the apparent lack of engagement, criticality and agency largely demonstrated by South East Asians was attributed to cultural clashes, cultural dissonance or cultural asymmetry (Currie, 2007) Also significantly for this work Tran (2008) highlighted the fact that little work had been carried out on individual international student strategies, personal aims, expectations and personal learning support systems. Doherty and Singh (2005) proposed ten years ago that the student voice was largely missing. Since then, an increasing amount of work has been completed on the student experience and the student perspective. The timing of this study 2009-2015 has coincided with a marked increase in interest on this topic. What international students say about their experiences and the strategies they use to succeed is beginning to appear and this research adds to this picture. A growing number of UK based researchers are exploring the voice of the international student, (Jones and Killick, 2013, Sperandino et al 2010, Leask 2014).

This study examines the pedagogical framework outlined by Currie (2007) in relation to the postgraduate programmes under study. As indicated above this pedagogical model remains largely unchallenged and provides the curriculum and pedagogical learning approach experienced by all participants. As with Currie (2007) my aim is to capture the student voice and help to “bring the experience of international students from the margins and contribute to the debate about the significance of national cultures” (Currie, 2007, p.548) and also add to the research on behaviour and transitions. The final conclusions of this study differ in emphasis from Currie’s accounts in 2007. Unlike Curry (2007) there is little evidence of cultural dissonance or expressed cultural concern with being asked to question, critique or challenge. Reasons provided for positive responses to the request for criticality range from preparation, to previous experience, to excitement at the prospect of being an active and involved student. The main concerns with engaging and being critical were on the whole more prosaic and, as one participant noted, were issues also identified by the home students. In brief, most of the concerns relate to pedagogical rather than cultural processes. For

example, many participants felt that they were often asked to comment on, question and critique issues with which they were unfamiliar. Some suggested a simple solution of being prepared better before the class with readings and references. Other participants suggested that the modular nature of the programme and how it was delivered did not encourage engagement and development. A particularly interesting outcome from this research is a reinforcement of earlier research (Ryan and Carroll, 2005) which suggests that language aspects are the major difficulties facing international students in engaging with their disciplines. Participants in this study commented extensively on specific technical language difficulties such as listening and dealing with speed, pronunciation and accent. Where students had experienced a Pre-Masters programme delivered and assessed in English the transition into an English speaking context was smoother. More specifically, a number of insightful comments were made in relation to the level of language sophistication required to recognise nuance and challenge argument in a second language at Masters Level. Some felt again that this was a language skill home students found problematic:

“Again I think sometime our lecturers forget that this is not our first language, even for those of us who speak English very well it is not easy and some of our students find English very difficult even at this level. Some of the English students on our programme also didn’t join in and ask questions, it is not just the international students.” **Student 33**

Their performance in meeting this linguistic challenge in a second language should be praised rather than punished.

However, there is some evidence in this study to support the view proposed by Samir (2005) cited by Tran (2008) that the challenges faced by international postgraduate students may be more complex, variable and go beyond aspects of second language proficiency. This study concurs with Arambewela and Hall’s (2013) view that to get a better and more accurate understanding of the international student experience and levels of satisfaction it is important to investigate the broader aspects of the student learning experience by examining and then going beyond the internal institutional factors (LeBlanc and Nguyen, 1999 cited by Arambewela and Hall (2013)). I suggest in this study that the linked themes of globalisation, lifelong learning and identity formation explored through narrative provides a vehicle to capture and develop the student voice and bring about an understanding of the international

postgraduate student experience by examining individual international student strategies, personal aims, expectations and personal learning support systems.

The outcomes of this research suggest that Trowler (1996) was right to recognise that beliefs about the nature and role of higher education are contested. However, this study proposes that much of the resistance against the dominant curriculum and pedagogical model, based on human capital development and neoliberalist policies and practice, is performed by individuals who are often at the margins of the institution. The implicit and explicit orthodoxy underpinning learning and teaching practice continues to be locked within neoliberal political practice. However, this approach is not without its critics and specific responses to the globalisation agenda are developing and beginning to impact on institutional practice. In the UK context the recently published Higher Education Academy (2014) Internationalising Higher Education Framework, provides a comprehensive template for change. The recent publication 2014 of this document rules it out from analysis within this study. However, the institutional drive to interrogate and operationalise the framework in the case study institution, UnivX indicates that the sector may be ready to shift direction to ensure that internationalisation becomes part of the culture for all learners and teachers in higher education.

It is outside the scope and timeframe of this study to fully evaluate these current pedagogical models for internationalisation however it is important to comment briefly on one pedagogical model which is beginning to develop a prominence in the international pedagogical literature. It is relevant to this study as it represents a model which participants in this study experienced as an unsatisfied expectation. As indicated in the literature review Patel and Lynch (2013) propose and consider the concept and practice of “Glocalization” as an alternative to the internationalization models dominant in higher education. Advocates of glocalization such as Welikala’s (2011) present it as an alternative to the current internationalisation model which they see as creating and formalising a deficit model for the international student. “Deficient in the sense that the internationalization paradigm in practice in higher education in the “West” frames the international student as being “in deficit, obedient, passive, lacking autonomy and unable to engage in critical argumentative process” (Welikala, 2011 cited by Patel and Lynch 2013, p.15).

As indicated in earlier chapters of this study these were the qualities and approaches to international students found in practice within UnivX. An investigation of this deficit paradigm and pedagogical practice in 2009 was one of the major drivers for this study. Patel and Lynch (2013) make another particularly important point for this study in their summary of approaches to internationalisation. Welikala's study (2011) of earlier international pedagogy researchers such as Curran (2007) argues that approaches to pedagogy for international students simply favour and repeat the local pedagogical approaches for international students. These approaches "emphasize Western didacticism encouraging assimilation and socialisation of international students to the learning approaches and theoretical perspectives advocated by the host university. Outcomes of this study do not specifically see lack of engagement as a consequence of national cultural dissonance but more as a lack of engagement with local cultures and practices. The proposal for an alternative "Glocalization" model seems to be a significant response to this outcome. Advocates of glocalization pedagogy (Patel and Lynch, 2013, et al) argue that it explicitly embeds the local with the external. It would do so by embracing "third culture" building. The main point for this study is the proposal that this approach would take learning away from a consideration of cultural dominance or at best cultural relativism and engage the local and the international student towards a deeper level of respectful dialogue and engagement among cultures. It would be at this point that the aim of international students "enhancing the home student experience" (Universities UK, 2014) might become real and also significantly the process would enhance the international student experience through engagement with the local. The narratives provided throughout this study confirm a lack of engagement with local students and local cultures and the dissatisfaction and frustration this has produced for the international postgraduate student. Figure 4 provides an outline of the features of the proposed glocalization model. Figure 12 revises Patel and Lynch's model in relation to the outcomes of this study.

Figure 12 : Revised Glocalization Model, Patel and Lynch 2013

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicit reinforcement of the notion that respectful exchange of cultural wealth among learners and teachers will inform and enhance pedagogy <p><i>The outcomes of this study suggest that in the current model experienced by these participants there is requirement for recognition and explicit reinforcement of the “notion that respectful exchange of cultural wealth among learners and teachers to inform and enhance pedagogy.” There is little evidence outside the processes of the research study itself to propose that a discourse of cultural respect and exchange is taking place between home and international students and their teachers.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The explicit importance of embedding and providing support for critical reflection for all participants learners and teachers as a central feature of the learning programme <p><i>There is more of a mixed response to this point. In some programmes there is evidence of pre-programme preparation to embed and support critical reflection. In others, there are specific customised critical reflection modules and learning processes. Other participant comments confirm that criticality is not only an expectation but is explicitly identified and supported through teaching and assessment processes. Where there are problems with critical reflection and argument participants in this study relate this to lack of knowledge and confidence in second language performance. There is little, if any, direct reference to cultural clashes and cultural dissonance.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The creation of Third Culture spaces where dialogue/reflection and learning can take place <p><i>This study confirms the need for such “cultural spaces” to generate and maintain dialogue, reflection and learning. However, it also confirms the lack of such space for participants within this study. This may partly be due to the dominance of the modularisation process. In the case study, UnivX policy has developed which insists that all learning must be contained and assessed with the module. Even if the intention with modules (Robertson, 1994) was to “liberalise” the learning process and to place students at the centre as entrepreneurs of their learning, there is little evidence that students in this study have either the formal policy processes or the economic power of the customer to effect such changes. There is evidence of significant agency being employed by the participants but this is usually demonstrated outside the modular programmes.</i></p>

- Provision of a space for storytelling as a vehicle for sharing and Third Culture building

A major outcome of this study is the need for a space for storytelling, learning and ultimately sharing “Third Culture” building. In this study the space provided was achieved through the interactive narrative approaches created through the research processes. This point will be interrogated more fully in the following sections of this study. The discussion will result in a formal conclusion and recommendation that this “story-telling space” must be introduced into the learning programmes if internationalisation is to become more than policy and practice rhetoric.

