Student Engagement within Higher Education: An Analysis of Staff and Student's Opinions beyond Academic Engagement

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Professional Doctorate in Sport

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Abstract

Higher education and the dynamic environment that it operates within has been well documented, with many factors impacting upon the effectiveness of the sector. At the forefront of such strategic thinking, is how universities interact and engage with their students. This thesis investigates student engagement with the UK higher education sector, focusing on staff and student opinions beyond academic engagement, taking a holistic approach that research has suggested is lacking. Three empirical studies were undertaking to investigate: the role of staff and students within engagement activities; and the benefits and barriers to student engagement.

Study one involved a qualitative analysis (n=14) interviewing staff that worked in a UK university and had a role in student engagement. A focus group methodology (n=21) was utilised for study two exploring student opinions of engagement. Study three involved an online questionnaire (n= 1,411) examining student views on advantages and barriers to engagement activity.

The results revealed that both staff and students agreed that student engagement resulted in many benefits for the individual, university and society. Staff working in higher education stated that potential barriers to universities engaging with their students included resourcing, issues related to operational, process and systems. Students suggested that the main barriers preventing students engaging at university were: transitioning to university; other commitments; financial constraints; mental health issues; lack of confidence and motivation; learning difficulties; lack of support; cultural differences; class size; difficulty in joining clubs; and staff buy-in. The findings reveal 4 different types of students that are grouped based upon: the type of engagement activity they undertake; the role they perceive of students within engagement; benefits and barriers to engagement.

In line with the requirements of a professional doctorate, recommendations have been suggested to aid organisational policy regarding student engagement within higher education.

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Glossary of Terms

HE	Higher Education
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
UK	United Kingdom
SE	Student Engagement
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
OfS	Office for Students
NSS	National Student Survey
TEF	The Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework
DLHE	Destination of Leavers from Higher Education
UCAS	The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
HEA	Higher Education Academy
CE	Customer Engagement
NSSE	The National Survey of Student Engagement

Authors Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas, and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences Ethics Committee.

I declare that the word count of this thesis is 47,527, including tables and quotations. (56,247 with references and appendices)

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

1.1 Introduction

This purpose of this chapter is to provide the setting for the study, explaining the rationale of a professional doctorate and the intended outcomes of the study and how it will help inform practice, in line with the aims of such an award. As the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) explains professional doctorates "provide an opportunity for individuals to situate professional knowledge developed over time in a theoretical academic framework" (QAA, 2015, p.8) acknowledging that the subsequent research can potentially result in organisation and policy related change. Aligned with this, chapter 1 will set the context of the research study, explaining the changing nature of higher education (HE) in the UK, how this has impacted upon the strategic management of universities today and the implications for professional practice. Chapter 2 will focus on the theoretical underpinning of the study, exploring the notion of student engagement (SE) and the opportunities and challenges associated with the concept.

The author of this thesis teaches in the area of sport management and has worked in HE for over 20 years. Serving on various external professional bodies (World Association for Sport Management, European Association of Sport Management and the Africa Sport Business Association) and with experience of consultancy and teaching in many countries across the globe, the research was initiated first and foremost by an interest in teaching and how students engage within HE. How universities interact and engage with potential students, current students and graduates is now part of many strategic planning exercises throughout UK universities. The increased competition regarding securing student numbers both domestically and internationally has resulted in many elaborate student engagement (SE) initiatives that attempt to recruit potential students, as well as enhance their experiences whilst at university and beyond. However, from experience and as evidence suggests, whilst student engagement has many advantages, not all students engage and benefit from such initiatives, thus bringing into questioning the value and benefit of SE within HE. For these reasons, investigating why students and staff opinions may differ with regards SE and why some students engage and others do not, will be the focus of this study. Gaining a greater understanding of such issues will hopefully help inform university policy so that limited

funding and resources are utilised in the most effective and efficient way, that will result in the best return on investment for all concerned.

1.2 The UK Higher Education Sector

In 2019 the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) reported that 165 institutions operated in the UK HE sector (HESA, 2020). In terms of statistics the role that the HE sector contributes to the UK economy has grown incredibly in the last decade, current figures showing that total income for the sector being £38.2 billion, with the majority coming from tuition fees and education contracts, plus funding and research grants, investment income and donations (HESA Finance Record, 2017-18). Most of the UK HE institutes are classed as charitable status, with a small minority being private institutes that have degree awarding powers. It is estimated that 439,995 staff are employed within UK HE institutions, with approximately half of these being academics (HESA Staff Record, 2018-2019). Hence, the economic impact that universities play in the economy and the contribution they make to the UK Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is significant.

The latest HESA figures in terms of student numbers attending UK HE institutions reveal that 2.38 million students were enrolled in 2018-2019 (refer to Table 1), the majority of these being full-time undergraduate students from the UK, however 0.48 million were students from overseas.

Table 1. Number of Students enrolled in UK Higher Education (2018-2019) (HESA Student Record, 2019)

Student Status	Number (millions)
Undergraduate	1.80
Postgraduate	0.59
Full-Time	1.88
Part-Time	0.5
Students from the UK	1.9
Students from the EU	0.14
Students from non-EU countries	0.34

Researchers (McRoy & Gibbs, 2009; Stensaker et al., 2014; Dennis, 2017) have highlighted the numerous changes that have taken place within HE in the past decade, which have had an effect upon the strategic management of such institutions and the nature of the student body.

At the forefront of many changes, it has been acknowledged that Government reforms (Enders, de Boer & Weyer, 2013; Marginson, 2013; Lomer, 2018) have had a profound impact upon the strategic management of universities, both in the UK and further afield. Over a decade ago, the Higher Education Management & Policy Institute (2009) suggested that HE had come under much scrutiny by not only Government, but also the media and public bodies, who have questioned how effectively HE is serving society, today the same questions are still being raised with many demanding answers.

Changes in the funding of universities (Viaene & Zilcha, 2013; Marginson, 2018; Augar, 2019) and the introduction of students fees (Kelchen, 2016; Cattaneo et al., 2020) have played a role in the debate, with researchers questioning what is the function of a modern university (Hensley et al., 2013). Another major change has been the increased competition within the sector and the growth in the number of HE institutes, resulting in more students attending university (Marginson, 2016; Bolton, 2020). Other policies which have led to increased numbers include the widening participation agenda (Wilkins & Burke, 2013; Wainwright et al., 2020); the huge growth in internationalisation within HE (Jones, 2010; Ilieva, Beck & Waterstone, 2014; HM Government, 2019); and student mobility initiatives (Castro et al., 2016).

Such influences have played a major role in the way that universities now operate and manage their strategic plans. The change in financing and funding of universities, has meant that HE institutions cannot solely rely on income from UK student tuition fees and they need to find other sources of unregulated income to be able to survive in an increasingly commercial marketplace. Di Nauta et al., (2018) suggest that now, more than ever universities have to prove their worth by demonstrating "efficiency, effectiveness and affordable managerial models for economic development" (p.180).

The challenges of working in such organisations have been documented and Du & Lapsley (2019) suggest that there are many tensions within UK universities regarding "professions and managerialism" (p.452) due to the shift in focus of them being a purely public service institute, to organisations that need to be commercially able to survive. Universities now provide more than just academic services as they compete to serve a diverse student body and often other associated stakeholders too, including: accreditation bodies, local community, employees, government, local councils, overseas partners, research collaborations and funding bodies

(Labanauskis & Ginevicius, 2017). The tensions between producing world-leading research, addressing societal issues and preparing graduates that can serve the labour market all now need to be addressed by universities, if they are to survive in the current economic climate (Muff, 2017; Swartz et al., 2019). Such a balance can prove difficult and the increase in scrutiny and auditing of HE institutions has highlighted the challenges that many universities' face today (Tourish et al., 2017). Understanding such challenges and how the UK HE sector adapts to them, as well as how they interact and engage with their students is a key area that requires further research (Maxwell-Stuart & Huisman, 2018).

The change in emphasis has led to universities focusing many of their resources and efforts on marketing in an attempt to maintain the supply of student and stakeholder demand (Dennis et al., 2016). Such an approach is viewed as relatively modern in terms of universities (Mogaji & Yoon, 2019) however, it is clear that whilst marketing within HE is relatively new, the approaches adopted are extremely innovative and sophisticated. Missaghian & Millian (2019) highlight how universities have now changed beyond recognition and spend many of their resources on branding, promotional activities and marketing events. How universities are perceived and the value they place on students is at the forefront of marketing strategies and one doesn't have to venture far on any university campus or attend a HE recruitment fair, to see the extent that universities go to, to try and achieve such aims.

The debate regarding whether student are customers has received much attention in recent years (Mark, 2013; Bunce et al., 2017; Guilbault, 2018) however, what is clear is that whatever the view is, universities now provide services and facilities that are aligned to customer demands. Many university campuses are now modern, state of the art facilities with 24 hour on-demand services that cater to different needs (Sutton & De Santis, 2017). Sophisticated and elaborate communication strategies are now commonplace in universities (Lee et al., 2018) which has transformed interactions. Twenty years ago most communication was face to face mainly during the hours of 9am to 5pm during term-time. Now with the increase in technological advancements and social media platforms, communication between university services and students is available 24 hours a day, 365 days per year. Also, the additional services offered by HE institutes has become the focus of many universities as they have recognised that the importance of the student experience goes beyond academic services. Dominguez-Whitehead (2018) suggests that often such non-academic services are over-

looked by researchers, yet they are deemed essential for student's success whilst at university, including halls of residence, security and campus facilities. The additional services offered are many and varied ranging from: competition standard sport facilities; social areas including bars, restaurants and entertainment centres; clubs and societies; shops and retail facilities; faith centres; health and wellbeing services, often all within a campus complex. Such services have led to many universities now employing an increasing number of non-academic employees (Ryttberg & Geschwind, 2017) in order to enhance the quality of student provision they provide, which in itself has led to much debate regarding whether the changing ratio experienced by many HE institutes of academic to non-academic staff working in universities, results in improved outcomes for students and university performance indicators (Baltaru, 2019).

How students communicate what their needs and demands are within their university setting has also changed in recent years. HE institutions use a variety of ways to find out what their students think about their organisations. Such platforms include the Students Union and the Student Voice, as well as surveying students throughout their time at university on a variety of issues including module, programme, assessment and teaching reviews. With the growing use of league table rankings and the subsequent outcomes on universities, if they rise or fall against their strategic plans, the use of surveys and reviews on students has intensified suggesting that students may now have more of a 'voice" within a university (Brooman, 2015; Bishop, 2018) whilst others suggesting that such exercises are questionable and open to scrutiny (Canning, 2017; Senior et al., 2017).

With the relatively recent introduction of the Office for Students (OfS) in 2018, an independent regulator of HE aimed at ensuring that all students have an optimum experience whilst at university and receive value for money, as well as the National Student Survey (NSS) which is commissioned by the OfS to all final year undergraduate students studying in the UK to investigate student's views on what it has been like to study at their respective university. It would appear that students now have far more opportunity to feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of their universities in the hope of improving the services offered by them. Such surveys play a major role now in impacting upon league tables and rankings, including the new Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) aimed at assessing the quality of learning and teaching at undergraduate level in English universities (with an opt-in

clause for other HE institutes in the UK) and the subsequent outcomes associated to funding. Such methods of accountability allow students now to make a more informed choice about attending university as they can instantly review and compare statistics that are legally required by universities through Discover Uni data sets posted against set criteria including information from students (NSS); information related to employability statistics (DLHE); information about the institutions (TEF) and information related to study programmes.

The changes highlighted have led to many tensions within UK HE today and universities being able to deliver on strategic plans, namely: frictions between where funding is concentrated; which initiatives take priority; strains between academic and professional support staff; where power lies between stakeholders; and tensions regarding how students are viewed. Understanding where SE fits into this dynamic, the importance and role it plays within HE will be the focus of this study, helping to gain insights into some of the issues associated with the concept from both a staff and student perspective.

1.3 Students Today

The number of students applying to UK universities has seen an increase in recent years, with 706,435 people applying for an undergraduate course through UCAS in 2019 (UCAS, 2019). Table 1 outlines the status of students within the university system, which demonstrates the demand for UK HE provision is still very appealing to many. The changes to the student population has changed in recent years (HESA Student Data, 2019) and whilst a few decades ago, the majority of students studying at university would have been from middle-class families and studying full-time, today there is a far more varied student body, from many different socio-economic backgrounds, studying diverse programmes of study, often in a part-time or distance delivery mode.

Researchers have suggested that due to the many changes identified within HE, this has inevitably had an impact upon the nature of the student body and the rise in the term of 'non-traditional students'. Jahn et al., (2017) indicates that that the rise and integration of non-traditional learners is one of the biggest challenges facing HE institutes today and more needs to be done to understand the changing nature of students and the subsequent way they engage, study and learn at university. Cotton et al., (2017) suggests that non-traditional users

of university are those students who are under-represented in HE and could include “first generation students (first in family to participate in HE), mature students, disabled students, single parents, students from low income families and minority ethnic groups” (p.63). Other changes that have been acknowledged within the typologies of students attending university are the rise in students studying courses part-time due to work commitments, which inevitably impacts upon their student experience (Jackson, 2012) and also the growth of international students and the impact of such cohorts within the learning environment (Glass & Westmount, 2013).

It is clear from the research that the changing nature of the student body unsurprisingly has influenced how universities interact with their students and the concept of student engagement has seen a rise in its importance within HE institutes (Collaco, 2017). However, it has also been acknowledged that there has been limited research (Wang & Degol, 2014) into the effects of student engagement, in particular, understanding if engagement initiatives impact students in different ways and gaining a greater insight into this, is needed so that universities can effectively target engagement activities. Given the change in the student body, yet a failure by universities to fully evaluate whether expensive engagement initiatives work, this research serves as a timely investigation into such questions.

Students today can study a varied portfolio of programmes that were not available in previous years and how they study has also changed. Universities UK (2018) suggest that HE institutes need to change and adapt to support flexible study that allow more people to attend university. They suggest that shorter, part-time courses should be offered in the hope of attracting a different type of student, to develop skills that employers need. Many universities have accepted this recommendation and now students are able to study numerous programmes part-time, distance delivery and also through the new degree apprenticeship format. Thus, allowing more students the flexibility of studying, whilst also working and earning an income at the same time. It also opens up opportunities to people who may have other commitments that in the past may have stopped them from attending university, such as caring for children and family or other commitments. Hence, many universities now offer life-long learning opportunities to potential students of all ages and backgrounds (Andrade & Alden-Rivers, 2019).

In addition to how students now study, the range and diversity of programmes that universities offer has increased considerably. Widiputera et al., (2017) suggests that due to increased competition and the emphasis on HE institutions competing for student numbers, many universities are now, more than ever focusing on the diversity of the programmes they offer in attempting to fully meet the needs and demands of students. Whilst many of the traditional disciplines still prove popular including medicine, law, business, sciences and engineering, there are a growing number of students wishing to study less traditional programmes such as the creative arts, hospitality and tourism, fashion, design and sport related programmes. Some universities also attempt to position themselves in the marketplace by offering very distinct programmes aimed at a unique audience such as Surf Science & Technology, Equestrian Psychology & Sport Science or Contemporary Circus and Physical Performance, often these are linked to historical or cultural ties with the university or location within which they are offered. Hence, the number and diversity of programmes that are offered within HE in the UK for potential students to choose from, is becoming increasingly varied and opening up potential opportunities to students who may not have considered going to university in the past.

With the increase in students attending university, the nature of what they study and the costs of such education, many have questioned 'do HE institutes provide a return on investment'? (Money et al., 2016; Suleman, 2016). The introduction of tuition fees and the high cost of many degree programmes has raised the issue regarding the value for money of such products and services. Tomlinson (2018) acknowledges that the UK HE sector has become increasingly marketised and as such institutions have now to be accountable to their students with regards value, quality, consumerism and performativity. His findings suggest that students now, are wanting to see if they are increasing their own personal value with regards to employment prospects by obtaining a UK degree. Other researchers (Qureshi et al., 2016; Balloo et al., 2017) report similar findings, suggesting that the main reason why students attend university is to improve career and employability aspects, followed by enhancing their personal development and quality of life. However, the research noted that universities should be mindful of the different typologies of their students and not to treat all students as the same or as one commodity.

The notion surrounding the purpose of a university education has been raised by many and is being challenged by some suggesting that students do not get the return, they were expecting. Research by Cook et al., 2019 found that many people suggested that attending HE would not result in financial benefits which they suggested may impact upon a decline in students attending HE. They state that because of this, universities may become increasingly polarised and universities will have to be even more "demand driven, focusing on the quality of their teaching provision, links with employers and their overall worth to the student" (p.1266).