Within the current internationalisation in higher education debate Clifford and Montgomery (2014) also offer some important insights of significance to this study. They suggest that one way of challenging western higher education internationalisation practice can be achieved by promoting graduates as “Global Citizens”. There are clear links between this current work and earlier work referred to in this study from Bone (2008). Clifford and Montgomery (2014) refer to Schultz (2007) who identified the term being promoted in higher education at the beginning of the 21st century. Schultz (2007) suggests that it is the terms “feel good factor” which made it attractive but argued that little serious research was carried out as to what this “Global Citizen” would require in their learning. Interestingly just two years later Booth et al (2009) argue that tertiary education's servitude to the economy meant that the debate on educating global citizens had quickly become muted. Yet, as outlined in the Chapter Two of this study in 2014 Clifford and Montgomery argue that the growth in internationalisation identified by other writers such as Knight (2013) has opened up opportunities to revisit the broader aims of higher education and has allowed higher education to question the increasingly reductionist employability agenda so dominant in UK higher education and within earlier strategies within the case study of UnivX. Beck's (2012) review of Canadian research on internationalisation provides a useful template to revise approaches to internationalisation in relation to the outcomes of this study in one UK university.

Figure 13: Review of Canadian Research on Internationalisation, Beck 2012 revised in Response to the Outcomes of this Study

1. Conceptual confusion in the field:
<i>This study confirms ongoing confusion and debate about concepts and terminologies used within the UK field of internationalisation, such as internationalisation and globalisation, culture and lifelong learning.</i>
2. The lack of understanding of perspectives, practices and the experiences of participants involved in internationalisation:
<i>The experiences of the participants under study demonstrate a lack of understanding of the perspectives, practices and experiences of these postgraduate international students. The study also highlights the lack of space provided to listen to participants and the consequent lack of engagement with their learning outside the strict parameters of programme modules.</i>
3. The implications of this on how internationalisation is conceptualised and practised
<i>This study not only confirms but demonstrates the outcomes of a lack of understanding of how individuals make sense and experience their international event. The clearest example demonstrated in this study is the lack of recognition of individual learning needs and expectations of international students. Whether this refers to sensitivity to second language performance or to their expectations and experiences as international students there is little evidence of an engagement with individual students to assess their needs and expectations.</i>
4. Little attention to curriculum
<i>The outcomes of this research provide a mixed picture in relation to attention to curriculum. There is evidence of some broadening of the curriculum to encompass international contexts and a commitment to encouraging students to use their own contexts for assessment items. However, the dominant home based curriculum is used as a template for the learning of all students. Interrogating the teacher's view on curriculum is outside the scope of this research. The need to further investigate teachers' attitude to curriculum for international students is an research issue emerging from this study.</i>
5. Almost none related to pedagogy
<i>Little evidence emerges from this study of a concern with interrogating pedagogy</i>

appropriate for an international postgraduate group. This has recently been acknowledged and acted upon in UnivX through the establishment of a new international strategy, learning and teaching working parties and an engagement with recent publications such as the Higher Education Academy (2014) Internationalising Higher Education Framework. The need to research pedagogical developments in relation to international and globalised learning also emerges as an outcome of this research study.

6. A propensity towards an economic rationale for internationalisation with:
Experience within the case study of UnivX until recently confirms a propensity towards an economic rationale for internationalisation. UnivX unlike the universities highlighted in Figure 3, and Figure 17, is not as dependent on international student recruitment for income. However, until 2012 and its change in strategic direction the major impetus for internationalisation in UnivX was almost exclusively embodied in the process of attracting conventional international students or through developing international collaborative partnerships to generate third stream income. Since 2012 internationalisation has been couched and developed within a holistic external/globalisation policy and practice discourse for all members of the university.

7. Intensified competition in the recruitment of international students
The period of this study 2009-2015 witnessed intensification in competition in the recruitment of international students. Recruitment of international students fell to its lowest point in UnivX in 2010-2011 and is only beginning to grow.

8. Branding
A concern with branding is witnessed in Univ X throughout this period. As indicated throughout this study the brand from 2009-2012 of “World of Work” was pursued vigorously. The current brand of a modern civic university is redolent of the view advocated by Clifford and Montgomery (2014) of promoting graduates and the institution as global players. “As a modern civic university, we are integral to the life of the city, but we are also global in our approach, forging international partnerships to facilitate world leading research and collaboration to tackle some of the huge global issues facing the modern world that have an everyday impact here at home”(about UnivX, 2015).

What form global engagement adopts in UnivX and across the sector is an important research question for future consideration.

9. The increase of study abroad programmes and exchanges

As indicated in the response to the economic rationale for internationalisation UnivX is only recently engaging with offering study abroad and exchanges for its home students. It is too early to comment on the effectiveness of this approach, however the discourse and practice of internationalising the home student learning experience through study abroad is being driven in UnivX. Developing the work of Brooks et al (2012) in relation to the effectiveness of providing new directions through internationalisation for UK students is outside the scope of this present study but is another point warranting further research within the internationalising/globalising context.

10. Satellite campuses and partnerships with universities in “developing countries”

UnivX, unlike several of its direct competitors, has not established satellite campuses in “developing countries”. However, it has invested heavily in developing partnerships in such areas. The latest (2012) strategy proposes a significant shift away from such arrangements to partnerships with a smaller number of equitable non UK universities to develop research and learning partnership.

11. Increasing alarm and dismay over the dominance of commercial interests and ideologies as the basis for internationalisation

UnivX has operationalised its alarm and dismay over the dominance of commercial interests and ideologies as the basis for internationalisation through its recent strategy and commitment to the approaches outlined in the previous points of: a commitment to internationalisation for all students and the reduction of partnership as largely being a vehicle for third stream income.

12. Internationalisation strategies tend to promote fixed ideas of the global as being “out there” and the local as being “here”

Some evidence is emerging from this study that the concept of global being “out there” is being challenged in the UK higher education and the case study UnivX. However, approaches such as those suggested by glocalization are at the embryonic stage and will require further research to test their effectiveness in practice.

Finally, current work identified in Chapter Two by scholars such Yemini (2015) argues that the internationalisation discourse in higher education has hit “it’s tipping point” and requires a new definition. The comments made in Figure 19 also suggest that the UK Higher Education sector is genuinely engaged with new directions for internationalisation and/or global engagement. Yemini (2015) argues that the term “internationalisation” has now been adopted as a catch-all concept to cover both internal institutional and sector responses and the external drivers of internationalisation including globalisation. Her proposal is that education in general, not solely higher education must put the learner to the fore of practice and discourse. Her proposed new definition is “Internationalisation can be defined as the process of encouraging integration of multicultural, multilingual and global dimensions within the education system, with the aim of instilling in learners a sense of global citizenship.” (Yemini, 2015, p. 21). Interestingly this discourse is now a feature of UnivX strategy and practice. It is important to interrogate the globalised citizen concept raised by Yemini (2015). It is within these debates that the outcomes of this study in relation to the linked concepts of globalisation and lifelong learning must now be considered.

Globalisation and Lifelong Learning:

RO 2: To examine the nature of globalised lifelong learning within the higher education sector

Chapter Two explored Lifelong learning as a response to globalisation. The following section outlines what the outcomes of this study add to this discussion. As stressed throughout the literature review the definitional debate in relation to internationalisation and globalisation is still live and vibrant. Within the Higher Education sector as Beck (2012) proposed, there continues to be conceptual confusion over terminology related to internationalisation and globalisation. This study suggests that although within UK higher education and UnivX there continues to be uncertainty in relation to how higher education should respond to the “globalisation” debate significant policy changes are in place to change direction

Teichler’s (2004) impression of higher education’s response to globalisation was highlighted in Chapter Two “it is surprising to note how much the debate on global phenomena in higher education suddenly focuses on marketization, competition and management in higher

education Other terms, such as knowledge, society, global village, global understanding or global learning, are hardly taken into consideration.” (cited by Marginson and Van der Wende 2006, Teichler 2004, p.23). What emerges from this study is the recognition that the discourse about internationalisation and globalisation has changed in the ten years since this remark was made. The specific “missing” terms of knowledge, society, global village, global understanding and global learning are now part of institutional strategy as well as academic commentary. The outcomes of this study confirm that throughout the sector there is now concern and a desire to ensure an international experience for all higher education participants. There is also an acknowledgement of the potential for new pedagogy and new forms of internationalisation driven by communication technology and internet activity. However, what the outcomes of this study confirm is that the neo-liberal models of learning originating in the 1980s and 1990s still continue to dominate higher education practice and the experience of the international postgraduate participants in this study. The outcomes of this study confirm that higher education may have been complacent about the nature of the international or globalisation model and the approaches to learning for international students during much of the time frame of this study. It would appear from the experience of the students and their narratives in this study that we may still need pathways to move internationalisation away from what Luke (2010) and other have referred to as “edu-business” towards more educational life serving practices Caruana , 2014, Leask, 2013. In this study it is the individual student agency which has largely made the international experience meaningful and important to them. As indicated throughout the narrative data, motivation for international study was complex and individual. The modular programme experienced often played a relatively minor and not always positive part in their international experience. This is a point of major significance to this study which will be developed in a consideration of lifelong learning models and later through the exploration of culture, identity and the student voice.

As indicated in the literature review, confusion and debate also still surround the concept and practice of lifelong learning. However, in the higher education context the orthodoxy has taken hold which links lifelong to modernity. Kristensson Uggla (2008) was quoted extensively in this discussion. His summary is significant. He makes the point that it is “no exaggeration to state that during the last decade a global policy consensus on lifelong learning has emerged.” (Kristensson Uggla , 2008, P.213) He argues that the consensus is

that lifelong learning is both work related and provides the strategy to cope with the career demands of the globalization process.

In this view, the globalized world requires the successful individual to be flexible, adaptable with the ability to continually respond to change as the prerequisite for success at a social and individual level. The international postgraduate student participating in this study demonstrates some of the features of this new lifelong learner. They show flexibility and adaptability to what is for most participants a very new experience. They have made the decision to travel and invest time and money. For English as second language participants, there is willingness to learn new languages. The other factors of a willingness to change, engage with new cultures, to be in transition and to explicitly and deliberately engage with the globalization narrative as globalised citizens are explicitly interrogated through the research narrative processes in this study.

A willingness to change as a consequence and through the international learning process is evident in many of the accounts. In some cases this is a conscious and stated expectation of the experience. For a small number of participants change is not expressed as an aim and the experience described in these accounts of simply working and living with fellow nationals seems to preclude many of the characteristics identified for the globalised lifelong learner. In several cases unfortunately this may even include learning a new language in this case English.

The desire to engage with new cultures is expressed in many of the narratives. However, what emerges from this study is that this process is not supported or helped by the formal learning programmes and engagement either with the host university or host local community. The experience of these participants confirms the concerns expressed by advocates of the Globalization model such as Patel and Lynch (2013) that there is little space for individuals to engage either with home students or local communities. A number of participants are disappointed and angry as such a limiting experience was not their expectation. In some ways this experience shares the features of the literature on other marginalised groups in higher education discussed in Chapter Two.

Many participants, as evidenced by the accounts, felt at the margins of the institution, apart from their participation in formal introduction and graduation events. Ironically, almost without exception, participants were positive about their experience and would recommend

UnivX as their alma mater to family, friends and prospective students. This point will be returned to in the final discussion of culture and identity. However, accounts evidence that they were perceived by the organisation as “difficult to reach and engage with.” Whether this opinion is unique to international postgraduate students or postgraduate students in general, is a question identified as an emerging research issue for this researcher.

Cosmopolitanism is another concept appearing in the internationalisation and globalisation literature and raised in the literature review. As indicated in Chapter Two one of the substantive research questions in this study is an explicit response to the invitation made by Szersynski and Urry (2002) in their discussion of the culture of cosmopolitanism, “We ask a simple empirical question, with the development of global processes so brilliantly outlined by Marx and Engels in 1848, is cosmopolitanism becoming more widespread and if so of what does it consist?” (Szersynski and Urry, 2002, p.402) I reformulated Szersynski and Urry’s empirical question into the title and research question for this study. One major aim of this research project is to explore and interrogate what example of the “globalised citizen” is represented by students participating in this study. Do they represent the mobile, wealthy, cosmopolitan elite or at least the conscious dynamic entrepreneur of the self or are they part of an alternative view offered by writers such as Pashby (2011) and part of the possibilities advocated by Caruana 2014, Killick, 2014.

Evidence from this study suggests that some participants do fit the mobile, wealthy, cosmopolitan elite model. International postgraduate study for a small number of participants is used as a vehicle with echoes of the grand tour. Their family wealth and support allows them to collect qualifications and experiences across the globe. Some demonstrate characteristics of the entrepreneur of the self, with a deliberate and conscious desire to use the experience to further or significantly change their career direction. However, most of the participants in this study do not fit easily into either group. Many appear to be either at the next expected step in their life or are using the experience as a transition.

Pashby (2011) argument is that within current higher education internationalisation discourse, the focus is on developing students as “national” or local citizens with an international or global awareness rather than a privileging of the “global” in global citizen. The narratives of the participants in this study suggest that Pashby (2011) may be overly optimistic in making

such claims for Higher Education in 2011. In the case study context of UnivX, Pashby's view is more in line with the 2012 international strategy and the 2014 Higher Education Academy Internationalisation Framework than the experience of the participants under study.

It could be argued that linking lifelong learning to employability still dominates practice. However, whether this should be so, is challenged. As indicated in Chapter Two (Jarvis 2010) there are alternative views such as that offered by NIACE (2010, p.397) of a vision where "learning plays its full role in personal growth and emancipation, prosperity, solidarity and global responsibility..... and is ultimately connected with the achievement of choice, health and well-being, dignity, cultural identity and democratic tolerance." The findings of NIACE 2010 on higher education institutional learning suggests that much learning policy and practice found in higher education does not match this vision of learning. The experience of the participants in this study, confirm the NIACE report conclusion.

The NIACE report (2010) also highlights a point of significance to this study. It suggests that in the 21st century there are more points of life transitions than in previous generations. It also proposes innovative ways about how and when people should be able to receive learning support in these transitional stages. One outcome of this research study is that the international postgraduate student experience represents a significant transitional event period for participants. As outlined in the data, transition is a feature of every participant's experience. Transitions range from conventional progression from undergraduate to postgraduate study, to more nuanced change in career direction, to very personal and emotional transitions relating to emancipation and finding themselves. Agency and learning in periods of transition and change are explored through this study and in particular through the narrative research methodologies employed. A central question explored through participant stories is that of agency and the importance of reflection as a learning support for change and transition. This point is discussed explicitly later in this chapter.

The NIACE (2010) report provides an alternative view of what lifelong learning practice should be in higher education. There are a growing number of suggested alternative lifelong learning models which reject even more explicitly the inevitability of global neoliberal capitalism and reductionist human capital based curriculum models. A range of models is discussed in Chapter Two. Freire's (1972) earlier work or what Walker (2010) proposes

“Freire can still teach us” provide a radical alternative approach to lifelong learning. Walker’s (2010) view of the nature of the learning within the “new neoliberal and 3rd Way pedagogy” is one which now can be interrogated and explored through an examination of students’ aims, expectations and experiences of their learning within the higher education curriculum model. “In this framework lifelong learning becomes a way to help citizens adapt to an already existing world. It has been given no real role in re-imagining an entirely different world order where the free market or corporate profits no longer remain an unexamined “good”. (Walker 2010, p.87) She goes on to argue that, “Progressive and critical educators assert that by taking the neoliberal globalised order as given, lifelong learning has not only been promoted to help citizens adapt to that order but in fact this has been accompanied by adult educators, higher education and administrators internalising the free market ethos and offering for profit and for the economy courses.” (Walker, 2010, p.88) One particular alternative provided by Freire (1968, 1987) outlined in the literature review, is one which has little formal space in the modularised programmes completed by the participants in this study. The proposition offered by Freire, is that students should be encouraged to dream by their teachers, to create a world which could be, or should be. The transformative nature of a relationship between tutor and student would then become an essential element of a lifelong learning model. Walker (2010) adds to this proposal by quoting Freire, “Dreaming is not a necessary political act, it is an integral part of the historico-social manner of being a person.” (Freire, 1991, cited by Walker, 2010, p 91). The potential for learning through interaction between the insider researcher and the student is a crucial element of this research study and the chosen research process. As such it will be interrogated more fully later in this chapter. However, at this point it is important to highlight that many of the accounts in this study are dreaming narratives, where participants dream of making things better. In these “dreaming” narratives individuals demonstrate that lifelong learning can provide a way of creating and operationalising change. It can be done through engagement with research and individual tutors, i.e. the formal higher education learning process. There may be or should be a place and a space for dreaming in higher education. What emerges from this study is that this space is not often provided for dreaming within modularised learning programmes. Evidence from this study suggests that when this learning and dreaming did take place it was often outside the formal learning experiences provided by the modules. However, learning and dreaming occur in some of the research encounters in this study. This is a significant point addressed in the discussion of identity and student voice.