Understanding what students perceive as quality from a university education and what they want as a return on investment is an area that has not been fully explored (Webb et al., 2017; Sin et al., 2019), yet often engagement initiatives are aimed at trying to fulfil such expectations. Students are often advised that they should engage with all aspects of 'university life' so that they can get the most from it and enhance their opportunities when they graduate, yet often many students do not take up such opportunities. Understanding why, is crucial to fully evaluating the complex nature of engagement and what may cause a student not to participate however, how it is questionable as to how many universities fully evaluate such SE initiatives and address such questions.

Recent research investigating student's perceptions of quality within HE (Leonard & Comm, 2018) noted that many of the factors that are associated with perceived quality were related to academic outcomes (learning and teaching, assessment, graduate attributes and degree outcomes). However, Akareem & Syed Hossain (2016) noted that one of the many factors that influence perceived quality are the extra-curricular activities that are offered within universities. They found that many student's perception of quality within their universities were related to the non-academic services and the associated benefits they could gain from these whilst studying. The vast array of such opportunities are very transparent within any UK university today and are often used in promotional campaigns. Overseas placements, clinical experiences, mentors, sport clubs, societies and volunteering are all examples of engagement opportunities available to any student today. It has been proven that this non-academic environment produced by HE institutions correlates positively with student's views on service quality, suggesting that HE institutions should focus not only on the academic

needs of students, but also on non-academic needs too, in attempting to understand the attractiveness of such opportunities and the variations in uptake.

As highlighted, the nature of HE students has changed within the past few decades and as a result, how universities work with students has altered accordingly. The demands and needs of students and the external factors affecting HE institutions has had a major impact upon both universities, their students and the UK HE sector.

1.4 Research Aims

Given the changes faced by universities today and the emphasis now placed on SE within the sector, this study is a timely investigation into understanding staff and student's opinions of engagement within HE. The findings of previous research and the theoretical framework to understand the concept of student engagement will be presented in the literature review (chapter 2). The thesis involves the collection of data from three separate empirical studies to address the following research aims.

Chapter 3 will outline the findings from a qualitative investigation using interviews of staff opinions on student engagement within higher education. The research questions will address the following: what types of engagement activities take place at your university; what do staff think is meant by student engagement; what are the perceived benefits of student engagement; what are the barriers that university may experience in engaging with their students; and what is the role of staff in student engagement?

Chapter 4 presents the results from a qualitative investigation using focus groups of student opinions of engagement within higher education. Research questions associated with this study include: what are students understanding of student engagement; are students aware of student engagement initiatives within their university; how do students engage with university; what do students gain from student engagement initiatives within university; what are the barriers to students engaging with university; and what is the role of students in student engagement?

Chapter 5 involves a quantitative investigation using online questionnaires of student opinions of engagement within higher education. The following research questions will be

addressed: how do students academically engage with their university; do students engage with non-academic initiatives within their university; what are the benefits of student engagement activities; what is the role of students within student engagement; and what are the barriers to students engaging with university?

The research, analysis and findings of the doctoral thesis will make the following contributions, in line with a professional doctorate aims:

- A critique of the literature and previous research underpinning the study aims, outlining why the study is pertinent and relevant (chapter 2)

- A critical explanation and rationale of the methodologies utilised to obtain the empirical data for the three studies (chapter 3, 4 and 5)

- A critical evaluation to understand staff opinions of student engagement (chapter 3)

- A critical evaluation to understand student opinions of student engagement (chapters 4 & 5)

- Evidence based recommendations to inform UK Higher Education institutions regarding student engagement (chapter 6)

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter will provide a critical theoretical overview of student engagement. Drawing on previous research, different viewpoints will be explained and critiqued to highlight the understanding of what student engagement is. Advantages of SE will be presented, as well as barriers to engagement explaining what reasons may deter people from participating in engagement initiatives. The chapter will also elaborate on student expectations of HE and an overview of the typologies associated with students studying at university. The final section will discuss the role of students and whether they play a part in co-creation within HE.

2.1 What is Student Engagement?

As already discussed, the changing nature of HE has been well documented by researchers who have identified that market pressures and the growing competitive nature of education provision has led to such institutes having to rethink how they strategically manage and view their students (Black, 2015; Faizan et al., 2016). Imperative to this thinking, is the noticeable rise in the opportunities that universities now offer to their students for enhanced engagement. It has been recognised by researchers that student engagement has become an extremely important concept within HE, with regards to student achievement and learning and as such many universities are concentrating their efforts and resources in this area (Kahu, 2013; Healey, Flint & Harrington, 2014; Sinatra et al., 2015).

Understanding the scope of SE and defining what it actually means, has been a question raised by many (Trowler, 2015). Boekaerts (2016) suggests that there is "little consensus regarding the boundaries of engagement" (p.77) and also noted that there are varied differences in attempting to define SE. In simple terms, SE has been described as what university students do, or what is their involvement and commitment whilst in education (Hu, Ching & Chao, 2012). However, Manderanach (2015) elaborates on this and suggests that SE is interrelated to include three aspects (refer to Table 2) namely: behavioural engagement (for example participating in class activities); cognitive engagement (for example demonstrating critical thinking ability); and affective engagement (for example partaking in activity to reach full potential). Aligned with this notion of psychological determinants, Lawson & Lawson (2013) concur that SE is inter-related however, they note that many studies investigating SE use only

one dimension in SE theoretical models and "studies that incorporate two or more engagement dimensions are unusual" (p.437). They note that omission of such dimensions do not fully provide a holistic and clear understanding of SE, as they fail to explore all the numerous factors that can impact upon engagement.

Table 2. Examples of Assessment Items to Gauge Types of Engagement (Manderanach, 2016, p.3)

Behavioural	Cognitive	Affective
Frequency of asking questions in class	Proportion of coursework emphasizing higher order thinking strategies	Effort to work harder to meet instructor's expectations
Frequency of group projects or collaborative work	Time spent on projects requiring integration and synthesis of ideas	Investment to better understand someone else's perspective
Frequency of attending events in the community related to course material	Amount of coursework requiring practical application of knowledge or skills	Frequency of discussing course material outside of class time
Frequency of tutoring others		Tendency to be prepared (or lack preparation) for class
		Time investment in studying

In light of this, Fredricks et al., (2016) enhanced the earlier work on SE modelling and added a further dimension to behavioural, cognitive and affective items. They suggested the inclusion of: social-behavioural (students affect and behaviour during collaborative work); agentic (how students are proactive to teacher's instruction) and volitional (energy in action). Importantly, they highlighted that researchers in attempting to define SE and the broad construct that it encompasses, has led to considerable "variability in definitions, both within and across different types of engagement" (p.2). They suggest that this has caused challenges regarding evaluating and measuring SE and suggest that because of this, it is extremely important that SE should be evaluated and measured using both a quantitative and qualitative approach, to allow a more meaningful understanding that takes into account the multi-faceted dimensions that can impact upon SE.

Whilst many debate what the actual definition of SE is, Zepke (2015) states that it,

> lacks a single meaning. It can be conceived narrowly as

> a set of student and institutional behaviours in a classroom or holistically and critically as a social - cultural ecosystem in which engagement is the glue linking classroom, personal background and the wider community as essential contributors to learning (p.1311)

In attempting to address this issue, some researchers have suggested that SE is derived from the growing research in the area of customer engagement and service quality and the emerging debate around students as customers (Guilbault, 2016). Wimpenny & Savin-Baden (2012) undertook a systematic review of the SE literature, to gain a greater understanding of the concepts related to student engagement. The analysis revealed four prominent themes, namely: inter-relational engagement - relates to how students connect to other people including student to teacher, peer to peer and student to family. Engagement as autonomy - relates to the ability of students to move from unfamiliar circumstances and self-consciousness to independence in learning. Emotional engagement - relates to a student's ability with regards resilience and determination. Engagement as connection and disjunction - the ability of students to make connections through experiences to those that felt disconnected. The findings concluded that there are many inter-related factors that can play a role in SE and how students participate, suggesting that more research is needed to fully understand the implications, particularly investigating "student's personal and psychological responses towards engagement and students will to learn in higher education" (p.324).

Recognising the difficulty in researchers attempting to define SE, Bowden et al., (2019) recently undertook a systematic review that highlighted the range of definitions used to explain SE and the various orientations used to help classify how engagement is viewed (refer to Table 3). The variations in definitions highlight the complexity of researcher's views regarding SE however, they summarised the findings to suggest that there are two antecedents to engagement namely: student involvement and expectations and four dimensions of SE namely: effective, social, cognitive and behavioural. The orientations highlighted demonstrate the emphasis the researchers have applied in defining their view of SE. Interestingly, they suggest that HE institutes who want to fully understand if their SE initiatives are viable, worthwhile and achieving their outcomes, then senior management within universities need to understand the various dimensions of SE to guarantee that holistic engagement is achieved with all students. They state that HE institutes cannot expect

students to simply engage "rather the onus is on institutions to understand the determinants of engagement, and to then proactively translate this understanding into effective experience design which fosters the conditions that allow diverse student populations to mutually interact and engage" (p.15).

Table 3. Selected Definitions of Student Engagement (Bowden et al., 2019, p.4)

Definition	Source	Orientation
The extent to which students are engagement in activities that HE research has shown to be linked with high quality learning outcomes	Krause & Coates (2008)	Behavioural
The concept of student engagement is based on the constructivist assumption that learning is influenced by how an individual participates in educationally purposeful activities	Coates (2007)	Behavioural
SE is concerned with the interaction between the time, effort and other relevant resources invested by both students and their institutions	Trowler (2010)	Behavioural
An observable, action orientated subtype (behavioural) and two internal ones (cognitive and affective engagement) but then is differentiated from motivation as engagement being action (observable behaviour), motivation as intent(internal)	Christenson, Reschly & Wylie (2012)	Psychological, tricomponent
A multi-aspect construct that include effort, resiliency and persistence while facing obstacles (vigour), passion, inspiration and pride in academic learning (dedication) and involvement in learning activities and tasks (absorption) as the main facets of this construct	Schauefeli et al., (2002)	Psychological, tricomponent
The extent to which students feel welcomed by institutional environments and climates	Johnson et al., (2007)	Socio-cultural
The extent to which students succeed in integrating and the amount of social support received	Eggens, Van der Werf & Bosker (2008)	Socio-cultural
A metaconstruct that includes: behavioural engagement includes involvement in academic and social or extra-curricular activities; positive conduct, absence of disruptive behaviours; effort, persistence, concentration, attention; participation in governance. Cognitive engagement incorporates thoughtfulness and willingness to exert effort. Emotional engagement encompasses students' affective reactions in the classroom, including interest, boredom, happiness, sadness and anxiety	Fredricks, Blumenfield & Paris (2004)	Holistic, transformational

It has been highlighted that many measures of SE, focus purely from an academic perspective, however, it is important to note that engagement at university involves many aspects of non-academic activity too. Acknowledging this, Trowler (2010) in her report for the Higher Education Academy (HEA) stated that SE is

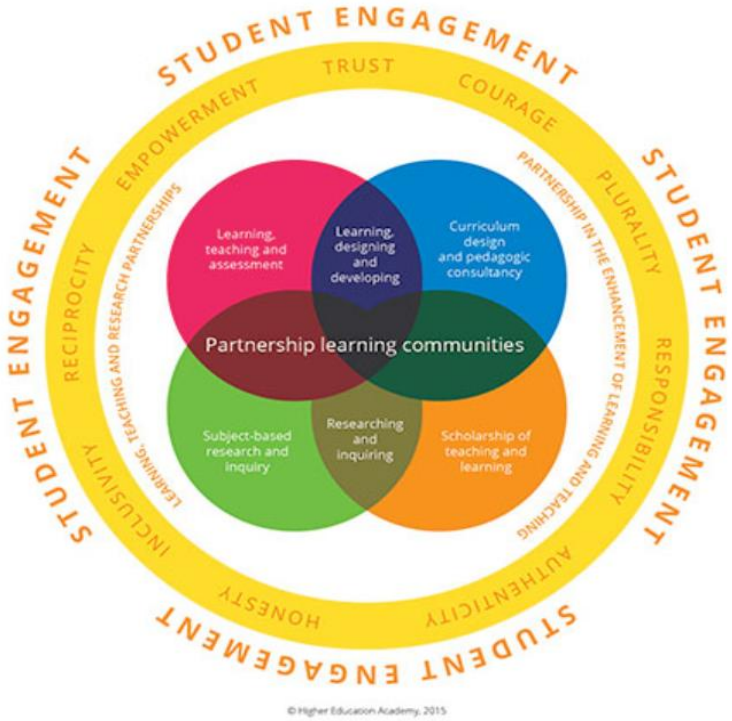
> concerned with the interactions between the time, effort and other relevant resources invested by both students and their institutions intended to optimise the student experience and the enhance the learning outcomes and development of students and the performance, and reputation of the institution (p.3)

Acknowledging this and endorsing the work by Bowden et al., suggesting a holistic approach is needed in evaluating and understanding concepts of SE, Kahu (2013) started to address how the dimensions are inter-connected. She agrees with previous research in that there are four major research viewpoints on SE namely: the behavioural perception; the psychological perception; the socio-cultural perception; and the holistic perception. The behavioural approach views SE from a student behaviour and teaching practice focus and Kahu (2013) suggests that this approach is most common in practice. However, she acknowledges that this approach does not include student's emotions or thinking process, as such excludes valuable information relating to student's experiences. The psychological approach views SE as an "internal psycho-social process that evolves over time and varies in intensity" (p.761). This approach includes dimensions of behaviour, cognition, emotion and conation and recognises that this can change over time and is dependent on the situation and individual. The socio-cultural approach focuses on the social, political and cultural context and suggests that student's individual circumstances are taken into account, particularly non-traditional students and how they engage, paying particular attention to how universities address this with regards to their policies, systems, structure and institutional culture. The holistic approach attempts to take a broader view of engagement and encompasses elements outlined above. Whilst Kahu (2013) accepts that the approaches to understanding SE are useful, she also stresses that further research is needed to fully comprehend how the variables interrelate within a conceptual framework. Often, many HE institutions do not fully measure and evaluate such concepts and drill down to see if SE participation impacts students in different ways. Many universities measure SE by simple processes such as participation

rates, however they fail to analyse who those students are, what their background is and why did they choose or not choose to participate. Kahu (2013) recognises this and suggests that all variables that impact upon SE needs to be taken into account if universities want to run successful and viable SE initiatives.

Clearly, having an understanding of your diverse student body has been recognised as a necessity for HE to be able to deliver strategic SE plans. Work commissioned by the HEA (2015) has suggested that for engagement to be effective students need to be viewed as partners and the role they play within their universities is paramount for successful HE initiatives (refer to Figure 1). They suggest that SE is imperative within HE institutes, but recognise that not all engagement undertaken by universities is done in partnership. Their research suggested that by working in partnership, institutions are more likely to achieve: student learning; staff engagement; transformation of the learning process; and sustainability of communities, by having shared goals and values.

Figure 1. Framework for Student Engagement through Partnership (HEA, 2015, p.3)



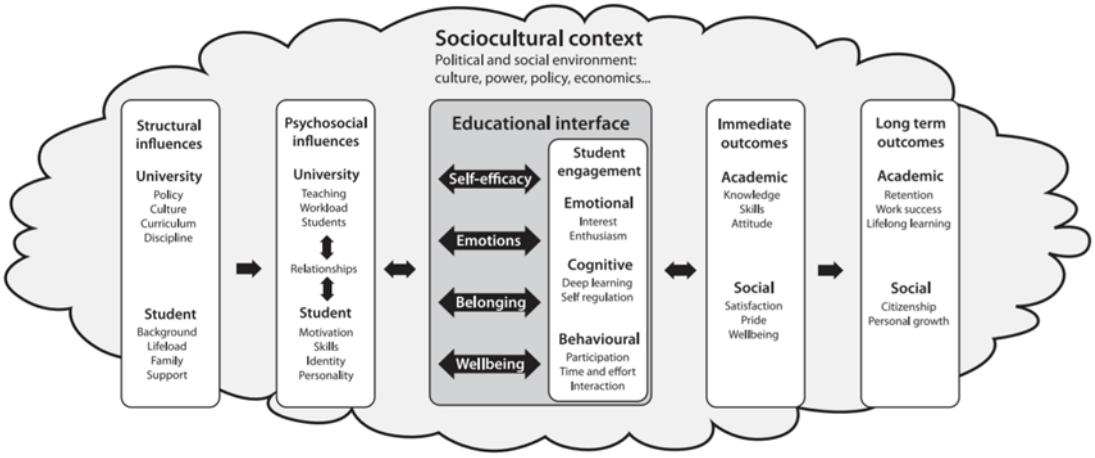
The work outlined a conceptual model that identifies four areas, in which students can act as partners including: learning, teaching and assessment; subject-based research and inquiry;

scholarship of teaching and learning; and curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy. It suggests that the framework encompasses partnership values that help forge relationships amongst the stakeholders and students affiliated to HE institutes. Central to the partnership are shared values that are aided by university policies, systems and processes. Healey, Flint & Harrington (2016) elaborate on the work undertaken by the HEA and also emphasise the importance of seeing students as partners with regards to engagement. Their research suggests that HE institutes should embrace new ways of working by "co-creating, co-producing, co-learning, co-designing, co-developing, co-researching and co-inquiring" (p.9) to enhance learning and teaching, which fundamentally challenges the traditional ways in which universities have operated. They suggest the need for research in this area to investigate how effective such concepts are within HE institutes and to explore the different ways engagement can be enhanced. However, many institutions are slow in recognising such ideals and often expensive SE initiatives are implemented without consultation with students, which can potentially result in less favourable outcomes for both the university and student population.