RO 3: To study the significance of culture, cultural experiences and nationality on identity and learning?

The need to investigate the student experience from the student voice and a fundamental disquiet with a national cultural explanation for behaviour were the initial catalyst for this research. To equate learning behaviour so directly to what appears to be largely under theorised and researched views of national cultures demanded research. This section discusses the outcomes of the study in relation to the interlocking aspects of culture, policies and learning practices predicated on notions of culture and nationality.

As outlined in the literature review, commentators such as Rembold and Carrier (2011) ask the question whether national identities are still pertinent in an age of “globalisation”. They point out that by the mid-1990s some writers had diagnosed the end of the nation state. One of the major research questions in this study resonates with this perspective and considers whether the identity of international student or globalised learner takes on greater significance than nationality during their period of international study?

What emerges from this study appears to contradict Rembold and Carriers’s (2011) hypothesis that the disappearance of the nation state and consequently national identity is at hand. A common theme appearing in many of the narratives is the centrality of national identity within the postgraduate international learning experience. Rather than nationality being reduced by more situationally defined identities such as the postgraduate student as the “globalised lifelong learner” most of the individuals participating in this study see their nationality as being their defined identity. In some cases this is reinforced through the international postgraduate learning experience rather than being challenged by it. Data from this study demonstrates numerous ways in which nationality is recognised and reinforced rather than challenged. Significantly, labelling through nationality is usually an outcome of an internal as well as an external process. Examples of the interdependent process of nationality and identity formation appear throughout the narratives provided in this study.

This process is evident in Chinese students using anglicised nicknames for the convenience of their English tutors and fellow students. Ironically, rather than this process globalising

individuals it could be seen as stereotyping them as “foreigners” and reinforcing deficit, problematic and “difficult to reach” views of Chinese students. One participant refused to engage with this practice for the explicit reasons highlighted here.

Other examples of the largely unchallenged focus on nationality as the key identifier range from perceptions which recognise the centrality and significance of language and appearance to identify. Several participants explicitly state that they will always be seen as a particular nationality due to their appearance and language. This is the case with comments from several South East Asian students. Other English language speakers such as the American participants continue to identify themselves through nationality. Those who are at ease with their nationality recognise national stereotypes and either indulge or challenge their perception of identity in relation to stereotype.

Being identified and identifying themselves as international students is one alternative to national identity. Overall the participants are identified by the institution as international students and seem content to identify themselves as such. However, nationality appears to maintain its prominence as an identifier and from the experience of the participant’s nationality appears to be highlighted and reinforced even through the international learning experience.

There are a small number of alternative perceptions of nationality. These are notably evidenced in the accounts of individual participants who have lived and studied in the UK for a number of years. One participant is a powerful example. He has lived and studied independently, away from family and his home nation since the age of fifteen. What is striking from his account is his current confusion over nationality and identity. He remarks on hybridisation but alongside this perceives that he is still seen as a foreign national even by close acquaintances. His confusion over identity could be seen as what Rembold and Carrier (2011) identify as a consequence of the diminishing of the nation state. However, in this case it is not the apparent diminishing importance of the nation state but the unique nature of the lived experience of the individual which may bring him closer to a situationally defined hybrid identity.

Rembold and Carrier’s (2011) study is of particular significance to this study. Their work explores how the features of globalisation, examined earlier in this study, such as migration,

the increasing borderless flow of economies, fundamental changes in communication technologies affect behaviour and identity. They ask a question of particular significance to this study, if students have an opportunity to meet “citizens from all over the world” then “what impact do these experiences have on identity construction?” This question resonates with University UK (2014) statement about international students “enhancing the home student experience.”

This particular question has been interrogated throughout this study. A number of answers emerge from the narratives. The lack of formal and informal engagement with citizens from all over the world, including the local community is a constant stated disappointment. Many participants expected engagement with citizens from all over the world but unfortunately unless they brought about such encounters outside their formal programme little contact was made. The need to develop a campus community to address such feelings of alienation is now beginning to be addressed in the work of scholars such as Killick, (2012).

Whether there is evidence from this study to support Massey’s (1993) argument that there is a positive and dynamic relationship between place and identity, in her words “a progressive sense of place” (Massey 1993) is a more complex question to answer. What may be of significance to this study is her conclusion that identities are flexible, multiple and constructed in particular time and space. As indicated throughout this study, such a view is redolent of views of the globalised learner. It may be evident within the experience and identity construction of the international transient students participating in this study. One of the central questions raised by Massey (1993) and others such as Appadurai (2006) writing from an anthropological perspective is whether “local” or specific identities such as that of being a transient, globalised learner, ever take precedent over earlier identities such as those created as nationalities. Several writers suggest that this may be the case if relationships are made on a transient, fleeting and globalised basis. As Rembold and Carrier (2011, p. 365) suggest writers such as Appadurai (2006) “hold soil and place to be no longer central to identity construction. He defends “locality” as a lived experience in a globalised and de-territorialised world.” However, other writers are reluctant to dismiss the significance of nationality to identity so readily. They suggest that the process of identity formation is more complex and more layered. The evidence from this study tends to confirm this view.

As indicated in the earlier discussion, nationality dominates perceptions of identity for the participants in this study. However, the argument that national identities may dissolve in some situations and readily recompose and be persistent and significant as the situation demands is also evidenced in this study. Throughout this study narratives demonstrate this process. It is highlighted dramatically when questioning concepts of culture and organisational culture. Several examples are presented in the narratives of individuals proudly becoming part of the institutional culture as they participate in institutional ceremonies such as induction and graduation. Pride in being an international student within their alma mater institution is expressed by students in contradiction to their expressed dissatisfaction with their experience. Other participants explicitly recognise the transience of cultures and the need to recompose their identity within different situations. Recognition of Quangxi from Chinese participants and the need to recognise it within a Chinese and not a UK culture is a repeated theme. Equally the recognition of the need to change an account or narrative for a particular audience evidences the flexible nature of identity formation and significantly the awareness participants demonstrate of the need for flexibility within their personal development. The evidence of flexibility and awareness of the nature of culture demonstrated by the participants in this study demands a discussion of what their narratives add to an understanding of culture within this context.

As indicated in this discussion the concept of culture as “national culture” has a significant place in the perceptions and experiences of the participants in this study. Recent work such as that completed by Rusheweyh and Lanser (2013) on performing identity, culture and nationality makes a number of relevant points to this study. They suggest that although national identities are relevant and endurable they are not static. They argue that national identities are “not given indefinitely but are always reinterpreted and restructured. They are acquired through strategic negotiations and remain a dynamic, changeable relationship with national, ethnic and religious belonging” (p.192). They stress that cultural identity is positioned and remains always in a specific context, in time or in space, in respect of the past, present and the future. It is as Clifford proposes that identity is a matter of “becoming as well as being” in other words identity formation is a process of “dialectical entanglement of indigenous “roots” and travelling/migratory “routes”. (Clifford, 2001, p.477) I will argue in this chapter that one lesson emerging from this study is that narrative approaches can not only capture this process but may also be instrumental in creating the “routes.” However, before

engaging with this discussion it is important to discuss what the outcomes of this study add to knowledge of culture and identity.

In the literature review, care and concern with using theory from “eminent” theorists such as Bourdieu was highlighted. However, the process of this research and its outcomes does warrant discussion of the influential theoretical work of Bourdieu (1984, 1990, 1998) and Giddens (1991, 2002).

During this study I have “blown hot and cold” in relation to the applicability of Bourdieu’s habitus and field theory as an explanation of identity and behaviour demonstrated by the international students under study. As indicated in the literature review for Bourdieu “habitus and field” is part of his attempt to “transcend the dualisms of agency-structure, objective-subjective and the micro-macro” Reay, 2004, p. 432). This aim is significant to this study and its attempts to understand and explain the dynamics between individual agency and institutional and societal structure in the experience of being an international student. For Bourdieu it is the interaction of habitus with field or structure which determines behaviour. Habitus represents the system of behaviour an individual is predicated to act with and upon. It predisposes individuals to certain forms of behaviour based on experiences, and expectations or cultures. When I linked this to Brunner’s (2010) theory on the significance of canonical narratives and Taylor and Littleton’s (2006) work on narrative discursive approaches to identity and behaviour a theoretical pattern emerges which can capture and explain the process of cultural constraints and individual response and action demonstrated by the postgraduate international students under study. With “habitus” Bourdieu suggests that individual behaviour demonstrates a degree of uniform behaviour through shared cultural experiences whilst at the same recognising that individual experiences can be diverse and lead to forms of non “conventional behaviour, “Just as no two individual histories are identical so no two individual habitus are identical.” (Bourdieu, 1990c, p. 46). According to Bourdieu habitus can be continually restructured by individuals leading to what he calls a “cultured” or learned habitus. Brunner’s (2010) notion of canonical narrative suggests a similar process of behaviour and identity being an integral mix of learned cultural behaviour which individuals create through the art of inventing and learning. However, Bourdieu alongside this positive view of cultural change and learning highlights the limitations of choice through his insistence on the resilience of structures or in Bourdieu’s terminology “fields”. As Reay (2004) points out there is normally a close dynamic between habitus and

field. The outcomes of this study suggest that the power of the institutional “field” of higher education is a strong and resilient field for international students. Many of the narrative accounts in this study support the perception of these students as being at the margins or to some extent “like fish out of water.”

“Social reality exists, so to speak, twice, in things and in minds, in fields and in habitus, outside and inside social agents. And when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it is like a “fish in water”: it does not feel the weight of the water and it takes the world about itself for granted.” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 127 cited by Reay, 2004, p.436.)

The logic of this statement is that when habitus encounters a field with which it is not familiar, the resulting differences can either hinder or generate change and learning. This is significant to the individuals in this study. They are all in an unfamiliar setting they feel the “weight of the water” and cannot take the world about them for granted. It can be a strange and intimidating place.

As Reay (2004) suggests the dynamic between habitus and field may be a useful way of viewing the relationship between structure and individual action within large scale settings such as universities. However, the importance of structure and the resilience of culture in relation to identity and behaviour as highlighted by Bourdieu (1992) is significantly minimised by a number of influential current social and educational theorists. There is a tendency in some current theorization of social change and identity formation to place reflexivity at the heart of modern identity formation. As indicated in Chapter Two, in this theorization the outcomes of major social trends “such as “globalisation” and the apparent breakdown of cultural barriers come together to forge the self through a transforming and liberating process of reflexivity” (Adams, 2003, p.222) .

One of the aims of this research study is to explore whether the postgraduate international student as an example of the globalised lifelong learner demonstrate these flexible, “liberated” identities. As outlined in the literature review, to do this within the specific higher education context it is necessary to consider Giddens’s theory on identity, culture and reflection. This study suggests that Giddens’s theorisation on identity and reflection forms the basis of many of the curriculum and pedagogical models experienced by the participants in this study. Giddens’s (1994, 1998, 2003) theorization of identity represents the core of this approach and

as such provides, a theoretical framework for much current learning policy and practice for international students in higher education. His basic argument is that reflexivity takes on a core and extended role in processes of identity formation once it comes into contact with “post traditional” settings which emerge from modernity’s dynamism (Adams, 2003). International students undertaking globalised lifelong learning and immersion in new cultures could be seen as examples of modernity’s “boundary free dynamism”. The theoretical emphasis placed on reflexivity as part of the curriculum experienced in the programmes under study has a direct link to Giddens’s (1992) work on identity, “The self today is for everyone a reflexive project – a more or less continuous interrogation of past, present and future.” (Giddens, 1992, p.30). In this view individuals are seen as no longer being bound to fixed culturally given identities, including national identities, “We have no choice but to choose how to be and how to act” (Giddens, 1994, p. 75). Giddens argues that as cultural and traditional barriers break down, reflexivity provides a capability for the individual to construct and reconstruct the self. Such views are central to neoliberal approaches to globalisation and lifelong learning policies as outlined in the previous chapters. One of the major aims of this study is to explore whether approaches to learning based on these views is accurate or misplaced and problematic. The outcomes of this study suggest that proposing unconstrained reflexivity and objectivity as the basis for action and identity formation and lifelong learning overlooks crucial factors identified by participants in this study such as context, time, wealth, nationality and language, which influence the choices individuals make.

An outcome of this study is that one way of coming to an informed decision about the legitimacy of these views, may be found by listening to the voice of the individual learner. This study has provided a mechanism to allow the researcher to listen to the individual learner’s voice. It appears from this study that essentialist national cultural stereotypical views of behaviour are misplaced. The amount of agency demonstrated by many of the participants, for example, challenges the stereotype of the passive, obedient South East Asian student. Culture is significant to the subjects under study but it is not static and inflexible. This study tends to confirm the work of critics of reflexive self-identity theory such as Alexander (1996). There is resonance between these views and Bourdieu’s foregrounding of the interplay between habitus and field. Alexander argues that culture is a more powerful realm of experience and that reflexivity can “be understood only within the context of cultural tradition, not outside of it” (Alexander, 1996, p 136)

Evidence from this study proposes that the space allowed by international study can provide a context for reflection, learning, change and transition. However, the study also suggests that the outcomes of this personal reflection are almost always influenced and affected by previous experience, cultures, expectations, commitment and economics. In this study only one participant has the economic and family support to apparently construct their experience and identity through reflection.

What appears to be emerging as a significant outcome of this study is a confirmation that there is need to provide a “space” for international postgraduate students for learning as suggested by Patel and Lynch (2013) and Beck (2012). Killick (2012). The outcomes of this study endorse the proposal made in the research methodology chapter that providing “reflective space” for dialogue and learning through the use of narrative based research processes can capture a more accurate sense of the issue under study. What may also be equally significant as an outcome of this study is the sense that the process of engaging with an individual and developing discourse can also be instrumental for individual learning based on reflection and action. In other words this interactive process may assist the learner to create the “route” from the “root.” (Clifford, 2001) The emphasis placed on narrative as a research and learning method emerged and was refined as the study developed. The proposition that narrative, dialogue and discourse are essential features of learning and may be even more so for international students in transition is interrogated further in the following section.

Narrative and the Student Voice:

RO 4: To consider whether narrative research approaches are able to both capture and develop experience and learning?

As outlined in the literature review there is a well-established concern with narrative and identity in a number of areas such as social psychology, discursive psychology and narrative in psychology (Taylor and Littleton, 2006) which add a different perspective to modernist thinkers such as Giddens. A particularly influential set of work which has influenced this study is provided by Taylor (2005) and Taylor and Littleton (2006). In many ways their work echoes and responds to the concerns raised by Alexander (1996) and Adams (2003). However, what may be of even more specific importance to this study is what was identified in the

literature review as their view of the nature of biographical narrative as “as a situated construction produced for and constituted within each new occasion of talk but shaped by previously presented versions and also by understandings which prevail in the wider discursive environment, such as expectations about the appropriate trajectory of a life.”(Taylor and Littleton, 2006, p 23).

This focus adds an important balance to some of the “identity through reflexivity” models outlined in the previous section. It suggests that the almost “Romantic” notion of the individual as hero seeking their own untrammelled destiny proposed by Giddens et al through reflexivity, may be at best partial and inappropriate in dismissing previous experience and perceptions of culture as being of substance to identity and behaviour.

The participants under study are at a crucial stage of their life, or to use Taylor and Littleton’s (2006, p.24) phrase their “life trajectory.” Many are at a point where choices will be made as to which direction to take on the next stage of their life. Numerous examples of individuals creating and dealing with personal transition are evidenced throughout the narrative accounts.