Other researchers agree with the concept of universities working in partnership (Bryson, 2016; Jensen & Bennett, 2016) and building on this notion, Kahu & Nelson (2017) proposed a conceptual framework (refer to Figure 2) of student engagement that involves not only psychological influences, but also the role the university plays, as well as external macro factors that may affect how a student views engagement. The model encompasses a more comprehensive approach to the many factors that may influence engagement including: the sociocultural context (politics, economics); structural influences (university policy, culture, curriculum, student background, family, support) and psychosocial influences (university teaching, workload, student personality, motivation). They suggest that when institutional and student factors affiliate (this is when engagement takes place), for example, if the curriculum aligns with a student's particular interest, then they will be more inclined to engage. The model suggests that four constructs are deemed important within the student experience and engagement, namely: academic self-efficacy, student's perception of their ability to perform the task; the subsequent student's emotions of the situation; the feelings of belonging; and finally the feeling of wellbeing. Resulting in immediate outcomes (academic knowledge, skills, social satisfaction and pride) and longer term outcomes (work success, lifelong learning, social citizenship and personal growth). The model suggests that such

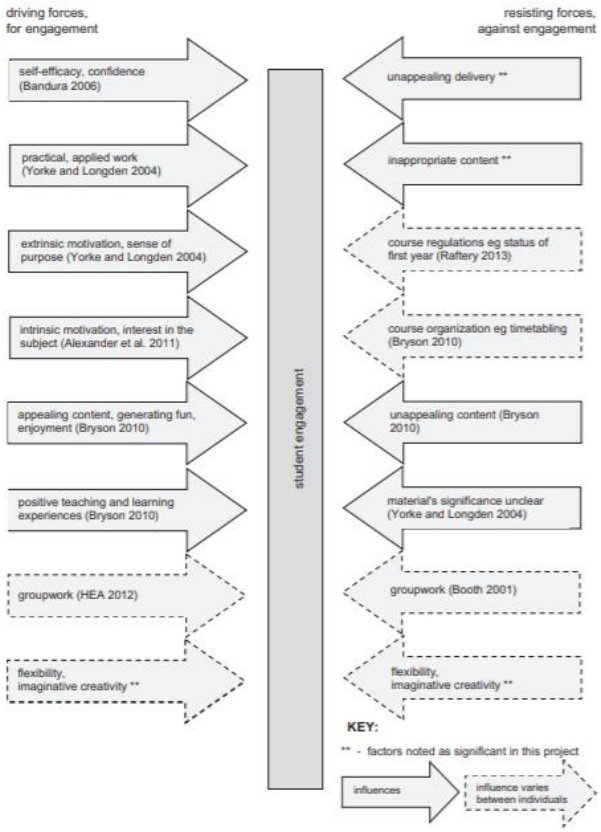
constructs can help to explain the variations in why some students engage more than others and also emphasises the importance of recognising the partnership between the student and HE institution, as well as acknowledging that the student body is made up of many different individuals. They conclude by suggesting that many stakeholders have an impact upon successful SE initiatives and the "institutional context is critical…and institutional flexibility is paramount" (p.11). Working together in partnership is essential and recognising that all students are different and being flexible to such needs, is deemed most important for engagement success.

Figure 2. Refined Conceptual Framework of Student Engagement Incorporating the Educational Interface (Kahu & Nelson, 2017, p.7)



Payne (2019) also endorses the notion that individuals react differently to engagement for a variety of reasons (refer to Figure 3). She suggests that students are confronted by 'driving forces' for engagement and 'resistant forces' for engagement. The driving forces that can encourage students to engage relate to similar factors already identified in previous research such as self-efficacy, motivation, sense of purpose, enjoyment, positive learning and teaching experiences. Whereas the resistant forces against engagement relate mainly to academic aspects of the programme of study and how it is delivered (for example, curriculum content, teaching delivery and timetabling). It is interesting to note that the driving forces for engagement have been seen by other researchers as potential reasons why students do not engage, for example, students who lack motivation or confidence (Caruth, 2018), such barriers to engagement will be explained in detail later in the review.

Figure 3. Force-Field Model of Factors Influencing Students' Engagement (Payne, 2019, p.648)



The model highlights the factors that can aid engagement and disengagement however, what has become clear from the research presented is very few HE institutes fully investigate if these factors impact certain segments of the student body. What type of student engages with university initiatives due to self-efficacy? Is there a particular typology of student that finds group work a problem and subsequently does not engage? Often, universities or academics may measure this in a simple linear way, evaluating the uptake of a piece of group work in percentages of how many completed the task, yet if investigated more deeply, it could be that students who had work or family commitments found it more difficult to engage with their peers due to external time pressures. Understanding such variables is essential in attempting to fully understand the complexities and factors that impact SE.

It is clear from the research presented that student engagement is an incredibly important feature of the HE sector. Subsequently, from a research perspective there is growing interest and debate attempting to explore the many facets associated with the concept.

Understanding such dimensions and exploring how different stakeholders (staff and students) view and relate to the concepts will be the basis of this study, taking a comprehensive and holistic overview of the various influences identified in the literature that can influence engagement outcomes.

2.2 Advantages of Student Engagement

Researchers (Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Zilvinskis et al., 2017; Dumford & Miller, 2018) have agreed that SE can have many benefits to a student's experience in education including academic achievement and enhancing the student's experience, as well as the teaching staff. Reschly & Christenson (2012) suggest that engagement is often linked to the concept of increased motivation, but suggest that this depends upon the context and the student. Their research revealed that engagement can results in many positive outcomes for students namely: academic (pass grades, higher degree classifications); social (stronger peer relationships, increased social awareness); and emotional (conflict resolution skills, greater empathy). Such constructive outcomes can then lead onto further benefits of employment, resulting in further positive gains for educational institutes, employees and society in general, acknowledging that the benefits of SE can go beyond just the scope of the individual student.

Sinatra et al., (2015) agrees, but suggests that in order for the wider associated benefits to be 'shared', motivation of the student is central to achieving such ambitions. Their research identified that SE can help to increase student motivation through various dimensions of engagement namely: behavioural engagement, emotional engagement, cognitive engagement and agentic engagement, which is described as occurring when students are proactive within the educational setting. They suggest that if students are actively engaged through instruction in educational settings then they are more inclined to contribute and be involved in their learning, highlighting the importance of the role that academics play in successful SE.

Research by Skinner and Pitzer (2012) also suggest that the benefits of engagement can result in positive outcomes related to behaviour, emotion and cognition (refer to Table 4). They suggest that engagement can result in many positive, motivational outcomes including: focus, involvement, enjoyment, satisfaction, goal achievement and mastery. They also suggest that

the conceptualisation can also result in the opposite of engagement, namely 'dissatisfaction', which results in students withdrawing from the tasks or situation (which will be discussed in a later section). They endorse previous findings that all students have different personalities and backgrounds and suggest that such trying to constantly motivate and enhance strategies to aid engagement, is often seen as too much for many academics. "The downward spirals of student and teacher engagement, the draining away of students' intrinsic motivation and the rates of student dropout and teacher burnout are all reminders of the current situation" (p.37). Concluding, they advocate the need for further research in attempting to gain a fuller understanding of SE that will result in the positive outcomes they have identified, that aid educators fulfilling the long term benefits associated with engagement initiatives.

Table 4. A Motivational Conceptualisation of Engagement in Education (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012, p.25)

	Engagement	Disaffection
Behaviour Initiation Ongoing participation Re-engagement	Action initiation Effort, Exertion Working hard Attempts Persistence Intensity Focus, Attention Concentration Absorption Involvement	Passivity, Procrastination Giving up Restlessness Half-hearted Unfocussed, Inattentive Distracted Mentally withdrawn Burned out, Exhausted Unprepared Absent
Emotion Initiation Ongoing participation Re-engagement	Enthusiasm Interest Enjoyment Satisfaction Pride Vitality Zest	Boredom Disinterest Frustration, Anger Sadness Worry, Anxiety Shame Self-blame
Cognitive Orientation Initiation Ongoing participation Re-engagement	Purposeful Approach Goal strivings Strategy search Willing participation Preference for challenge Mastery Follow through, Care Thoroughness	Aimless Helpless Resigned Unwilling Opposition Avoidance Apathy Hopeless Pressured

Another benefit of an engaged student, that has been identified in the literature relates to the concept of skill development and aspects of learning. Neves (2016) research found that students who were engaged at their university, showed high independent learning and critical thinking skills, as well as personal development skills including understanding others, developing personal values and understanding real-world problems. Northey et al., (2015) also highlight how engaged students demonstrate evidence of deeper learning and positive academic and learning outcomes.

Kahn (2014) agrees with the positive outcomes that engagement can have and suggests that not only does SE help an individual student with motivation, academic performance and ability, it also helps institutions with regards student attrition and a stronger affiliation between students and their universities, emphasising the important role that HE institutions play in determining SE success or failure. This is highlighted by Gunuc & Kazu (2015) who acknowledge the academic benefits associated with student engagement, but also suggest that SE initiatives can also help with socialisation, often associated with extra-curricular campus activities. They propose that such events that they term "campus engagement" can psychologically create a feeling of belonging and loyalty to the educational institute. Masika and Jones (2016) support this notion of SE aiding success, by providing a sense of "belonging" and helping to create an environment where students can learn together towards achieving academic and personal success.

Other researchers also outline that SE can aid success not only for students, but for educational institutes too. Henning (2012) suggests that engaged students can help raise the identity and image of an institution through highlighting success stories and raising the profile of the institution. Trowler and Trowler (2010) also concur and state that SE can "improve specific desirable outcomes and the value of engagement is no longer questioned" (p.2). As well as student outcomes, they suggest that high-performing HE institutions demonstrate comprehensive engagement strategies that can aid university governance, leadership and identity.

Lawson & Lawson (2013) outline that the impact of student engagement policy can reach far beyond the student and learning environment, suggesting that community and society can benefit from the associated positive outcomes too. Their research highlights that the focus of measuring engagement should not be linear focusing on academic attainment only. Rather

they suggest that a framework incorporating social-ecological analysis and social-cultural theory helps to demonstrate how engaged students can benefit their community too by undertaking non-academic, extra-curricular activities within their local environment. Similar findings were reported by Lester et al., (2013), whose research revealed that students also placed highly interactions that occurred outside of the university setting, which they termed 'social engagement' and activities that took place within the community were seen to be advantageous to both students and society. Similar findings were also reported by Thomas (2012) and McIlrath & Tansey (2013) who highlight the positives outcomes associated with volunteering engagement activities.

Whilst Fitzgerald et al., (2016) recognise that SE is vital to the success of the HE sector, as well as individual universities, they suggest that with regards engagement "is the understanding that not all knowledge and expertise resides in the academy, and that both expertise and great learning opportunities in teaching and scholarship also reside in non-academic settings" (p.223). They advocate that HE institutions, by their very nature focus on knowledge enterprise, hence they should concentrate their efforts on knowledge exchange that benefits society and produces global citizens, focussed on the well-being and positive impact for all. Similar findings were reported by Barnacle & Dall'Alba (2017) who suggest that SE should move away from a 'neoliberalism approach' that tends to focus on the economic value to students of HE and instead adopt an approach that encompasses positive social outcomes that benefits everyone. They state that "a conceptualisation such as this has the potential to support an educative process that promotes creativity, critical judgement, and ethical and social understanding towards a more just and caring world" (p.1336).

Interestingly, whilst the evidence clearly indicates that there are many positive outcomes associated with SE, the argument that many institutes only measure benefits in a 'linear' fashion rings true. For example, many universities may evaluate individual advantages of SE by quantifying how many of their students obtained good degree classifications. University benefits of SE may be measured by how many students enrolled in the institution. Societal benefits may be measured by how many volunteer hours were undertaken in an academic year. All of these outcomes are positive and add value however, they fundamentally fail to take a more comprehensive view of exploring the relationships between the various dimensions of SE, how they interconnect and what are the overall benefits to the various

stakeholders. Such an approach is clearly lacking and highlights that whilst universities are investing huge resources for student engagement in staffing, estates, extra-curricular activities and infrastructure, they are not truly evaluating if such expenses are fulfilling their aims and subsequently if the investments are warranted. As highlighted, the debate regarding what are the purpose of universities and do students get a return on investment, as well as the growing acknowledgement that universities are now commercial enterprises serving numerous stakeholders, would serve as a timely reminder that such a study is needed.

2.3 Barriers to Student Engagement

Whilst there is clear evidence that SE can has many positive benefits, there is growing realisation that not everyone partakes in engagement due to various barriers that can hinder or stop students from contributing to such activity (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012; Palmer et al., 2017; Quin, 2017). Baron & Corbin (2012) suggest that whilst many Government policies and university directives suggest increasing student engagement activities, they have in fact resulted in student "disengagement". They state that "much of what is done appears fragmented, sometimes contradictory and frequently without a clear and common understanding of what we mean by student engagement, the causes of disengagement or how to gauge the success of engagement initiatives" (p.759). They acknowledge that some of the issues related to disengagement are due to the changing nature of the student body, most notably, the changing expectations of students too, but suggest that this is an area that is under researched.

The rise of student attrition within education and the lack of engagement by students have been the topic of debate by many researchers recently (Ricard & Pelletier, 2016; Boylan & Renzulli, 2017; Beer & Lawson, 2018) who have identified the worrying rise of students dropping out of education programmes. Castello et al., (2017) highlight the importance of universities in recognising student retention rates and factors impacting on students dropping out of their studies, whilst attempting to transition to HE. They identified many factors that can impact upon students' success, such perceived barriers include: feelings of isolation, inability to socialize or create networks, passive personalities, financial barriers and the ability to balance academic work and personal life. They highlighted that many of the reasons stated

was often the result of universities "culture of institutional neglect" (p.1056) whereby HE institutes failed to help students integrate and transition into a university setting. The associated "culture" within a university setting and the role students "fit into" that culture has also been reported by Strayhorn (2014). Her work suggested that if students do not feel part of the university setting or culture, they do not feel a "sense of belonging" and as such, are at risk. The role that staff play in HE in helping students adapt and feel part of the culture is vital to overcome such barriers of isolation.

Research undertaken by Aljohani (2016) also identifies the many reasons associated with students dropping out of university, his work identifies the various models that have been associated with retention within HE and suggests that the issues that are most associated with lack of engagement and attrition are "physiological, psychological, sociological, cultural, organisational, environmental, interactional and economic views" (p.13). He concludes by suggesting that HE institutes need to fully understand the impact such issues have on individuals so that they can fully address and try to resolve the negative consequences associated with them. Eriksson et al., (2017) also suggests similar reasons for student attrition with HE, they identified many factors affecting completion rates at university including: the learner's perception of the course; the learner's social situation and characteristics; and the learner's ability to find and manage time effectively. Their research highlighted that such factors are not fully investigated and hence, the rise in student attrition across many HE sectors.

Similar endorsements were echoed by Hamilton Bailey & Phillips (2016), who suggest that factors associated with students dropping out of university are not fully understood. They suggest that often student's mental wellbeing is overlooked by HE institutes and factors (stress, anxiety depression, social dysfunction) that can potentially impact on students' ability to adapt to university life are not investigated. Freeman & Simonsen (2015) also suggest that this is an area that is under-researched, their work highlights that whilst many HE institutes implement expensive interventions (academic strategies; behavioural strategies; attendance strategies; study skills strategies; organisational and structural changes), the systems are often not evaluated and as such, a clear understanding of whether such strategies help attrition rates is not fully understood. Their work also supports the notion that the student

body is diverse and interventions need to accommodate this by recognising student groupings and understanding the barriers that can impact upon the various student typologies.

Zacherman & Foubert (2014) also endorse similar conclusions, they acknowledge the importance of intervention strategies and extra-curricular activities provided by HE institutes can indeed help many students engage with university life. However, they also report that often students who spend too much time on such additional non-academic activities can result in negative consequences on student achievement and as such, HE providers need to be mindful of that.

The market-driven environment that HE institutes now work in have also been highlighted as a potential barrier to student engagement, with increased numbers of students at university, resulting in increased class sizes that can prohibit student interaction (Exeter et al., 2010). Linked to this concept is the notion that many SE initiatives are often generic and fail to address student needs on an individual basis, which can result in students not fully engaging (Zepke, 2014). Similar findings were reported by Leach (2016) who highlighted that SE evaluations do not take into account such differences and hence, a lack of understanding regarding the success of engagement activities is missing.