The following section discusses the outcomes of the process adopted to allow participants to reflect on their experience, their identity and their future. The intention was to provide a range of integrated research methods which provided, where possible, a discursive narrative process to explore the possibilities and limitations which speakers bring to a reflection on their identity or as Taylor states, “or in other words how they are positioned by who they already are.” (Taylor 2005, b cited by Taylor and Littleton, 2006, p.25)

One of the lessons from this research study is that even strongly held beliefs and approaches may change as the researcher engages with their research process. My position is firmly located within the qualitative, interpretive, subjectivist paradigm acknowledging the importance and significance of context. However, as this research process developed a number of new and unanticipated research processes emerged. One unanticipated outcome was the significance of shared experience between the researcher and research participants. The emergence of unforeseen approaches is increasingly a recognised feature of what Trowler (2011) refers to as “close-up” insider research of this kind.

As argued in the methodology chapter, this research study is located within Cunliffe’s (2011) inter-subjectivity problematic. Cunliffe (2011) argues that within the inter subjectivity

problematic the ethnographic interactive is even more pronounced. Here, the researcher is involved directly in the sense making process through direct engagement with the research participants and reality construction as well as with the more common post research reflexive process. The researcher, therefore, is performing within the process and acknowledges their role as an actor in the sense making process with the research participants. In this research study this perspective is adopted and was considered more fully in the methodology and data analysis chapters through the use of narrative techniques described by (Georgekapoulou 2006) as conversations in action and others such as Reissman (2008) as performative narrative analysis and Taylor and Littleton (2006) as narrative discursive analysis.

Being there as insider researcher, or “being native rather than going native,” is an explicit feature of this research. The findings from this research confirm Geertz (1983) observation that positioning the researcher, almost in an anthropological way, within the data creation as well as the data collection is significant in developing a rich and detailed and emerging account. Arguments about the use of interview and narrative are outlined in detail in the methodology chapter. I will not rehearse these arguments. However, as indicated earlier one specific aim of this study is to examine the interview as a topic in itself throughout this research study. The aim is to consider the interview/narrative process as a real communicative event which can do more than simply generate and capture “unsullied” opinion.

As De Fina (2011) points out little attention has been paid to the context in which interview narratives have been produced and even less attention been given to the interview as a topic in itself. This point is significant to the ethnographic research outlined throughout this research study and to consideration of the insider researcher process. Modan and Schuman (2011) argue that the relationship between interviewer and interviewee rather than being a problem or liability is both a valuable site for analysis and also provides a sociolinguistic encounter which can provide positive outcomes for the research process. Evidence from this study confirms this point for both the semi-structured interview accounts and the narrative conversations. Throughout both processes there is evidence of what Modan and Schuman (2011) refer to as sociolinguistic encounters. The outcomes suggest that these encounters encouraged both student/participant and researcher/teacher to take on an “expert status”. Sharing expertise about the issues under study created opportunities for dialogue to develop about topics which may be taboo or tacit in everyday conversations. As Schuman (1986)

cited by Modan and Schuman 2011, p.14) suggest “in other words interviews afford “tellability” that may otherwise be restricted.” The narratives produced in this study evidence the quality of stories which can be told through interviews and research conversations. Throughout this study there is evidence of participants relaxing and welcoming the opportunity to tell their stories. The stories range from honest and insightful responses to formal learning processes to very personal accounts of reasons for moving to a new environment to provide distance and new direction.

The outcomes of this study confirm that the dynamic between the researcher and respondent is significant. As indicated in the discussion of ethics, insider research of this kind must acknowledge the formal roles and perceived status of the researcher. Evidence in the narratives demonstrates that age and status of the researcher were acknowledged by participants. Fortunately for this research the acknowledgement had positive outcomes. The researcher’s expertise was recognised and used by participants to challenge and develop thinking. There are examples in the narratives of participants explicitly recognising that learning was taking place in the conversations and that the research encounters were more than data collection exercises but often personal learning encounters.

As indicated earlier grand claims will not be made for the interviews and narratives in this study as having “therapeutic outcomes”, although it is tempting. However, a proposal that “talking” in this way can and should explicitly be part of learning and lifelong learning is proposed as an outcome of this study. For the proposal to be convincing a further examination of the dynamic of the interactive narrative process is necessary here. Erickson (1988) proposes that discourse analysis has shown that the positions adopted by the interviewer-respondent or teller and audience cannot be simply broken down into a static speaker and listener relationship. This point was highlighted in the literature review through reference to the work of Denzin, 1997, De Fina, 2011, Modan and Schuman, 2011, Brannen, 2013. What emerges from this study is confirmation that in order to encourage these participants to tell their stories it is necessary for the interviewer to be involved and to adopt a flexible and dynamic role. This research study also confirms De Fina’s (2011, p.29) conclusion that it is impossible to ignore the role the interviewer plays as a “catalyst for the coalescence of a variety of phenomena related to identity negotiation and language use.” Questions raised in this research include what role I played in the process of learning as a catalyst through my “senior insider” role allowing me to share a number of commonalities

with the respondents and through my engagement with them as members of different cultures. De Fina (2011) argues that storytelling is a prime location for identity creation between the individual and the researcher. She makes this telling point that “the kinds of identities that people present critically depend on who they understand their interlocutors to be.” De Fina, (2011, P.30). The process and outcomes of this study confirm this conclusion. The level of insight about the importance of context, identity and dialogue was demonstrated in many of the narratives. It may be best summarised in the comment of one participant who informed me that he would tell a different story about his reasons for becoming an international student if he was talking to a prospective employer!

The relationship between the researcher and participants as evidenced by this research study also answer some of the concerns expressed by Lee (2014). As indicated in the discussion of ethics in the methodology chapter, she is concerned with the dynamic between insider and outsider research from a cross cultural or alternative “worldview”. She is particularly concerned with the potential for exploitation of participants in cross-cultural research. For Lee (2014) the Western ethics code on which the research ethics code is based on causes her concern. She raises the issue of cultural dominance or cultural colonialism created through the Western research process. Such a concern is shared by several researchers. As indicated in the literature review, Ryen’s (2011) work “Exploring or Exploiting? Qualitative methods in times of globalisation” is apt to this research study as it not only deals with international students, i.e. individuals from outside “western cultures” but is also concerned with globalisation, culture and notions of cultural dissonance. Ryen (2011) identifies three possible approaches to minimise cultural dominance. This work has adopted Ryen’s third approach. The proposition is that although national cultures exist and alternative world views exist they are not static “in this interconnected world views and identities are intrinsically constructed within a time and place, they are “actively constructed narratives.” (Ryen, 2011, p.450 cited by Lee, 2014, p.300). Evidence throughout the narratives demonstrates this process in action. In this study identities and world view are heavily influenced by nationality and experience. However, there is consistent evidence of identities and world views changing and being actively engaged with through the international experience and through the production of the narratives themselves within the research process. The outcomes of this study confirm the view that shared narrative discourses between the researcher and participant aids learning, identity formation and development. This study confirms that rather

than this being an exploitative relationship the approach is beneficial both to the participants and the research process itself.

For Floyd and Arthur (2012) the specific organizational role of the insider researcher raises a number of ethical points. Being a “cultural insider” means sharing a common organizational culture with the participants (Floyd and Arthur 2012). As I do in this study. As outlined in the ethical considerations in the methodology chapter, a number of ethical points arise from this relationship. Consideration has to be taken in relation to my organizational role, identity and age. I am a mature, male, senior member of staff. I am viewed and referred to as “professor” by many of the participants even though this is not my role or designation. It is not an exaggeration to suggest that participants pay “respect” and acknowledge my “wisdom” in this setting. Commentators such as Lee (2014) are concerned that “cultural” distance from the participants may hinder honesty and dialogue. Inevitably I must consider whether perceptions of my role and seniority, hinders honesty and dialogue. Interestingly, the outcomes of this study confirm that participants respond comfortably because of trust and a sense that the researcher is familiar with and sensitive to the context under discussion. The interesting term “wisdom” was used by several participants in relation to the researcher. It is inappropriate to support or reject the legitimacy of being awarded this quality, however it was attributed by participants and their commitment to the research process was strengthened by their perception.

I also decided to use dialogic performance analysis Reissman (2008) and a narrative-discursive approach to research Taylor and Littleton (2006). These analytical approaches focus on narrative as being the product of talk between individuals in dialogue, in performance, in context. In these approaches the interlocking elements of structure, context and narrative as product of talk within a specific performance are highlighted. The outcomes of the study confirm that most of the participants saw it as an opportunity to voice their concerns and several derived a real sense of purpose in having their voice listened to. What emerged from the conversations were different versions of life stories or mini-biographies. My experience of interviewing in this study, and in previous work, is similar to Bannen’s (2013) experience where we both have found that interviews dealing with significant experience and transitions can generate extended narrative. As Bannen (2013) proposes, narrative life story conversations of this type create a co-constructionist approach to storytelling; “I concur with Burgos that the interviewer while acting as the initiator also acts

as the social medium or catalyst for the telling of the story given several conditions.” (Bannen, 2013, 3.11). The conditions stipulated by Bannen, (2013) are firstly that the interviewer provides and encourages autonomy for the respondent to share their own way of viewing the experience, in other words the interviewee is allowed and encouraged to tell their version of their story. Evidence throughout this study demonstrates that I consciously “for-grounded” and “back- grounded” myself to encourage narrative. Secondly, the interviewee is convinced that what they have to say is important not only to themselves but to a wider audience. It is the second point that supports the proposition that this approach can not only record but also develop the student voice. Participants within this study wanted to tell their stories and recount their experiences. However, they also expected that their voice would be listened to and appropriately acted upon. Implicitly and in some cases explicitly participants felt that constructing these accounts with a senior member of staff of UnivX would be beneficial to having their accounts listened to and acted on.

The study has identified a number of recent institutional, UnivX and sector challenges to the neoliberal model for internationalisation. I won't rehearse glocalisation and internationalisation frameworks again. However, this discussion of the student voice and the potential of narrative to develop learning must take the study back to a comment of what the outcomes of this study can add to the concept of learning and the student voice. It may be timely in the current discourse on internationalisation within higher education, to revisit the work of progressive and critical educators. I have referred to a central tension which is not addressed in this study but will be addressed in future work that is the role of the teacher within this context. Many teachers, as critical educators, may feel stuck between critiquing the dominant frame of learning and the obligation of helping their students to succeed within this model. A number of responses to this tension exist. I have referred to Bruner (1987) in the literature review and Bruner's cry for the inclusion of dreaming. He suggests that dreaming has little presence in current higher education models. The outcomes of this research confirm his conclusion. There is no statement of dreaming as a learning outcome in any of the modules experienced by these participants. In a university such as UnivX with its mission and strap-line of “Dream, Plan and Achieve” this seems to be a significant omission. His suggestion is that higher education teachers should help and encourage their students to “dream”. To encourage their students to imagine and create a world which “could be”. The transformative nature of a relationship between tutor and student would then become an

essential element of learning. This study suggests that learning space provided by the research narrative encounters at times mirrors this learning process. When participants claim that this one to one narrative process has provided them with the only opportunity to talk and interact with a tutor at length, it seems legitimate to suggest that model should be introduced as an integral part of their learning programmes. As such the student voice would be sought, listened to and acted upon. It would be an integral part of learning with engagement between the local and international creating learning. It would also support the concept and practice of a transformative curriculum identified by Barnett (2000) as a requirement for the “supercomplexity” of the world which higher education was responding to in 2000. The outcomes of this study suggest that developments in boundary free communication technologies may have made the world even more “super-complex” in 2015. As outlined in Chapter One, Mezirow (2003, p.58), writing shortly after Barnett (2000) as cited by Clifford and Montgomery (2015, p.48) describes the transformative curriculum as: “Learning that transforms problematic frames of reference – sets of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning, perspectives, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminatory, open, reflective and emotionally able to change.” The outcome of this study suggests that this type of transformative curriculum could be employed for internationalisation and specifically as a vehicle for developing the learning of international students in the process of personal transition, which many international postgraduate students experience within the super complex and dynamic context of higher education in 2015. How this model could be operationalised within current curriculum models in higher education requires further research and analysis.

Conclusions and Emerging Research:

The time afforded, 2009-2015, to complete the study has provided me with the space to engage with the postgraduate international student experience from an informed and researched based perspective. I will quote Burke’s observation for the final time. This process is “distinctively the academic perspective.” (Burke, 2009, p.5) This academic study allows me to come to the following conclusions which are of interest both to the academic community and also hopefully to policy makers in higher education.

This research study explores international postgraduate students as globalised lifelong learners during the period 2009-2015. It does so by investigating postgraduate international

students' experience of English higher education in relation to a number of objectives within the context of one specific English university. The research objectives underpinning the study are:

Research Objective One: To explore why individuals choose to become postgraduate international students

Research Objective Two: To examine the nature of globalised, lifelong learning within the higher education sector

Research Objective Three: To study the significance of culture, cultural experiences and nationality on identity and learning

Research Objective Four: To consider whether narrative research approaches are able to both capture and develop experience and learning

The concluding section provides responses to the research objectives based on the outcomes of this study and identifies emerging research questions. This study is a piece of academic research, not action research. However, as suggested earlier many of the outcomes of this research are of direct relevance to higher education practitioners whether they are teachers, programme and curriculum developers, insider researchers or policy makers.

The outcomes of this study suggest that some of the models of globalised lifelong learning experienced by the participants in their formal higher education programmes could be seen as limited and limiting for the learner. They could be seen as political constructs taken from the neoliberal economic narrative, rather than representing the complex, dynamic and multi-dimensional reality of learning evidenced within these narrative accounts. This research confirms that individuals are significant agents of their experience. A key outcome of this research is evidence which demonstrates that through various strategies, postgraduate international students can resist pressures to accept a singular conception of their learning and experience. These students are not passive, but active agents. However, agency is often performed at the margins rather than being part of the formal learning experience. An outcome of this research is a recommendation of the need to practice "inclusion" in higher education for international postgraduate students. To achieve inclusion will require an

acknowledgement that many international students currently operate at the margins of their institution. Bringing international postgraduate students from the margin to the middle will improve learning for all students and staff in higher education. Learning and lifelong learning approaches which encourage the individual to think, challenge and be critical and even to dream, should play a role within the formal academic processes of programmes and not be left at the margins or solely in the hands of individual passionate students and teachers. To do so, requires confidence and a certainty as to what higher education's role is within approaches to internationalisation and globalisation. As indicated above, this study highlighted the confusion and lack of clarity in relation to the concepts of internationalisation, globalisation and culture used within the UK field of higher education. Concepts such as internationalisation, globalisation, global engagement and the globalised learner or citizen need to be clarified and agreed as the basis for informed and appropriate practice. Fundamental to this change is the need to challenge the "essentialist" views of culture, nationality and learning which underpin much of the globalised learning model and practice currently in place within higher education. If the concept of globalisation is to have legitimacy in higher education, trans-national rather than one way traffic to "western" universities must be a prerequisite rather than a rhetorical policy statement for strategy. Current policy and work on internationalising the student experience for all students, including UK home students, represents a start in this process. However, as indicated above many of the initiatives designed to internationalise the student experience for all students are in their infancy. As such the identification of emerging research is not difficult. Most of the current initiatives would benefit from further research.

Developing Brooks et al (2012) and similar work in relation to the effectiveness of providing new directions through internationalisation for UK students is an issue warranting further research. The institution case study UnivX where it has been notoriously difficult to encourage home students to take on "external" experiences as part of their higher education, would be a fascinating context for this research. Equally the strategic international policy changes witnessed since 2009 and since 2012 within the case study context of UnivX warrant further study. How the case study UnivX manages its strategic shift from "world of work" in 2009 to its current 2012 aim to be a "civic university with a global approach" warrants further research. There is evidence of UnivX taking on board concerns with the neoliberal principles and practices discussed throughout this study. How the institution effects and operationalises

its desired change would provide a context for important research relating to the management of change at micro, meso, and macro level. Much of this research would be of interest to the sector as well as to the academic audience. In my current role, it is an area I wish to revisit on completion of this study.