Gourlay (2015) agrees and suggests that many different contexts need to be take into account, including the learning style and motivation of the individual student, the relationship between the lecturer and the student and the resources that are used for the engagement activities. The differences in student characteristics are also identified by Wawrzynski et al., (2012) who suggest that academic ability can potentially impact negatively on SE, as well as resources of time and finance, and also general awareness of such initiatives. Boles & Whelan (2017) concur with such findings and highlight that a number of factors can hinder SE including: the learning environment; interactions between students and academics; the design and structure of the curriculum; assessment and feedback; support services; and the campus environment. They suggest that there are many multifaceted aspects that impact upon engagement and student success and many are focussed around the quality of staff interactions with students, yet such importance is often overlooked by many academics in HE.

The role the lecturer plays with regards to student engagement has been under scrutiny within recent research and the associated "buy in" from staff to participate in university engagement strategies has come into increased focus. Research undertaken by Van Uden et al., (2014) suggested that teacher behaviour, teacher beliefs concerning motives for being a teacher, and attitudes towards teacher knowledge all influence how they perceive student engagement and whether they actively engage in centralised activities. Similar findings were reported by Zepke et al., (2014) who investigated what priorities teachers placed on student engagement. The role of university staff in engaging students early on in their transition is supported by many researchers (Jang et al., 2016; Glock & Karbach, 2015; Thys & Van Houtte, 2016; Gray & Di Loreto, 2016) who emphasize the importance of staff interacting with their students and the ability to motivate all types of students to engage in both academic and extra-curricular activities. Such research identifies that staff and the presence of staff in teaching and learning, play a vital role in motivating and reassuring students furthering their education. The research also identifies that teacher expectations can often differ depending on many factors (socio-economic status, ethnicity, parental social class) and subsequently, students may receive different advice and treatment regarding their ability to succeed in their studies and entering HE.

Similar findings were also reported by Egalite et al., (2015) who identify the important role that teachers play in student achievement, particularly with regards to teachers and students that share the same ethnicity. They suggest that often the negative connotations associated with ethnic minority students dropping out of university can be overcome by teachers who can act as role models and mentors thus highlighting the important role academic staff play in helping students engage in university life and academic studies. Similar endorsements were also reported by Paunesku et al., (2015) who suggest that often this is an area that is under resourced and warrants further research, particularly interventions that focus on the experiences of students from stereotyped student groups associated with under achievement.

The role of non-academic or professional staff within universities and how they are involved in the student experience, including SE initiatives is an area that has received growing interest recently. Evidence clearly indicates that the number of professional staff employed within the HE sector has risen in recent years (Frye & Fulton, 2020) however, whilst extra resources

are often appreciated, the role of academic staff v professional staff has come under scrutiny by some. Roberts (2018) revealed the important role that non-academic professional staff in universities play with regards engagement and the student's 'life-cycle' within HE, suggesting that they have an important factor to play, but often this is an area that is under-researched as most studies focus solely on academic staff. Curran & Prottas (2017) revealed that one of the major concerns professional staff have is what their role is and how it is defined? They identified that this is one of the major 'stressors' that staff complained about and hindered them doing their job. As evidenced, the diverse and broad array of engagement initiatives go beyond the classroom and academic input only. Professional staff now play an important role in many SE pursuits and often 'underlying tensions' exist within many universities questioning who is seen to have overall responsibility of such engagement. Baltaru (2018) endorses this issue, her research acknowledges that HE professional staff work on the margins between academic and administrative staff, leading to the distorting of boundaries, suggesting that universities need to look beyond their organisations purely from a teaching and research perspective. Whilst such frictions exist, the important role that professional staff play within HE is apparent, yet often professional support staff (a major stakeholder in modern universities) are not involved in such research, thus many institutes fail to fully evaluate from varied perspectives. Clearly, further research is needed to gain an insight into what role professional staff play in SE, what their perceptions are and if they encounter barriers to delivering engagement opportunities.

Recent research by Shah & Cheng (2019) revealed many obstacles to SE from their research findings, but interestingly the barriers that were reported 'most important' by the students were 'external' to the teaching and learning association (refer to Table 5). Work and family commitments, financial difficulties and mental health concerns were rated the highest, as oppose to engagement with tutors which was rated the lowest. Their findings highlighted the necessity that HE institutes should be aware that due to the changing diversity of the student body, SE strategies need to take into account the needs of different student groups. Failure to do so, may result in increased attrition rates and poor academic outcomes, as well as other associated social and economic benefits to students, institutes and society. They conclude by suggesting that further research into the barriers to SE is needed, with particular emphasis placed on investigating the different student typologies that now attend HE.

Table 5. Personal and Academic Barriers to Student Engagement

(Shah & Cheng, 2019, p.192)

Type of Personal or Academic Barrier	% Most Important
Juggling work and study	33.6
Caring for children	29.5
Financial difficulties	18.8
Mental health issues, e.g. anxiety, depression	15.4
Academic writing skills	12.8
Distance from the university	12.1
Adjusting to the university learning environment	10.1
Mathematic skills	7.40
Caring for parents of other family	6.70
Engaging with peers (in class or online)	6.70
Oral presentation skills	5.40
Personal health reasons	2.00
Physical disability and/or physical health issues	2.00
Using technology, e.g. Blackboard	2.00
Engaging with teachers	2.00

As outlined, there are many factors that can impact upon a student engaging with HE institutes that can have a detrimental effect upon the student and wider stakeholders. Given the importance placed upon SE and the resources that universities spend and use on such activities, gaining a greater understanding of such potential barriers is essential. Tight (2019) stresses this need by suggesting that modern-day students' lives are much more than just their university and programme of study, it involves the people they associate with, social activities and work. Therefore, a fuller exploration of such broader experiences needs to be studied to gain a better understanding of how students engage with their universities and why, whilst at the same time, trying to gain a fuller picture of what type of person they are and to explore if personal factors impact on engagement.

2.4 Student Expectations of Higher Education

Underlying such views on SE, is the importance of valuing the concept of service quality and co-creation and the role that students now play in higher education provision (Pucciareli & Kaplan, 2016; Teeroovengadum et al., 2016). The role of the student within HE has become an interesting discussion point in recent years as the notion of a student as a consumer has

come into question (Tomlinson, 2016) with many debating what impact this has upon HE providers (Carter & Yeo, 2016). In attempting to understand such concepts, it is imperative that a clear understanding of the expectations students have in entering HE is vital, as well as the perceived benefits of engaging students in the process (Carver, 2016).

Money et al., (2017) highlight the significance of student expectations when entering HE and they have identified that many students have naïve conceptions of what is expected of them whilst at university. Their study noted that the typology of students could potentially have different expectations and experiences due to many factors including: students now having to work whilst studying at university; mature students entering HE; domestic arrangements of either a student staying at home or moving into university accommodation; and also how students make relationships within their university setting. The findings highlight the importance of recognising students as individuals and raising awareness of what students' value as important so HE institutes can help close the "expectation gap" and ultimately help students achieve successful outcomes.

Hughes & Smail (2015) agree and support the notion that the types of students and how they transition into HE is an important aspect that is often overlooked by educational providers. Their research concluded that student engagement that concentrated on "social integration and student wellbeing" was deemed more effective in supporting student's transition into university life. Similar findings were presented in the research by Thomas et al., (2017) who suggest that students go through stages when transitioning into university namely: affirmation, assimilation and integration. Their work highlighted the importance that marketing technology and in particular, social media plays in attempting to help students transition and form new communities however, it also acknowledges that some student groupings struggle in doing this and that universities need to be mindful of using such mediums aimed at a mass delivery to the whole student body. Neier and Zayer (2015) concur regarding the use of technology in attempting to help students transition into HE, suggesting that whilst social media can play a major role in how students adapt to university and impact upon their views of the institute they are enrolled in, universities should take care and need to be mindful of the variations of uptake and use of such platforms. Such work is endorsed by Imlawi et al., (2015) who also found that the role of technology can have a positive impact upon helping to inform students about HE expectations and student engagement.

Research by Respondek et al., (2017) acknowledge the stress and anxiety that students entering HE face. Their work highlights the role that students play in attempting to deal with such difficulties and stress that often such anxieties are related to the "perceived control" that students exert over factors such as: "self-regulated learning, effective study strategies used; achievement motivation; intrinsic motivation, and personality constructs such as extraversion and conscientiousness" (p.3). They conclude by suggesting that HE institutes need to fully understand the anxieties of students and help implement strategies that aid students control over such emotions. Kori et al., (2016) also agree that students have a role to play in determining how successful they are in entering HE and succeeding at their studies. Their research acknowledges that student's learning motivation and behaviour is fundamental for academic achievement and whilst HE providers can help with this, fundamentally students are in charge of their own destiny. Research by Renzulli (2015) identified that students who struggled in HE and were at risk of dropping out of their studies lacked motivational skills, as well as others skills needed to succeed including time management, self-regulation and control over study time. She concluded by suggesting that more research is needed to fully understand effective intervention strategies implemented by universities to engage with their study body, as well as outlining the expectations of students and the role they have whilst studying at university.

Coertjens et al., (2017) highlight the importance of the transition period that students undergo when entering HE institutes, identifying that many students often do not complete their studies and drop out of education. Their work identified the importance of understanding students learning environment and the changes they go through when moving into a university setting. The vulnerability of students entering HE and the associated pressures of such a transition is also highlighted by research undertaken by Holliman et al., (2018). They noted that students often struggle to adapt and engage to university life and their work highlights the importance of a student's ability to be able to adapt to such changes. Their work identified that students who were adaptable and demonstrated resilience, often achieved higher academic outcomes, due to increased engagement. They identified that HE institutes need to recognise the importance of enabling students to adapt and engage in university life as vital, to allow students to transition successfully into HE.

Griffin & Gilbert (2016) suggest that there are many "forces" that can impact upon student's ability to transition into HE and ultimately engage with their institute. They identified 4 key factors that can assist student's ability to transition, namely: the situation (the perceived control one has over what is happening); self (personal characteristics e.g., age, gender, socioeconomic status); support (affirmation received from important others) and strategies (ability to deal and manage transition). The research acknowledges the role that a student can play in addressing the factors above and more importantly highlight the importance of HE institutes recognising that all students are different and as such, support, resources and policies adopted by HE providers need to recognise and accommodate this.

Whannel & Whannel (2015) also highlight the significance of universities recognising the importance of students understanding fully their role in transitioning to university. They identify that students "identity" play an important role in them being able to adapt to the new challenges they face when they enter HE and they acknowledge that individual students face various barriers that may impact upon that transition namely: financial, personality, first-in-family to enter university. Their research concludes by suggestion that HE institutes need to help students transition into university life by "assisting them to develop a strong emotional commitment to an appropriate university student identity" (p.51), they also highlight that having the appropriate staff to aid this, is essential. Such findings are endorsed by other researchers (Stoessel et al., 2015; Ishitani, 2016) who found that students whom may struggle with understanding the expectations of HE demonstrate certain features namely: females; migration background; fully employed students; family background; and living at home. They suggest that such students are potentially at higher risk of not engaging or dropping out of academia and HE institutes need to address such factors when attempting intervention strategies to reduce student attrition. The understanding of individual expectations of students entering HE is clearly needed in attempting to aid universities gain a greater awareness as to whether such factors impact adversely on student engagement.

2.5 Student Typologies

Having a greater understanding of student's expectations and knowing who your students are, is an area that is growing in importance within research, due to the significant advantages

that can be gained, as already discussed. Khattab (2015) suggests that educational institutes should have a thorough understanding of students' aspirations and expectations, to fully realise student's potential. He suggests that behaviour and engagement can be predicted based upon student typologies, namely: the confident, the deceived, the contestant, the conformist, the insecure, the fortuitous, the expectant, and the disengaged (refer to Table 6). The typologies were determined by a number of factors including expectations and aspirations, as well as the resources to achieve such aspirations including: financial, awareness; socio-economic barriers; lack of academic ability; and lack of knowledge regarding how to access HE. His study concluded that educational institutes need to be aware of such varied factors that can influence student outcomes and hence, should focus on factors that may hinder student achievements as well as focussing on promoting students to fulfil their aspirations.

Similar work regarding student typologies was undertaken by Collie et al., (2017), they identified three classifications for students namely: the thriver; supported struggler; and at-risk struggler and assessed factors that could impact upon their motivation and academic success. They noted the importance of support networks needed in aiding such success and recognised that social support (home and community) and academic support were vital, as well as recognising students as individuals and noting that many students often experience adversity (mental health, disability, difficult home environments) that can impact upon academic success. Dryer et al., (2016) acknowledges that student engagement and achievement can often be affected by disability. They too found that such students can often feel isolated and find it difficult to form social networks, they concluded by stating that further research is needed to fully understand the impact of disability on "students cognitive and behavioural dimensions such as their motivation to learn, engagement, persistence and academic achievement" (p.428).

O'Shea (2016) also identified similar findings in her research that identified that often students who are the "first in family to come to university may lack the necessary capitals to enact success" (p.59). However, she argued that often such students have many "capitals" or areas from within their environment and circumstances that can aid them in transitioning to university life namely: aspirational, resistant, familial and experiential capital.

Table 6. Student Typologies that can Impact Behaviour (Khattab, 2015, p.736-738)

Typology & Characteristics
The Confident - complete consistency at the highest levels, where educational aspirations, expectations and achievements are all positive. This category is likely to include middle-class students where high aspirations are the norm and, most importantly, the resources to achieve these aspirations are available
The Deceived - this category consists of students who have high aspirations and genuinely believe they will achieve their aspirations, but, in reality, end up with low achievement. This might be due to a lack of financial or educational resources, lack of information about or unfamiliarity with the ways systems work or how standards are attained
The Contestant - this category includes students who develop high aspirations, have low expectations, but obtain high achievement. These students are likely to be raised in families valuing education, but are faced with harsh socio-economic conditions, either in terms of material resources or in experiencing a competitive environment (for example at school)
The Conformist - this category refers to students with high aspirations, low expectations and low achievement. These students act in line with the societal norms (e.g. education is important), but are aware of their disadvantageous material and economic position, which might lead them to lower their expectations and, as a result, to poorly perform at school
The Insecure - this category consists of students whose aspirations are far removed from their expectations or achievements. They have low aspirations, but high expectations and high achievement. Students in this category might be unsure yet about their educational future plans or do not want to commit themselves to such plans
The Fortuitous - this category represents students who have succeeded in obtaining high achievement in spite of their low aspirations and low expectations. This group of students strongly challenge the relationship between aspirations/expectations and actual achievement. The school performance of this group cannot be predicted by their aspirations and expectations. It is possible that these students might have been targeted by special programmes, institutions or community initiatives designed for underachievers from underprivileged families
The Expectant - This category includes students who have low aspirations, high expectations and low achievement. These students might have been receiving incorrect signals on their actual ability by attending low quality schools where academic ability is lower than average, and competition is rare, which could give them a false perception of their 'real' qualities
The Disengaged - This category includes students with low aspirations, low expectations and low achievements. These students tend to be disengaged from schooling or education, often consciously and by being involved in activities other than academic or educational activities

The findings highlight the importance of universities understanding students as individuals and treating their situations appropriately and how classification of students are integrated within a university setting.

It has been highlighted that whilst many HE institutes attempt to engage with their students in a systematic way, more research needs to be undertaken to investigate whether such strategies can be open to bias. Many researchers (Cherng, 2017; Namrata, 2011; Friedrich et al, 2015) suggest that often student's expectations and the realisation of academic success can be related to teacher's perceptions. Such perceptions have been reported as being open to bias based upon race, ethnicity and social background. Thus, highlighting the importance of HE institutes being fully aware of "perception gaps" and ensuring that all students are supported to fully realise their potential. Similarly, Gershenson et al., (2015) state that the "direction of the effect of overly pessimistic expectations is theoretically ambiguous as such expectations may cause students to either make ill-advised investments in higher education or motivate their students to change their behaviours in ways that increase their potential and opportunities" (p.222). Their work highlights the importance of ensuring that all students, regardless of their background, circumstances, social class or environment should be given unbiased advice regarding what HE is about, so that all students can make informed decisions and be aware of the expectations needed to succeed.

It would therefore seem imperative that investigating engagement from not only a student perspective (that incorporates the type of student they are), as well as a staff perspective (to understand their views on engagement) is needed to fully comprehend the variables in order to attempt to achieve optimum engagement advantages for all stakeholders. However, as already discussed universities fail to tackle and investigate such issues, rather focussing on simple, measurable, quantitative statistics that only partially address engagement outcomes. Understanding if certain students cannot access engagement activities due to their personal circumstances would seem to warrant further inquiry from the research presented.

2.6 Co-Creation of Students

The changing nature of HE and the diverse, competitive marketplace that universities now operate in has been well documented and discussed, as universities continue to go through a

paradigm shift regarding funding, many HE providers are now focussing their activities on commercial practices, in particular marketing activities. How students are viewed (customers' v students) is an area of debate (White, 2007) that has been highlighted and the increase in organisations focussing on service quality (Douglas et al., 2015), and customer engagement (CE) and student engagement has received much attention in recent years (Hu et al., 2012; Chaplin & Wyton, 2014; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Wimpenny, 2016).

Dollinger et al., (2018) suggest that co-creation has a vital role to play in the HE sector today, they state that co-creation is,

> the process of students' feedback, opinions, and other resources such as their intellectual capabilities and personalities, integrated alongside institutional resources, which can offer mutual value to both students and institutions (p.210)

They suggest that the value of co-creation can help HE institutes to work in partnership with students, in an attempt to fully engage with them resulting in more meaningful experiences for the student body. Their findings suggested that students can benefit from co-creation through: quality interactions; increased satisfaction; and improved graduate capabilities, as well as the institutions benefiting in the form of: increased student loyalty; university image; and an improved student-university identification. They agree with the research suggested that HE institutes should try and work in partnership with students and in doing so the benefits of student engagement can be expanded. For example, if students are engaging in a classroom setting, they help to co-create the learning experience and the associated advantages of that can be for other students, as well as the teaching staff. Likewise, if students are enthusiastic and engaged as student ambassadors within their university, this can help co-create a strong image and brand for the institution when potential students visit for open days. Co-creation can also take place for the wider community, if students engage in volunteering opportunities and help co-create positive outcomes through community work.

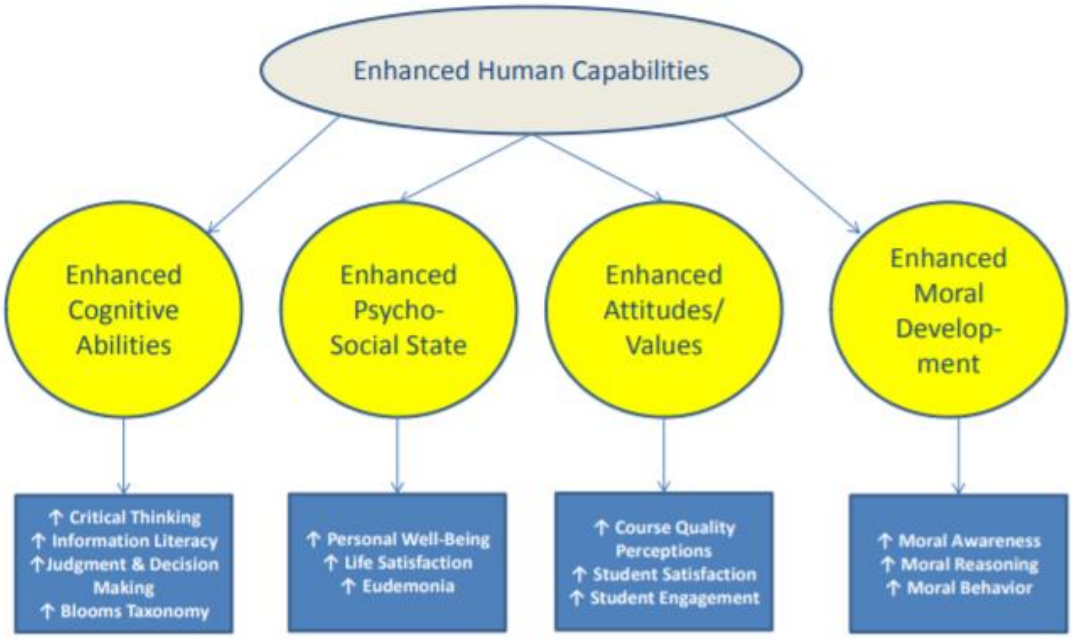
Brodie et al., (2011) agree, their research suggests that engagement is based on relational foundations of interactive experiences and the co-creation of value, through the various stakeholders associated. Their findings conclude by suggesting that more research is needed

regarding the concepts of co-creation within HE and the role that engagement plays in the HE sector. Recent research undertaken into student engagement has suggested that students can act as co-creators of their teaching and learning environment and as such, this has become an area that HE providers are investing in (Woodall et al., 2014; Bovill, 2014; Healey et al., 2016; Wawrzinek et al., 2017). Cook-Sather & Luz (2015) found that by actively involving students and developing partnerships with the student body, students can help gain a greater understanding about the issues associated with teaching and learning and as such if they "take up greater responsibility for both, and work with faculty and other students to ensure greater engagement and efficacy, higher education can become a shared endeavour that makes both success and enjoyment more likely" (p.1098).

Judson & Taylor (2014) agree that the changing environment that HE providers are operating in, has meant that universities have had to adapt their engagement strategies to accommodate such changes. They too suggest that universities should focus on "longer term value co-creation, as opposed to the delivery of perceived value" (p.51), resulting in a model for measuring success within HE, that focuses on enhancing human capabilities (refer to Figure 4). The model highlights the areas that they deem important for universities to encourage within their students namely: cognitive abilities; psycho-social state; attitudes/values'; and moral development. They suggest that in order to achieve this, HE providers need to work with their students to co-create value, that empower students to maximise their potential for the benefits of not only themselves, but society as a whole. Suggesting that universities need to place their resources and efforts into transforming students into critical thinkers and scholars as oppose to considering students as consumers, who are often viewed in the short term.

Similar conclusions are endorsed by Elsharnouby (2015) who agree that students within HE do play a role in co-creating, but they acknowledge that the "exploration of the students' co-creation behaviour outside the classroom in HE is lacking" (p.245). His findings suggest that universities should focus attention on investigating engagement that may be external to a classroom setting, as this is an area that can enhance student satisfaction, co-creation within HE and ultimately help students achieve their goals from a university education.

Figure 4. Enhancing Human Capabilities of HE Students (Judson & Taylor, 2014, p.59)



Teeroovengadum et al., (2016) also endorse the concept of co-creation with HE and suggest that a holistic approach is needed to fully comprehend the impact it has upon engagement outcomes. They suggest that "quality in higher education is not a unidimensional concept and is in fact best described as a set of dimensions" (p.246). These include: administrative quality; support facilities quality; core educational quality; transformative quality; and physical environment quality. Within these constructs there are further sub-dimensions that also feed into the overall service quality outcome, these include: attitude and behaviour; administrative processes; curriculum; competence; pedagogy; support infrastructure; learning setting and general infrastructure. They conclude by suggesting that service quality, engagement and co-creation can only be truly measured if all these dimensions are taken into account. De Oliveira Santini et al., (2017) also found similar results in their research and concluded that all factors that impact upon student engagement and the value of co-creation should be taken into account when assessing how successful HE providers are, yet as has been evidenced, many universities fail to evaluate from a holistic viewpoint.

Cook-Sather & Luz (2015) whilst acknowledging that the concept of co-creation in HE and working in partnership with stakeholders has its advantages, their research also identifies that often, students and staff find the concept of "partnership" difficult. They refer to this as

threshold concepts “where the notion as students as ‘knowers’ and partners in pedagogical conversations is troublesome for many students because it is unfamiliar” (p.1101). Their research concludes by suggesting that if students pass through the threshold concept and see themselves as co-creators to teaching and learning, they become more engaged, empowered and help both staff and students involved with a HE setting. Fitzgerald et al., (2016) agree with the previous research presented regarding aspects of co-creation and the importance of recognising that engagement needs to occur not only with students, but with other partners. Their findings reported that HE institutes need to broaden their efforts relating to student engagement and co-creation and focus more on “societal relevance” as oppose to academic ability. They state that modern, engaged institutes are ones that demonstrate significant benefits to society and the wider community and as such, produce graduates that can have productive roles in a diverse environment and society. They highlight the importance of providing opportunities for students to help co-create opportunities that benefit the individual, community and society as a whole.

As highlighted the value of co-creation within HE and the importance placed upon SE has a major role to play in modern universities and the HE sector. The growing recognition of taking a holistic approach when exploring the effectiveness of SE strategies within HE is being recognised as an area that requires further research and debate. Gaining a greater insight into what the perceived roles of both staff and students are with regards SE is imperative. As well as having an understanding of whether staff and students regard they have a role to play in co-creation and the associated positive outcomes in all aspects of engagement activity is needed.

2.7 Summary

Whilst the breadth of research relating to student engagement is comprehensive and views differ between what SE is, it is clear from the literature that SE is an extremely important part of the HE sector today. The growing pressures that universities face and the dynamic environment that they operate in, has placed increased scrutiny on HE institutions to deliver quality service to their students, whilst at the same time ensuring commercial viability.

The important role that SE plays in helping to address such issues and the many benefits and advantages to be gained have been documented. However, it is clear from the research discussed that many students experience barriers to engagement. How SE is evaluated has brought about many questions and taking a holistic approach is needed due to many researchers identifying gaps in the research that warrant further investigation.

The tensions identified within the university setting today have highlighted the growing need that justifications of strategic aims and plans are coming under greater scrutiny, more than ever, to satisfy the many stakeholders now associated with UK HE institutes. Given the importance placed on SE initiatives and the resources used in servicing them, this study is timely in understanding the dimensions associated with SE from both a staff and student perspective. It will aim to identify how universities provide engagement opportunities for students and how students engage with those opportunities.

Chapter 3: A Qualitative Investigation of Staff Opinions on Student Engagement within Higher Education

This chapter will present the findings from the first empirical study exploring staff opinions of student engagement. The structure comprises of the research aims and a justification of the qualitative interview methodology utilised to collect the data. The findings will be outlined in relation to: staff involvement within SE; what staff stated to be the advantages of engagement; and the barriers preventing staff from providing engagement opportunities. The themes that emerged from the qualitative data identified that all staff were involved in elements of engagement and the main benefits were recognised to students, universities and society. The barriers that restricted staff from offering engagement opportunities related to issues concerned with resourcing, operational, processes and systems. The final section provides a conclusion to the study and management implications are presented in chapter 6.

3.1 Research Aims

As discussed, research into engagement is often viewed from a student's perspective, in particular related to student outcomes (Kahu, 2013) however, it has been identified that further research is needed to understand the opinions of staff (Healey, Flint & Harrington, 2016). As evidenced, the rise in professional staff within universities and the role they play in engagement activities is noticeable, yet this has caused tensions in some aspects of HE provision (Curran & Prottas, 2017; Baltaru, 2018). Gaining opinion and views from both staff groupings is essential to understand their views on the types of engagement activity they may be involved in and what their views are regarding student engagement (Roberts, 2018). The advantages of students participating in engagement initiatives have been well documented and it is clear that there are numerous benefits to not only students, but other associated stakeholders too (Dumford & Miller, 2018). A vitally important perspective to explore, is to investigate if HE staff endorse the findings from previous research related to the benefits of SE as this has been identified that this is an area that warrants further research (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012; Lawson & Lawson, 2013), as well as seeing if such opinions differ between academic and professional staff points of view Fitzgerald et al., (2016). A particular area of investigation which is clearly lacking, is the study of potential barriers to HE staff being able

to offer SE initiatives (Aljohani, 2016). Previous studies have explored problems of students not being able to access such activities, but very little research has been undertaken to explore any potential barriers that may stop staff from being able to deliver SE opportunities (Freeman & Simonsen, 2015). This study will explore how staff perceive their role within engaging with students and ask if there are any barriers that prevent them from being able to deliver such opportunities (Boles & Whelan, 2017). Gaining insight from academic and professional staff will offer awareness into many of the issues raised in the literature review namely: the importance of SE; the advantages of engagement activities; and potential issues of staff being able to offer engagement within HE. This study will address the issues and questions raised, that will hopefully help inform HE providers with a more evidence based insight into how to alleviate some of the concerns.

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Design

Fredricks et al., (2016) have suggested that there are many challenges in researching SE, including measurement and the analytical techniques used to investigate the concept. Whilst many different approaches have been utilised in previous studies (Eccles, 2016; Tadesse et al., 2018), it has been recognised that there are various methodological designs that can be used. In this first study, a qualitative design was implemented to gain a deeper insight into people's views on the subject. Rahman (2017) suggests that there are many advantages to using such a method including: a deeper insight into participant's feelings; a holistic (interpretivism) understanding of viewpoints; and an appreciation of different people's meanings and experiences. Using semi-structured interviews, allowed participants to express their views and draw on various epistemologies, based upon their beliefs and opinions (Roulston, 2019).

3.2.2 Participants

Participants were recruited from staff employed at a Post-92 university within the UK, using a convenience sampling technique, which is common in studies on engagement (Fernandes

& Esteves, 2016). The staff were purposively selected from a range of departments, using criterion sampling (Veal & Darcy, 2013) based upon them having to have been employed by the university for at least six months and have working knowledge of the student experience within their remit.

It has been acknowledged that undertaking research within a setting that the researcher is known can have both advantages and disadvantages (Coghlan, 2007). Greene (2014) suggests that this form of research which is often undertaken via qualitative studies is often referred to as 'insider research', which she advocates as "the study of one's own social group or society" (p.1). Teusner (2016) suggests that in recent years, insider research has come under increasing scrutiny regarding validity as the researcher she suggests, is an 'actor' within the research setting and as such the issues of subjectivity and control comes into question. Other researchers (Taylor, 2011; Iphofen & Tolich, 2018; Jaswinder & Nest, 2018; Bloomfield & Harreveld, 2020) also debate the ethics of insider research and suggest that people who utilise this method need to be mindful of the potential disadvantages that may arise from being known to the participants that are being questioned.

Blythe et al., (2013) suggest that undertaking insider research present four main problems namely: "assumed understanding, ensuring analytic objectivity, dealing with emotions and participants' expectations" (p.8). Unluer (2012) endorses such concerns and raises the issues of the role of the researcher/instructor, the researcher making assumptions about questions answered and sensing that they already know what the participants think. He suggests that being close to an organisation, as well as the people that work within the institution and knowing what the organisation culture is like can potentially impact on collecting deep and meaningful research data. Mercer (2007) also shares similar concerns suggesting that researchers may have pre-conceptions and a potential shared history with their participants. However, she also suggests that such insider research has many advantages that can potentially outweigh the associated disadvantages namely: "freer access, stronger rapport and a deeper, more readily-available frame of shared reference with which to interpret the data they collect" (p.13). Greene (2014) also suggests that insider research can be advantageous in that is allows the researcher to have additional knowledge and expertise that can be used to gain meaningful information. Potential deeper interaction, as the researcher

and participant may know each other, thus allowing for ease of discussion and access to key people that may have been restricted if not known to the researcher.

Understanding the potential advantages and disadvantages to insider research and having discussed this with the research team and feedback from staff within the ethics committee, care and consideration was taken into account when choosing this method and the participants for the initial study. Also, being aware of the potential hazards to minimise the impact as outlined by Fleming (2018) was taken into account, including "minimizing the potential for implicit coercion of participants; privacy and confidentiality; identifying potential biases…and being aware of the potential of professional conflicts in the dual roles of being an academic and researcher within the same context" (p.319-320).

Fourteen staff, including academic and professional support staff, were interviewed from various departments within the university including academic (A) and services (S) (refer to Table 7). Five participants were academic staff and 9 participants were professional support staff. The participant's experience of working within HE ranged from 1 year to 33 years, averaging 15 years in total. All of the participants had a role in working with students and all were involved in various aspects of student engagement.

3.2.3 Procedure

Following ethical approval from the Faculty of Health & Life Sciences Ethics Committee at Northumbria University, potential participants were sent an email asking if they would be willing to participate. Once agreed, all respondents were sent a participant information sheet which outlined the purpose of the study, the requirements of the participants and an explanation of how the research data would be used and stored. A mutual time and date was agreed for the interviews to take place, the location being a quiet and private office located on the university campus. Before the interviews took place, participants were reminded of the research aims of the study and asked to complete and sign a consent form that outlined that the participant understood the requirements of the study and agreed to take part. It was also explained that all the interviews would be recorded and transcribed, with the data being anonymised.