The narrative accounts in this study provide rich “conversations with a purpose” and provide insight into individual experience, notions of culture and raise questions about the danger of modernist curriculum models and essentialist view of learning, culture, nationality and identity formation. The impact of cultural dissonance and cultural asymmetry in relation to learning has little resonance in these accounts. Based on the outcomes of this research the perception that international students are intrinsically “culturally alien”, shy and “difficult to reach” should be challenged and rejected. A feature of this research is the level of agency, insight and awareness demonstrated by the participants who in some cases explicitly recognise the complexity and mutability of culture, identity and nationality. Many also explicitly recognise the significance of context in their responses to questions about culture, identity and learning. The personal narrative accounts suggest that nationality is important. It is used to identify individuals in their international context and rather than this being reduced or replaced by other more situational identifiers such as globalised learner, it takes on a greater prominence both for the individual and the external community. The focus on nationality is not always welcomed by participants. Some view it as confining rather than liberating. The narratives suggest that individuals welcome being seen as a member of a particular national group and a globalised learner. This new identity represents individual’s perceptions of what their international study has produced. They welcome it both for career and personal development. There is little evidence of individuals being seen or seeing themselves as boundary free globalised learners.

As suggested earlier Rembold and Carrier’s (2011) study is of particular significance to this study. Their work explores how the features of globalisation, examined earlier in this study, such as migration, the increasing borderless flow of economies, fundamental changes in communication technologies affect behaviour and identity. They ask a question of particular significance to this study, if students have an opportunity to meet “citizens from all over the world” then “what impact do these experiences have on identity construction?” This question resonates with University UK (2014) statement about international students “enhancing the home student experience.”

This particular question has been interrogated throughout this study. A number of answers emerge from the narratives. The lack of formal and informal engagement with citizens from all over the world, including the local community is a constant stated disappointment. Many participants expected engagement with citizens from all over the world but unfortunately unless they brought about such encounters outside their formal programme little contact was made. Although the issue of meeting students or “people” from all over the world has been addressed in the study, the outcome from this study is unhelpful in assessing its impact. Most participants did not have the experience. An emerging research question is to consider how such encounters can be assured as a programme process and then an exploration of the impact on such encounters on identity and learning.

As indicated in the discussion, the concept of culture as “national culture” has a significant place in the perceptions and experiences of the participants in this study. Recent work such as that completed by Rusheweyh and Lanser (2013) on performing identity, culture and nationality makes a number of relevant points to this study. They suggest that although national identities are relevant and endurable they are not static. A clear outcome of this research is that nationality is important both to the individual student and to the host institution. However, there is evidence to suggest that national identities are not static and that individuals will define and refine identity in relation to contextual settings. Evidence from this study proposes that the space allowed by international study can provide a context for reflection, learning, change and transition. Further research could consider what role higher education can and should play in assisting this fundamental process for international postgraduate students, who are often as this study confirms at a transitional stage of their personal development.

The outcomes of this study confirm that the international student voice should be sought, listened to and acted on by universities with agency being brought from the margins to the centre. In order to do this, the outcomes also suggest the appropriateness of the narrative research methods used in capturing the individual experience through listening to the participant’s voice. The accounts provide a rich and detailed response to the research. They paint a detailed and convincing account of the international student experience from the user’s perspective. The range of methods; written accounts, semi-structured interviews and

narrative conversations provide depth and rigour to the accounts. What also emerged from this study is that in “close-up” insider research of this kind the dialogue produced in the interactive encounters can also lead to learning and can directly develop the accounts provided. This study suggests when the dialogue is genuine dialogue the quality of the outcome and the experience for both parties can become learning and a liberating encounter. In order to support and develop appropriate models of trans-national as opposed to globalised lifelong learning it is necessary to work towards multiple forms of learning and learning outcomes. The learning demonstrated in these interactive, focused encounters could be used within alternative forms of learning and in particular within transformative curriculum models. The outcomes of this research suggest that many postgraduate students are at a significant transition stage of their development. Curriculum processes which help to support individuals to make effective transformations should be sought and employed.

Before leaving this point, I would like to return briefly to revisit the work of progressive and critical educators. I have referred to a central tension which is not addressed in this study but will be addressed in future work that is the role of the teacher within this context. An outcome of this study suggests that informed conversations between teacher and students could become a valuable part of an appropriate transformative curriculum. The emerging research from this point is the need to explore the teacher’s role as a source of creativity, development and dreaming for students within modular postgraduate programmes?

It would be an ambitious study but one which could be instrumental to the understanding and development of international, globalised lifelong learning within the current context of modularised programmes.

A comment on reliability and validity as outlined throughout this work is warranted here. I suggest that the data presentation and discussion chapters evidence confirmability, dependability, consistency and auditability. This conclusion section also highlights the extensive opportunities for further research emerging from this study. I consider this a positive outcome. It reflects the quality descriptors of transferability, applicability and fittingness suggesting that the approach outlined in this study could be applied in other contexts and with other participants. The analytical and theoretical generalizations presented in this final chapter also evidence the extent to which the outcomes of the process rather than

solving a problem force the researcher to recognise the need for further questioning and research as an outcome of the study.

The significance of the issues addressed in this study is also reflected in the dramatic increase in current research addressing globalisation, internationalisation, lifelong learning and the student experience, Killick, 2012, Jones and Killick, 2013, Leask, 2013. On a personal level, what emerges from this research study is the desire to further investigate the dynamic between formal learning, personal learning, transformative curriculum, nationality, culture and their place within in approaches to internationalising the curriculum and pedagogy. I will pursue this research with enthusiasm.

Finally it is necessary to answer the research question set for the study: **RQ: Are international postgraduate students globalised, lifelong learners?** The outcome of the study suggests that the international postgraduate students participating in this research are examples of the globalised, lifelong learner but the example they represent is individual, complex and dynamic. The outcomes of this study also suggest that in order to support individuals taking on this experience it is necessary for higher education to develop alternative approaches to transnational learning, which may not readily fit current standardised modular based approaches to learning. It may be necessary to move towards multiple forms of learning, including explicit transformative models of learning. The outcomes of this research also suggest that one appropriate way to support transformative learning is to ensure that capturing and developing the student voice becomes an explicit and integral part of learning. I will also pursue research related to the student voice and transformation with equal enthusiasm.

Contribution to Knowledge:

The above discussion and conclusions imply the contributions the study makes to knowledge. I would like to end the study with a short, more explicit, final statement highlighting the range of contributions to knowledge made by this research study. The work contributes to a number of discrete and linked bodies of knowledge, approaches to research and policy and practice within higher education. As indicated throughout the thesis, it adds to a growing research base interrogating the concepts of globalisation, lifelong learning and

internationalisation within higher education. Prior to 2009, the start of this study there was a discernible gap in knowledge related to these concepts and practices within higher education, particularly from the voice of the learner. This work provides insights from the student voice and significantly about the student voice which may contribute to reducing the size of this gap. The legitimacy and need for this study is confirmed by the rapid growth of research in this area, both nationally and internationally, which this work will add to. My aim is to participate as an active member of these research groups in the future. The outcomes of the study also add to the ongoing interest in the concepts of globalisation, internationalisation and lifelong learning within the higher education sector. The specific outcomes addressing the durability of nationality within an apparent internationalising process adds to knowledge and may add to practice. Equally outcomes relating to transition, dreaming, personal transformation as elements of formal learning programmes add to knowledge and again may add to practice. A key feature of the study is its concern with narrative based research methods. This area is also undergoing a renaissance. This study adds to this body of knowledge through its linking of insider research, narrative, identity formation and learning. Approaches such as these can add to social constructivist approaches to knowledge formation. Social constructivist approaches to learning and knowledge formation within the context of higher education warrant further research. My intention is to adopt a similar approach with one of the “missing groups” in this study, i.e. the teachers. As such the insider–researcher, “close-up” ethnographic processes interrogated within this study would be developed and outcomes would also contribute to knowledge in the field. The study also makes a contribution to practice within the higher education sector and practice within the specific university providing the context for the study. It would be inappropriate and repetitive to address each of the specific contributions to practice which the study makes. However, on a strategic practice level the study does contribute to knowledge relating to the appropriateness of using modular programmes and current custom and practice for local postgraduate students as the model for international students. It adds to the current major interest in internationalisation within the sector. It is well-timed and adds to strategy and practice initiatives designed to bring the international learner from the margins to the centre. It adds evidence of the need to recognise that internationalisation of higher education learning may require a curriculum which is not always evident in current practice.

I like other researchers and higher education professionals, will continue to consider practice from a research informed perspective. The outcomes of this study will contribute to this consideration.

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