Table 7. Background Information of Study 1 Participants			
Department	**Title**	**Coding Reference**	**Experience within HE**
Sport, Exercise & Rehabilitation (A)	Senior Lecturer	A1	10 years
Sport, Exercise & Rehabilitation (A)	Graduate Tutor	A2	6 years
Sport, Exercise & Rehabilitation (A)	Head of Department	A3	22 years
Faculty Executive (A)	Faculty Associate Pro Vice Chancellor	A4	27 years
Faculty Executive (A)	Research Professor	A5	21 years
International Office (S)	International Recruitment Manager	S1	28 years
Student Support & Wellbeing (S)	Student Support Manager	S2	24 years
Marketing (S)	Undergraduate Marketing Manager	S3	11 years
University Sport (S)	Student & Staff Participant Manager	S4	1 year
Alumni (S)	Advancement Marketing Manager	S5	7 years
Careers (S)	Careers Advice & Guidance Manager	S6	23 years
University Executive (S)	Marketing Director	S7	4 years
Library (S)	Director of Student Library & Services	S8	33 years
Student Union (S)	Student President	S9	2 years

A semi-structured interview schedule (refer to Appendix 1) was compiled which investigated the following areas: knowledge of student engagement activities and initiatives; differences between an engaged and dis-engaged student; advantages of student engagement; barriers to student engagement; and the role of staff within student engagement. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions, which allowed in-depth answers and a deeper understanding of social complexities (Anyan, 2013) and a holistic insight (Morse & McEvoy, 2014) concerning student engagement. The researcher probed when necessary to seek clarity on answers and ensure that the research questions were fully explored. At the end of the interviews, all participants were presented with a participant de-brief sheet which outlined information if they wanted to withdraw from the study and also if they wished to

receive data about the results. Data was collected over a 4-week period and the interviews lasted up to 1 hour and 33 minutes, with the average being 57 minutes.

3.2.4 Analysis

All of the interviews were recorded and transcribed to ensure an accurate report and record of the information collected. The data was then coded and themes and patterns were identified (Glaser & Laidel, 2013; Lawrence & Usman, 2013). As Castleberry & Nolen (2018) highlight the purpose of coding helps to identify "interesting features of the data systematically across the entire data set and occurs at multiple levels. Initially, codes are attached to units of data that could vary in size (i.e., phrase, sentence, paragraph) but usually codes encompass a complete thought" (p.807). Care was taken in the coding exercise to ensure that the themes were not 'underdeveloped' as Connelly & Peltzer (2016) suggest that often analysis of qualitative data is not fully analysed, leading to a lack of substantive findings, with little relevance to the research aims. Similar concerns and the importance of correctly coding to get thoughtful insights into participant's opinions have also been expressed by other researchers (Clark & Veale, 2018; Popat & Starkey, 2019). To ensure deep and meaningful codes were established, the researcher read the transcripts numerous times to safeguard an in-depth scrutiny of the investigation.

3.3 Results & Discussion

The findings from study 1 revealed three broad areas to answer the research aims namely: what is student engagement; benefits of student engagement; and potential barriers to student engagement. Within each section, sub-themes and lower order themes were identified (refer to Table 8 and Appendix 2) that revealed further insight into staff perceptions and views related to student engagement. The themes will be discussed with participant's quotes and critically analysed in context with the previous literature identified in the review section.

Table 8. Study 1 Theme Analysis		
Theme Heading	**Sub-Themes**	**Lower Order Themes**
What is Student Engagement?	Relationship Management	Service excellence, identity, culture, values
	Student Journey	Aspects of university life, SE Initiatives (pre-university, during university, after university)
Benefits of Student Engagement	Benefits to Students	Skill development, happiness & wellbeing, relationship building, academic achievement, career aspects
	Added Value for HE Institutes	Motivating staff, teaching and learning, marketing, promotion, branding, reputation, connections with industry
	Societal Gains	Global citizens, well-rounded individuals, volunteering
Barriers to Student Engagement	Resources	Staffing, finance, space, time
	Operational	Size, number of students, staff buy-in, lack of awareness
	Processes & Systems	Structure, lack of coordination, strategic v operational, centralisation, service departments v academic, standardisation
	Students v Customers	Commercial aspects, service quality, legal standing, return on investment, role of student

3.3.1 What is Student Engagement?

It was clear from the results that all members of staff interviewed considered they had a role to play in student engagement within the different positions they held. When asked what their views were regarding SE, the answers formed two main themes which related to relationship management and the student journey.

3.3.1.1 Relationship Management

All of the respondents stated that student engagement was an important aspect of university suggesting that SE was linked to the relationship that is formed between the university and its students. '*I think it's about relationship management*, *building an affiliation (with the students) and as a representative of the university, it is about trying to convey the values of the organisation'* (S1). *'From a student engagement point of view, I think it is about the culture that needs to be generated within the institution and I think the culture is not just about students, but staff as well'* (A4). Another member of staff suggested that '*engagement for me*

is about being embedded in the way we do things here through customer service excellence' (S8). The concept of engagement providing a sense of identity was also highlighted *'because I think if you make the students more engaged and more cohesive, that sense of identity gives them, I suppose a bit of pride'* (A2).

Such findings build upon the work and agree with previous researchers who emphasize that student engagement and the success of it, depends very much on the view that staff take with regards to such initiatives and the associated "buy in" (Van Uden at al., 2014; Zepke et al., 2014). In addition, the importance of lecturers building a relationship has been identified in the findings, which supports the work undertaken by Gourlay (2015) and Boles & Whelan (2017) who highlighted that engagement and student success are focussed around the quality of staff interactions with students. Similarly, the findings relate with the work by Kahn (2014) who agrees that engagement can help build a stronger affiliation and sense of identity between students and their universities, highlighting the important role the 'structural' (namely university) influences play in engagement (Kahu & Nelson, 2017). The aspect of culture that participants have referred to is interesting, as Strayhorn (2014) suggests this is an extremely important part of engagement, suggesting that if students do not feel part of the university culture, they don't feel as if they belong and are at risk.

3.3.1.2 Student Journey

The view that engagement was about how students immerse themselves in the various initiatives that are offered by universities, both academic and non-academic throughout the course of their time at university was another point that was raised, suggesting *'I think the key thing for me is they are touching our people and our services and facilities every minute of every day throughout the whole time they are with us'* (S8)

> *Typically for me an engaged student would be somebody who attends seminars and lectures, not just attends but also gets involved in the sessions and offers insightful comments and steers discussion. Someone who goes out of their way and has done extra reading. Also be involved in volunteering, work experience, being part of a sports team or being a rep* (A2)

> *I think an engaged student is one that doesn't just see them*

coming into the university to do their degree, do their course and then go home. I think an engaged student is one that is involved in various different aspects of the university, whether that is sport related or whether it is something to do with the student's union and societies (S5)

When staff were asked how they are involved in SE (refer to Table 9) many initiatives stated clearly demonstrated a commitment to engage with students throughout the lifetime of the student journey, namely, before, during and after graduation.

Table 9. Examples of Student Engagement Throughout the Student Journey

Pre-University	Experience Events	School Visits	Open Days	Conversion
	Recruitment campaigns	Marketing materials	Taster Sessions	Pre-departure Visits
	College Events	CRM Channels	Through Agents	Advertising
	Fairs	Tours	Webinars	Tele-Centres
	Twitter	Virtual Tours	Applications	Pop-Up Events
During University	Social Events	Induction	Students Union	Students Reps
	Student Ambassadors	Electronic Learning Platforms	Placements	Volunteering
	Clubs and Societies	Central Services	Attendance	Assessments
	Social Spaces	Student Forums	Tutorials	Workshops
	Workshops	Teaching	Validations	Buddy Systems
After University	Alumni	Careers	CPD Courses	LinkedIn
	Graduate Ambassadors	Postgraduate Events	Using the University Facilities	Employability Events
	Public Lectures	Re-Unions	Social Media	Word of Mouth
	Facebook	Social Events	Job Opportunities	Guest Lectures
	Donations	Using Merchandise	Internet	Focus Groups

The focus that staff placed on engagement occurring throughout the student journey also supported the work by Roberts (2018) who suggested that engagement is throughout the 'life cycle' of a HE student. Also, noticeably was the breadth of initiatives that were both academic and non-academic, suggesting that both aspects of engagement are important, agreeing with

the work by Trowler (2010) and also supporting the work by Gunuc & Kazu (2015) who highlight the important role that extra-curricular activities play in engagement initiatives and the associated benefits this can bring to students.

3.3.2 Benefits of Student Engagement

All of the respondents stated that there were many benefits gained from engaging with students and these included: benefits to students; added value for HE institutes and societal gains.

3.3.2.1 Benefits to Students

One of the most common themes to emerge from the data related to skill development. All of the respondents cited that student engagement could help develop skills including teamwork, communication, leadership, transferrable, networking, presentation and organisation. Comments from both the academic and professional staff agreed that student engagement could aid skill development and endorses the research undertaken by Neves (2016):

> *Having that ability to adapt and change, so communications skills, organisation skills are huge if you are balancing more than just your studies. If you are integrating more into what you are experiencing day to day then you just need to be really organised and prioritise what you are doing. All those skills transfer when you get a job.* (S5)

> *So there are the obvious benefits of academic engagement which includes a good degree and the skills which come with that. However, they also need to be engaged with other things like volunteering, work experience and sport…..they pick up those skills that aren't necessarily explicitly received through academia which are transferable to the work domain or employment*. (A1)

This notion is supported by the research undertaken by Hu et al., (2012) who agree that SE activities can help "students develop their general, cognitive and social skills" (p.86), and as such, can aid their motivation for learning.

Another common theme that emerged from the data is the concept of student engagement helping to provide a better experience for students and aiding their happiness and wellbeing whilst at university. *'So to the student it is a better experience for them, the more you are involved with something, the more you get from it'* (S9). Similarly, it was noted that *'I think an engaged student probably gets more out of the university, so that might be in academic performance, career performance or just happiness and general wellbeing'* (S7). In addition, the ability to form good relationships '*I think if they (students) are engaged then they are more likely to form better relationships with the tutors and fellow students'* (S1). Such findings were similar to previous research by Finn & Zimmer (2012) that identified that SE can have many positive benefits associated with student's wellbeing and overall enjoyment of studying within HE and a sense of belonging to an institute, that can help aid success (Masika & Jones, 2016, Gunuc & Kazu, 2015). The findings also align with previous research relating to the numerous benefits associated with behaviour, emotion and cognition (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012).

Numerous respondents mentioned the idea that engagement results in higher academic performance and results: *'if they (students) are more engaged in the community of higher education then they are more likely to do better at their course and their studies'* (S3). Also, the ability to enhance strategies for learning was commented upon, in that *'they are more likely to facilitate a concrete peer group, so they get that kind of sub-group learning that goes with engagement'* (A3). Correspondingly, the notion of enhancing learning was also mentioned, *'students by actually contributing to their and others learning actually achieve far and beyond their expectations when they first arrived'* (A4). These comments build upon the findings by Finn & Zimmer (2012) who acknowledge the relationship between SE and academic achievement, as well as the previous research identifying the important role that students play in learning initiatives (Kahu, 2013; Sinatra et al., 2015) and the role that engagement plays in aiding deeper learning (Northey et al., 2015). It also aligns with the concept that students can positively help co-create value by engaging in the many opportunities that the university provide and in this example, facilitate learning by enhancing the peer group interactions.

Related to the above comments is the concept of engagement helping enhance the employability of a graduate in that they become:

> *well more employable, more attractive to employers if they have done something different, something extra to put on their CV. Many students are focussed on doing their studies and getting a part time job, that in itself can be a good experience but when you find students that also want to volunteer or get involved in a society, that can open doors because of the networks, friendships and additional experiences* (S1).
>
> *I think the advantages of a student being engaged, is that it just opens up so many opportunities. You meet more people and get more contacts with businesses and organisations, then hopefully you then go on to find employment* (S5).

Qureshi et al., (2016) agree with the findings that student engagement can play a positive role in graduate employability; however, they suggest that this depends upon the student's perception of employability and how they engage within HE. Reschly & Christenson (2012) also endorse the findings and agree that engagement helps not only with academic performance, but also social aspects too in building relationships and contacts with peers and adults, both internal to the university and outside of the institution.

3.3.2.2 Added Value for HE Institutes

The student benefits discussed also have a positive impact that adds value to the university, not only in terms of a better learning environment for both students and staff, but also in terms of direct benefits to the university regarding reputation and the associated advantages. In terms of added value to the university, there was a general agreement that student engagement can have a positive effect upon student cohorts and the learning environment, including motivating the teaching staff and engaging students as partners. The importance of SE was also highlighted, *'you can't have a functional, successful university without quality student engagement'* (S9). *'Engagement is crucial to the university, without it, there would be no point to most of the things we do in a university'* (A5)

Similar to the research undertaken by Bryson (2016) regarding students as partners and Jensen and Bennett (2016) who suggest that staff should move away from a traditional teaching role into a "less pre-defined mode of interaction and liminal space where conversations about teaching and learning can take place" (p41).

> *So from a lecturing point of view, a bunch of engaged students is a lot easier, they are more flexible and I think they are more resilient in terms of looking for information and determining their own learning styles and thinking outside the box which makes life easier* (A3)

> *There was a group of students on my module and the dynamics were extremely positive and engagement of one encouraged engagement on others and they were really actively involved in discussions. It was really rich, there was lots of debate and my role was more of a facilitator as the group was self-managing and developing their own learning* (A4)

Such views correlate with the work by Cook-Sather & Luz (2015) who suggest that engaged students can help co-create in the area of teaching and learning, they noted that often students have difficulty working in partnership with academics, but the evidence provided by the academic findings would suggest this is not the case, as students who are actively engaged in the classroom can help facilitate deeper learning.

Having an engaged student body can also facilitate the university with regards to marketing and promotion, in that students who enjoy their studies are often acting as ambassadors and thus, enhancing the reputation of the institute. *'If there is a level of positivism, everyone is walking around feeling that they are a part of something that is really special and it just becomes part of the universities' DNA'* (A4)

> *In terms of university benefits, obviously we will have a higher calibre of graduates, so the reputation of local and national employers will increase and student satisfaction scores will increase and the hope is that we get a reputation of being able to produce employable graduates that are sort after by the industry* (A2)

'Having engaged students helps to sell the university, also they are on social media saying good things about the university' (A1) and *'having students that sing the praises of the university and the integrity of that really helps in terms of recruitment'* (S5). *'An engaged student is somebody who's got that campus and responsibility pride, be part of the university, wanting to influence and shape the future, wanting to carry that brand'* (S8). Trowler &

Trowler (2010) endorse such sentiments as they suggest that effective SE can have many benefits, in particular helping to enhance the reputation of the university.

3.3.2.3 Societal Gains

Another theme that was discussed regarding the benefits of students engaging was the concept that students can provide additional value to society. Particularly, the theme suggesting that students become 'more rounded' was a common perception. *'They are a more rounded individual; they succeed in life and do better things for themselves and people' (S3) and they become 'global citizens, they are open-minded and they see everything as a learning opportunity'* (A1). *'Being engaged develops you as a person and sets you apart from other students when you go out into the world'* (S3) and *'being a part of the university means that you develop more as a person'* (S9). '*Engagement is all about the capacity of helping others'* (S6). The findings align with the work by Lawson & Lawson (2013) suggesting that community and society can benefit from the associated positive outcomes too, but they acknowledge that often this is an area that is overlooked by universities and researchers.

In addition, many respondents mentioned the capacity of students volunteering which ultimately helps society. *'I see some of the things that students get involved with, it has a 'halo' effect across the university, and city…we see it every day in terms of the students that engage in the community and the impact, that volunteering has'* (S7). *'We have around 2,800 students volunteering with projects across the University and that is about 45,000 hours volunteered in total this year alone' (S9).*

> *Things like societies and the work they do in the student union is fantastic because it's about engaging outwards again. It's like the cliché about someone who comes in and gets a first, but has done nothing else, is maybe not as valuable to an employer, as someone who has joined societies and done voluntary work, who has put themselves out there but may have obtained a lower degree classification* (S2).

The data clearly shows that student engagement is viewed positively by al the stakeholders interviewed and corresponds with previous research (Lester et al., 2013; Gunuc & Kazu, 2015;

Fitzgerald et al., 2016; Barnacle & Dall'Alba, 2017) who acknowledge the importance of extra-curricular activities in engaging students within a HE setting by identifying the importance of 'social engagement' and the impact that initiatives outside of the university setting has upon the local community and the wider society. Researchers (Thomas, 2012; McIlrath & Tansey, 2013) in particular emphasise the positive role volunteering activities can have on student engagement and how such initiatives can impact constructively upon student learning.

3.3.3 Barriers to Student Engagement

Whilst many advantages associated with student engagement were acknowledged by the participants, several also identified there were numerous barriers to universities being able to offer such engagement initiatives. The main barriers identified related to resources, operational issues, processes and systems and tensions of students being perceived as customers.

3.3.3.1 Resources

The majority of respondents stated that there were some constraints that impacted upon them being able to offer engagement opportunities to students, the main limitation being that of resources. *'Resourcing in terms of staffing and finding adequate spaces'* (S6), as well as *'having to reduce the cost per head that were investing in initiatives'* (S8). The element of time and how adaptable the university is, was also raised *'I think resourcing is a difficult one and I think there is a time element. We are always in a state of change and there is always a time element to that'* (A3). '*It is about providing the staff who we have with the right tools, including timing and resources'* (A3). Researchers (Wawrzynski et al., 2012; Gourlay, 2015) also agree that one of the main barriers to successful SE initiatives is a lack of resources including time and finance. Similarly, Kahu & Nelson (2017) acknowledge within their theoretical framework, the role that socio-cultural contexts can play upon engagement. The political environment and economic aspects can adversely impact university funding, as well as structural influences, namely university policy. All of these factors can have implications on how HE institutions prioritise and resource engagement initiatives.

3.3.3.2 Operational

Related to the resourcing issues mentioned above, participants suggested another problem related to engagement initiatives was the increase in student's numbers and the resulting class sizes. *'It's more to do with the operational stuff associated with it, how we manage a large organisation with many students and diverse programmes'* (A4). *Some students will become dis-engaged because they have been lost in the system because we have expanded so much. If you have 30 students in your class, then there is a good chance you may know then, but if you have 150, it becomes less likely'* (A5). Exeter at al., (2010) also agree that the market driven environment and growth in student numbers and increased class sizes are a major barrier to effective SE initiatives. Whilst, it is acknowledged that increased class sizes can prove difficult for staff to administer and encourage engagement activity, inter-related to this concept, is that many students who may be less confident, as suggested by Khattab (2015) may find large classes intimidating and hence, may not feel comfortable to engage in such a setting. The drive for universities to be able to operate in a commercially driven environment and the push for them to increase student numbers, whilst at the same time trying to engage with the student body, would appear an increasing concern for staff involved.

In addition, the concept of staff buy in was stated with staff suggesting that, *'it depends on the activities at an operational level, the people who are delivering the engagement activities; it is the people at the front end who have to deliver it and buy into it*' (A3). '*The first barrier, I suppose is about people buying into it, a common set of expectations that you can deliver'* (A4). *'I think it depends on people priorities, because you want engagement to be part of all the different faculties, but it depends on what they deem their priorities are'* (S4). The findings present two concerns, namely the prioritisation that is placed on such activity and how individual staff then act upon those priorities. Kahu & Nelson (2017) suggest that university policy and direction is fundamental if engagement is to be successful, implying that engagement activity and behaviours should be seen to be of strategic importance and is communicated by senior members in the university. The importance then placed upon such engagement activity and the associated 'buy-in' from all members of staff would seem imperative and is supported by researches (Van Uden et al., 2014; Zepke, 2014) who emphasize the role staff play in SE and the importance they place on such activities, which endorses the findings of this study.

Interestingly, the notion of 'student buy-in' was commented upon as a potential barrier. *'I think sometimes lack of engagement lies with the student'* (S1) and *'sometimes there are limitations on how willing the student is to engage'* (S7). '*So there is often, I think, a mismatch between what students say they want to do and what they actually want to do and I have always found that frustrating'* (S2). *'I think it's about students taking responsibility too, we are here to help but they need to get enthusiastic and be part of it*' (A1). Gourlay (2015) agrees that the motivation associated with how willing students are to engage in additional activities can be a potential barrier to SE, regardless of how elaborate the schemes are or how enthusiastic staff are to deliver them. Similarly, the work by the HEA (2015) suggesting that key to student engagement success, is the notion that students and HE Institutions work in partnership is essential, so as well as having staff 'buy-in', the same is true for students too.

Similarly, lack of awareness of initiatives was also mentioned by two people *'I would assume so, though I've never actually been involved with it (student engagement), I don't know what we do around this, but I would like to think that we are engaging with them'* (A5). Rather alarmingly, this comment came from an academic, who is suggesting that they have never been involved in such activities, yet as part of their duties engagement is very much deemed an essential aspect of any academic job. However, it does raise an important issues of awareness by staff, which is supported by Wawrzynski et al., (2012) who agree with such sentiments. The views expressed are interesting and somewhat highlight the underlying tensions of the role of staff (academic and professional) with regards engagement activities as discussed by Curran & Prottas (2017) and Baltaru (2018), noticing that both sets of staff being concerned of 'buy-in' from colleagues.

3.3.3.3 Processes & Systems

An emergent theme related to barriers to student engagement was that of systems, processes and structures. *'Sometimes it can be difficult to work through different structures, you are not 100% sure on where things are, who you are supposed to talk to and what format it should be in'* (S9). *'With regards to universities and structures, it can be quite difficult to work with that, because things move quick so it is hard to keep up with what is needed'* (S6)

Another theme that emerged from the data related to a "lack of coordination" and a "joined up" approach to delivering engagement initiatives. *'I think sometimes it is just an operational one of how different parts of the university work together to coordinate better'* (S1) and '*we just need to work at coordinating things better, like the optimum way of communicating with students at the right time'* (A2). *'Trying to get everyone working together and respond quickly, as quickly as what students need us to, I think is a tricky balance'* (S5).

> *We need to join up the student journey; we have to work together more closely to understand where the student is sitting at any given point and who is engaging with them and why they are engagement with them. We need to make sure we don't all fight over the student or stress them out, all shouting at once* (S8)

Such comments relate to the findings of Baron & Corbin (2012) who stated that many reasons why students do not engage is due to a fragmented approach and often a lack of common understanding of the SE initiatives and what they are trying to achieve, suggesting that academics and service departments are not always aligned with what they are trying to achieve in regards to strategic engagement activities. As highlighted the vast array of opportunities available to students right throughout their 'student lifecycle" is comprehensive, but what does appear to be lacking is any strategic mapping of how such activities happen, when they occur and what is the main aim. The findings highlight that there appears to be a dis-jointed approach from various departments (academic and professional) that do not fully communicate their intentions to one another, leading to difficulties in engagement delivery and potential take up from students.

Related to the lack of coordination is the notion of a potential disparity between strategic intention and operational capacity. '*It is a challenge; we can do the policies, but where the struggle is, is in the implementation'* (A4) and '*I think there is always a tension between what the strategic and operational is'* (A3). Similarly, it relates to '*direction of policy around things such like student engagement, that has been pushed from the top without acknowledgement of what is happening at the ground level*' (A1).

> *I think the universities expectations are lower than ours on the programmes. For example, you get 100 students, so tick; you have ten staff, so tick. So it's like were efficient and were effective, we did it and we did it within budget. Did the students enjoy themselves; no, they hated it so it wasn't effective. We*

are measured on efficiency rather than effectiveness (A2)

Interesting to note, that all these comments were made solely from academics. The concept of "centralisation" also emerged as a theme and the notion that such a system in itself can create tensions, between not only the strategic policy makers and staff working at the operational level, but also between the service departments and academic staff.

> *There is a centralisation of services and a direction of policy around things like student engagement, they (services) say that if you do this, the student will be engaged, but actually we don't know that, because the people on the ground are saying no, that is not how it works'* (A3)

Such statements agree with the findings of Thomas (2012), who highlighted the importance of "institutional management and co-ordination" (p.17). She suggested that university executive and senior management should provide the necessary infrastructure to support staff involved with SE and they should also take responsibility for developing a culture to help promote such initiatives. This view is acknowledged by a recent report from the Guild HE (2015) who suggest that institutes who embed SE within their culture are often supported by strong leadership which often "a clear sense of value, desired outcomes and accountability for student engagement which is shared" (p.22).

Similar to the view of centralisation is the impact that a "standardised" approach is not always beneficial. *'The challenges that we face is that we decide on the policies and they are all very well and good, but the major challenge is the implementation in a standardised way'* (A4). *'One size is never going to fit all'* (A2)

> *I would say the university, I don't think it trusts, maybe that is too strong a word, but it doesn't trust the people who engage with students. So for example, how you engage with a sport management student is going to be different to how you engage a sport coaching student or a business student. It is all going to be different, so I think a one size fits all works against that* (A1)

This notion that student cohorts are different and the view that universities need to be mindful of the varied student typologies also emerged from the data. *'You have to find the balance for the individual, you can't do this (engagement) as a cohort, it's a personal journey and we need to provide different services to support that'* (S8). *'You need to make engagement a lot more targeted, it can be a lot more tailored to the stage they are at, the*

degree, what entry level, that will make the experience a lot stronger' (S3). Other suggestions were made related to the student age, the nationality of the student, and their home circumstances.

> *It's about the customer journey mapping, we need to look at what sort of person they are, what sort of things they need, what sort of adjustments and use all of this intelligence to build a service journey. At the end of the day when you know the student as an individual, you are more likely to achieve a meaning engagement experience* (S2)

Such statements endorse the work by Zepke (2014) who suggested that many SE initiatives are generic and do not address the individual needs of students, rather focussing on them in a standardised way, which can result in disengagement. However, the question of having the ability to have a less standardised approach was raised in that '*we don't really have the capacity to be as personalised with each individual student as we would want'* (S3). Also, '*how you get there without it being completely top down or just allowing everyone to do what they want, would cost us too much. You have to meet somewhere in the middle'* (A3). Understanding the different needs of students and the diverse nature of the study body has been well documented (Khattab, 2015; O'Shea, 2016; Collie et al., 2017) and whilst research is suggesting that universities need to acknowledge such differences, it is interesting to note that both academic and professional support staff recognise that due to constraints, this is not always feasible.

3.3.3.4 Student v Customer Tensions

A noteworthy theme that emerged from the data was the notion of whether a student is a "customer" and the tensions that arose from the terminology. Woodall et al., (2014) have identified that such tensions are becoming increasingly common in HE institutes as they become more subject to "consumerist pressures typical of a highly marketised environment" (p. 48). It was clear that there were two viewpoints in that some respondents were against the idea:

> *I personally struggle with the concept of the student as a customer…..lots of people don't like to think they are in customer services…for academics I think it is particularly controversial because you are not sat behind a counter* (A3)

Similarly, another academic stated '*no, they are not customers, they are students…they are paying for a service which some might say makes them a customer, but then you have that issue of a customer within a class which is sensitive'* (A2). Mark (2013) expressed similar concerns from his research, suggesting that "many educators are reluctant to embrace the student-customer model and are often suspicious of attempt to apply business concepts to an educational setting" (p.3). Others identified that because students had entered into a contractual relationship with the university, they were in essence customers. However, the *'nature of the contract is different'* (S8) and because of funding structures, students could be seen as customers:

> *regrettably I think it is true, but we have to be able to explain to students they are buying an experience and a service…they aren't buying a good degree, they are buying the opportunity to study a degree* (A5)

Bunce et al., (2017) agree that because students now pay tuition fees then in essence they are customers, but they too found in their research that this notion was rejected by many educators. It was interesting to note, that those against the concept of students as customers were all academics (S8 whilst employed in the services, was a full Professor).

However, those that agreed that students are customers all worked in the service departments:

> *I think the debate is over, the student is now enshrined in law as a customer through the Human Rights Act. I think the tension is, if I understand it correctly, that if I was an academic that I might see this as subservient..you know a customer means I am serving that person..but law says they are customers and they have customer rights* (S7)

The notion of expectations related to how a student should be viewed was also expressed when referring to students as customers. '*I think rightly so, they are paying a lot to come to university…it is a huge life decision for them and their families and their expectations are always going to be growing'* (S2). '*We all expect a lot more and we expect better customer service, quality experiences, value for money….and I think as an academic organisation it's sometimes difficult to be adaptable, quick thinking and reactive'* (S9). Guilbault (2016) supports the debate that students are indeed customers and he suggests that HE institutes should now concentrate efforts and resources to responds to student's needs, instead of

continuing to deny that they are consumers. Such thoughts are also endorsed by other researchers who suggest that universities should concentrate such efforts on valuing the concept of service quality and student expectations, regardless of whether a student is viewed as a customer or not (Tomlinson, 2016; Carter & Yeo, 2016).

Related to this concept, is the role and expectations of students within HE. The view that students had a role to play was endorsed, as well as universities ensuring that students had a clear expectation of what that role should be. The notion that students should bring a level of energy to university was shared, *'I think that the general message is that there are a lot of opportunities for students to become engaged, but they (students) have to be willing and devote time to them, students need to bring a level of energy and value too'* (A4). '*Students should know they are making the right decisions, they are in the right university and on the right programme and that level of positive energy is something that you should expect'* (A1). Another interesting view was that students should be able to solve certain issues by themselves:

> *I think a student group that is engaged, should be able to overcome problems, they can battle adversity and also, they can help each other. So engagement is not just about doing it for yourself, but there is the expectation, it is about doing it for others too* (A1)

Respondents also acknowledged that universities had a role to play in highlighting what those expectations were to students:

> *Taking on board the environment constantly changing, the competition side of things in HE is huge, so following through on what we promise students and making sure we don't over promise is important. Managing expectations of students is hugely important* (S3)

> *We need to think about making activities in the early stages of the student's experience of the university, that shows that engagement is positive, where it becomes an expectation for them. So it is about creating that expectation in the students when they first arrive and as they progress through* (A4)

Interestingly, it was also acknowledged that whilst it was recognised that the university and staff have a duty to students in explaining what the expectations and role of students within

HE are, it was suggested that a lack of evaluation fails to recognise if such notions take place. *'I think what we lack if I'm being honest, as a university, we lack the kind of metrics to be able to actually measure if we do such things, if students are aware if their role, if engagement and events are useful, if they have an impact'* (S1). *'I think engagement is a difficult thing to measure, if it is a just a superficial value for money, making the students urn up then that is a simplistic view'* (S4). This would differ from what is suggested by Teeroovengadum et al., (2016) who suggest that a holistic approach is needed when assessing student engagement, to fully understand if engagement and service quality is taking place. Findings related to students and staff playing a role in engagement, supports the work by Judson & Taylor (2014) who endorse the fact that both play an important part in helping to co-create value and engagement.

The concept of students playing a part in co-creation emerged when participants were asked what their role was with regards SE. It was suggested that the process needed to be two-way, *'An engaged student actually participates in a two-way relationship rather than a one-way relationship'* (S7). *'The university provides the opportunity, but the student needs to take that opportunity and build up the relationship with the university'* (S4). *'An engaged student has to be in a two-way conversation with the university'* (S8). It was agreed that universities should provide the engagement opportunities, '*as a university, it's about creating the opportunities, but it's the students that need to take up those opportunities and feed-in to what is trying to be achieved for the benefit of everyone'* (A2). This was elaborated upon by a number of participants who stated that students can help create value by taking on a meaningful part in engagement opportunities:

> *Part of SE is about student's vision and ownership, the role that they play in working with us to achieve an outcome. Therefore, this notion of studentships something that I think is an important dimension. They're not passive recipients or individuals within the university. They are actually a collective group, who can influence, so are a major stakeholder* (A4)

> *In my view I would say that they should be involved in most of the decision-making at the university. From the micro-level, so say what assessment tasks they should be performing, through to decisions about whether a programme should be approved. We have lots of processes that require active engagement and I think students should be a part of that* (A1)

> *It's about being an active part of the decision-making. To be an active player in the learning experiences of themselves and others and fulfilling their commitment to the learning outcomes for them and the university. We need to look at the extent to which students actively engage in all aspects of the universities work* (A3)

Examples provided by the staff comments suggest that students can help co-create value through engagement opportunities in many ways, for example academia (students being involved in programme design); social interactions (that helps co-create value for the peer group); and society engagement (engagement opportunities that aid the community such as volunteering). Whilst the findings highlight the importance of co-creating, one needs to be mindful that Cook-Sather & Luz (2015) acknowledge that this can be difficult in HE, due to the nature of the staff-student relationship, which is also apparent in the findings highlighted relating to student v customer debate. The results do align with previous research outlining the benefits that co-creation can play in enhancing engagement and the student experience (Fitzgerald et al., 2016; Wawrzinek et al., 2017).

3.4 Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate how universities offer engagement opportunities to their students; what are the advantages of student engagement from a university perspective; and any barriers to staff being able to deliver student engagement initiatives. The empirical findings clearly indicate that indeed there are many activities that HE institutes undertake to attempt to engage with their students through the student journey. The associated benefits of students engaging with such initiatives was apparent and the benefits were applicable to not only the individual, but also the university and society too.

Barriers to student engagement were also highlighted with the main reasons being lack of resources, operational issues and systems and processes not "fit for purpose". One of the main concerns highlighted was the concept that many SE initiatives were generic and bearing in mind, the evidence that has been presented regarding the changing nature of the student body, it is not surprising to hear that HE staff suggested that a "one size fits all" is not effective. Clearly, HE institutes need to be aware of their student population and their individual needs

whilst acknowledging resource implications. As well as understanding student typologies, those responsible for SE need to consider the whole student journey and determine how such typologies engage throughout this timeline. Also, university executive, in determining their strategic direction need to ensure that they have the right resources, systems and processes in place to ensure effective delivery, as well as ensuring that staff who are implementing such initiatives are fully equipped and aware of what their roles are in helping to deliver the activities.

Another interesting theme that emerged from the research was the notion that students have a role to play in SE and indeed can help co-create value in a teaching and learning setting. The concept of students having a dual role, in that they are recipients, as well as providers of what a university offers is a growing area of research and provides a new perspective in how students are viewed. Wawrzinek et al., (2017) suggest that universities provide a platform for students, but other stakeholders (academics and service departments) need to learn from each other in order to ensure that students receive effective service quality that helps to co-create value. Hence, it is imperative that academic departments and service departments work together in cooperation to ensure that SE initiatives are jointly understood and delivered, in order to help overcome some of the operational issues and tensions that have been presented in the research findings of this study.

Similarly, the discourse around "students as customers" has also received much attention in recent years, given the changing environment of HE. Regardless of individual perceptions of how HE staff view students, it is important to note from a management perspective that student satisfaction and student perceptions of return on investment and value for money, (all connotations associated with a commercial venture) are very much at the forefront of students minds when they are deciding where to study and as such, university executive would be naïve if they did not concentrate efforts on ensuring that they addressed such concerns. In doing so, it would seem imperative that this message be communicated internally to all staff (academic as well as professional) to highlight the importance that is placed on such factors and outcomes.

Whilst the findings raise interesting discussion, the views from both academic and professional staff raise important issues that potentially impact upon HE students and engagement. Understanding how students view engagement and addressing some of the

concerns raised in study one, is imperative to gain a greater insight and knowledge of SE, hence this thesis will now focus on views and opinions of students regarding engagement opportunities, that are both academic and non-academic.

Chapter 4: A Qualitative Investigation of Student Opinions on Student Engagement within Higher Education

This chapter will present the findings from the second empirical study exploring student opinions of SE. The structure comprises of the research aims and a reasoning of the focus group methodology utilised to collect the information. Findings will be explained in relation to: what students perceived to be the advantages and barriers to engagement; and whether students thought they have a role to play in engagement opportunities within HE. Students viewed the benefits of SE included a positive return on investment for the individual student, added value to their university and societal gains. Many barriers to students engaging at university were highlighted namely: transitioning to university; other commitments; financial barriers; mental health issues; lack of confidence and motivation; learning difficulties; lack of support; cultural difference; size of class; difficult to join in; and staff buy-in. The final section will provide a conclusion to the study, with management implications presented in chapter 6.

4.1 Research Aims

As discussed, research into engagement is often evaluated from a linear perspective, focusing on one aspect of inquiry from a given set of participants (Hu, Ching & Chao, 2012). The first study focussing on staff opinions of SE raised interesting viewpoints from both academic and professional staff within HE that can have potential implications upon how engagement opportunities are offered and delivered to students within HE. Wang & Degol (2014) suggest that gaining opinions from a student perspective is crucial to fully appreciate the complex and holistic nature of SE. Research regarding understanding student's views of what they think engagement is and what type of activity they may participate in from both an academic and non-academic perspective has been shown to be lacking hence, this study will address those questions raised (Trowler, 2010; Lester et al., 2013; Fitzgerald et al., 2016).

The concept relating to students attending university receiving a return on their investment (Suleman, 2016; Money et al., 2016) and increasing their own personal value (Tomlinson, 2017) will be investigated to gain a greater understanding to what students think are the advantages of SE and whether they endorse the previous research findings highlighted in the

review section. Also exploring if students agree that the benefits to SE can go beyond the individual student is an area of investigation that warrants further research (Henning, 2012; Lawson & Lawson, 2013; Barnacle & Dall'Alba, 2017).

Most importantly the barriers that stop students participating in engagement activities will be explored. The lack of research in this area has been highlighted and it is a vital question that HE institutions need to address, if they are to be successful in implementing SE strategies that fulfil the aims of their universities (Palmer et al., 2017; Quin, 2017). The research presented suggests that certain typologies of students may be at a disadvantage to uptake engagement opportunities for a variety of reasons such as socio-economic background and family commitments (Hamilton Bailey & Phillips, 2016; Aljohani, 2016; Eriksson et al., 2017). Modern universities today, by their very nature of having charitable status have a duty of care for all their students. Therefore, it is vitally important for them to fully understand if such barriers stop segments of their student population from engagement opportunities (Zacherman & Foubert, 2014). Hence, this study will address this issue to validate if such findings agree with the previous research highlighted. Addressing the research questions identified will hopefully help inform HE providers with an evidence based insight alleviating some of the issues and concerns raised.

4.2 Methodology

4.2.1 Design

Buckley (2013) identifies the importance of surveying students to explore their views on education, learning and engagement. However, he recognises that a lot of engagement activity does not take place in the classroom, suggesting that often such surveys do not take this into account. Other researchers agree and suggest that often surveys relating to student engagement focus solely on student success (Tai et al., 2020) and fail to address the many other dimensions associated with engagement identified in the literature. As outlined by Kahu & Nelson (2017) adopting a holistic approach to enquiring about SE and being able to explore the many facets that can impact upon individual students' relationship to engagement, provides a more comprehensive understanding. This study utilised a qualitative design to gain a greater in-depth insight (Rothwell et al., 2016) and allowing the exploration

of the various dimensions of engagement. Using focus groups, allowed participants to articulate their perceptions and issues (Jones et al., 2018) in the form of group discussions (Sim & Waterfield, 2019).

A semi-structured schedule (refer to Appendix 3) was compiled which investigated the following areas: understanding of student engagement; knowledge of student engagement activities and initiatives; differences between an engaged and dis-engaged student; advantages of student engagement; barriers to student engagement; how students find out about SE initiatives; and the role of students within SE.

The focus group consisted of open-ended questions which aimed at allowing in-depth answers and discourse (Carey & Asbury, 2016). Students were also asked to imagine a "typical week" in the life of two fictitious students (Billy and Jane), one who was fully engaged with university (refer to Appendix 5) and one who was not engaged (refer to Appendix 6). The use of fictional characters helped allow open discussion, allowing students to freely discuss and debate the characters. They were asked to provide examples that demonstrated engagement and dis-engagement and also what the advantages of being engaged are to a student and what the barriers may be that stop students participating in engagement activities, the results of which will be discussed.

4.2.2 Participants

Participants were recruited from undergraduate students studying at a Post-92 university within the UK. A convenience sampling technique was chosen, which is common in studies undertaken with students studying at university (Orcher, 2017). The students were purposively selected from a range of departments, using criterion sampling (Padgett, 2017) based upon students who were at least in their second year of study onwards. A total of twenty-one students participated in five focus groups, from various departments across the university, studying a variety of academic programmes (mainly from the Faculty of Health & Life Sciences), with the majority of students being in their final year of study (refer to Table 10). The sample consisted of students representing different gender, ethnicity, age ranges and study mode. In light of the concerns regarding insider research discussed in chapter 3, none of the students chosen were taught by the researcher.

Table 10. Study 2 Participant Information				
Focus Group	**Study Discipline**	**Gender**	**Study Year**	**Respondent Code**
1	Psychology	Male	Year 3	R1
1	Biomedical Sciences	Female	Year 3	R2
1	Psychology	Female	Year 3	R3
1	Food, Science & Nutrition	Female	Year 3	R4
1	Sport Psychology	Male	Year 3	R5
1	Sport Sciences	Male	Year 3	R6
2	Fine Arts	Female	Year 3	R7
2	Design	Female	Year 3	R8
2	Sport Sciences	Male	Year 3	R9
2	Sport Management	Male	Year 3	R10
2	Sport Coaching	Male	Year 2	R11
3	Nursing	Male	Year 3	R12
3	Nursing	Female	Year 2	R13
4	Law	Female	Year 3	R14
4	Law	Female	Year 3	R15
4	Law	Male	Year 3	R16
4	Law	Male	Year 3	R17
5	Psychology	Female	Year 3	R18
5	Psychology	Female	Year 2	R19
5	Psychology & Criminology	Female	Year 3	R20
5	Psychology	Female	Year 2	R21

4.2.3 Procedure

Following ethical approval from the Faculty of Health & Life Sciences Ethics Committee at Northumbria University, potential participants were sent an email asking if they would be willing to participate. Once agreed, all respondents were sent a participant information sheet which outlined the purpose of the study, the requirements of the participants and an explanation of how the research data would be used and stored. A mutual time and date was agreed for the focus groups to take place, the location being a small, quiet teaching room located on the university campus. Before the focus groups commenced, participants were reminded of the research aims of the study and asked to complete and sign a consent form that outlined that the participant understood the requirements of the study and agreed to take part. It was also explained that all the discussions would be recorded and transcribed, with the data being anonymised.

Throughout the focus group discussion, the researcher probed and encouraged participants to respond when necessary to enrich the debate of deep and meaningful beliefs and views that allowed a greater understanding of the research questions being posed (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013). Thus, allowing subsequent insights into given contexts and contextualisation of those meanings (Queiros et al., 2017; Attia & Edge, 2017).

At the end of the focus group, all participants were presented with a participant de-brief sheet which outlined information if they wanted to withdraw from the study and also if they wished to receive data about the results. The students were also handed a monetary gift voucher for participating in the research, the payment of which had been approved in ethical accordance with university policy. Data was collected over an 8-week period and the focus groups lasted up to 1 hour and 39 minutes, with the average being 1 hour, 12 minutes.

4.2.4 Analysis

All of the focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed to ensure an accurate report and record of the information collected. As Cyr (2016) suggests, focus group analysis allows the researcher to synthesis the findings by not only individual data, but also the group and interaction of the group, thus allowing the analysis of complex social concepts such as student engagement. Care was taken to avoid underdevelopment of the data, as outlined in study 1 and the data was coded, with the subsequent themes and patterns identified (Fugard & Potts, 2015; Saldana, 2016). To ensure deep and meaningful codes were established, the researcher read the transcripts numerous times to safeguard an in-depth scrutiny of the investigation.

4.3 Results & Discussion

The results from study 2 revealed three main areas of discussion, namely: the role of the student; advantages and incentives of student engagement; and barriers and disincentives to student engagement. Within each section, sub themes and lower order themes were identified (refer to Table 11 and Appendix 4) that revealed further insight into student's opinions related to SE. The themes will be discussed with participant's quotes and critically scrutinised in context with the previous literature presented in the review section.

Table 11. Study 2 Theme Analysis		
Theme Heading	**Sub-Themes**	**Lower Order Themes**
The Role of the Student	Understanding of SE	Inclusiveness, relationships, interactions, teamwork
	Student Responsibility	Proactive, effort, participating in additional opportunities, two-way process, professionalism
	Awareness of SE Opportunities	Types of SE initiatives, how students heard about SE
Advantages and Incentives of Student Engagement	Return on Investment	Health and wellbeing, stress release, feel-good factor, positive mental health, build relationships, positive experiences, skill development, career and employability benefits, networking
	Co-Created Value for HE Institutions	University rankings, league tables, student satisfaction, marketing and promotion, funding, reputation, relationship with teaching staff, positive teaching and learning experiences
	Societal Gains	Global citizens, well-balanced individuals, volunteering, local community, economic gains
Barriers and Disincentives to Student Engagement	Other Commitments	Childcare, family, work
	Transitioning	Expectations, homesick, live at home, anxiety, not knowing, integration
	Size of Class	Difficulty to interact, blanket approach
	Learning Difficulties	Stop students from engaging
	Cultural	Language, loneliness, inter-cultural differences
	Staff Buy-In	Role staff play, lack of interest, frustration
	Lack of Support	Nature-nurture, sense of direction
	Difficult to Join In	Miss induction, awkwardness
	Financial	Expense, working, cost of societies, access to loans
	Mental Health Issues	Depression, anxiety, loneliness
	Lack of Confidence and Motivation	Intimidation, timid, personality, not knowing

4.3.1 The Role of the Student

It was clear from the results that all the students had a clear view of what they understood SE was and the role of a student, the main areas that emerged from the discussion included: student's understanding of SE; student responsibility; and awareness of SE opportunities.

4.3.1.1 Understanding of Student Engagement

All of the respondents had various views regarding what they understood to be the meaning of student engagement. Many stated keywords that they associated with the term including: proactive, willing, motivation, initiative, drive, independence, support, guidance, active, awareness, relationship, rewarding, integration, determination, interaction, application, effort, organised, resourceful, planning, attending, communicating, collaborating, opportunity and commitment.

The concept of inclusiveness was also stated '*I think student engagement includes everybody. Everyone is catered for, no matter what problems you may have'* (R5). *'It makes everyone feels as a whole and there is something for everyone*' (R3). Similarly, the importance of relationship and interaction was stated, '*it doesn't necessarily mean a positive or negative relationship, but it's like when you are interacting with other people and trying to gain a relationship regardless of where that is based on'* (R12). '*it's about support and relationships, you have to have someone to go to, to be able to talk and share experiences with, that is engagement*' (R4).

Teamwork was another important concept concerning SE and the role students' play in supporting one another. '*Peer support, I think sometimes it can have happened without you even realising it, you can help your friends, help each other, commitment to each other and given your time*' (R17). '*Yeah, engaging with others on your course is quite important especially when it comes to assignments. Instead of struggling away on your own, make sure to use all the resources and that includes your friends and classmates'* (R19)

> *I think it's about how you work together, I think obviously turning up to your lectures, but also when we have group work. Actually contributing and doing stuff outside of lectures as well is the biggest thing, not just turning up to your lectures and not really listening, that is not engaging, it's about how you work with your peers* (R21)

> *Well helping other people out is important, I think oh I can't be bothered, but I know I've made an effort to go through the group chat, because I think if that was me and I needed people's* help, then I would want their help (R8)

The diverse explanation that students associate with the concept of engagement correlate with Boekaerts (2016) who suggests that there are many variations and definitions of what SE is, however, the notion of relationship building and integration corresponds with the work by suggested by the HEA (2015) who have partnership building at the core of engagement activities.

4.3.1.2 Student Responsibility

When asked specifically, if students have a role to play in engagement activities, almost all of the respondents agreed that they do. '*There are so many opportunities, but it's up to you to engage with them' (R3). 'I think it sounds really cliché, but you get out of it what you put in'* (R18). '*Yeah, I think there is nothing stopping students from getting involved, there is no reason really, not to'* (R13). '*So uni can offer all these fantastic opportunities, but if we don't take them up, they are going to stop offering them, so it requires effort from both parts. If they are willing to put them on, surely we should be willing to take that up'* (R20).

> *The way I think about it, is that it depends how you consider What you want from uni. I would say if you walk in and all you want to do is turn up to the lectures you have to and go home and that's it, then your student engagement is really minimal. But if you decide you're going to join a society and be really proactive then you can grow in the society, maybe become a member or a president. Whereas, if you don't join or sports club, or miss lectures, no one would even notice* (R2)

> *I think you can have poor student engagement or like good student engagement. Good student engagement, they (students) speak to everyone on the course. They get, sort of known. You know who they are. They usually go above and beyond their course, so not just engaged with the set material, but being a rep or getting involved with societies at the student union* (R14)

> *You put the effort in, you get out what you want. You want to make friends, you go and make friends. You want to go out, you go out. You want to get a job; you get a job. It's pretty self-explanatory, it's just go and get it really* (R10)

Such statements agree with the work by Respondek et al., (2017) who agree that students have a role in engagement, but universities need to be aware of the "anxiety" students may feel and as such, implement strategies to ensure students feel comfortable in engaging.

Another theme that emerged from the data related to students being proactive in joining in the additional opportunities that were offered by the university, both academic and non-academic. 'I*t is the whole sort of package that the university has, they have to try and engage with the student on every level, not just on information, but support on anything to do with what a student might need'* (R1). *'I think it's about taking part in things the university offers or hosts or organises'* (R9). *'If the university does something or organises something, how likely students are to respond to that'* (R4). *'And whether the students know about and are willing to take advantages of opportunities and activities'* (R21). The issues raised highlight the variety of engagement opportunities that are offered by both academic and professional staff, as well as implying that students have a role in taking up those partnership opportunities, similar to the findings of Healey, Flint & Harrington (2016). Such findings build upon the work and agree with previous researchers who have emphasised that student engagement is multi-faceted and can include many dimensions (Sinatra et al, 2015). The comments raised also build upon the work by Fredricks et al., (2016) suggesting that additional dimensions of social-behavioural (teamwork); agentic (extra academic activities) and volitional (opportunities and extra-curricular activities) play an important role in SE. In addition, the findings support the notion that students have a role to play in SE and students should strive to be proactive leaners (Kori et al., 2016) and help co-create all elements of education (Pucciareli & Kaplan, 2016).

The concept that SE was related to undertaking extra activities offered by universities was a common theme amongst respondents. Relating to academia, '*I think it's about extra academic stuff, so not just doing the bare minimum, but also if there any extra things or maybe there is some additional reading, additional lecture drop-in sessions, engaging with every area of the course*' (R13). '*I think its involvement, so your attendance, your reading and sort of extra work outside of the classroom. If you're in seminars, it's contributing, not passively attending lectures or not attending lectures'* (R15). '*I think it's to what extent a student engages with whatever the space they are involved in. So the course, other students, lecturers, pre-seminar work, that kind of stuff*' (R17). Such findings correlate with the work by

Manderanach (2015) who identifies that SE involvement can occur through behavioural, cognitive and affective engagement, resulting in enhanced academic ability.

However, the findings also highlighted the important role engagement can encompass through non-academic initiatives, supporting and acknowledging the work by Trowler (2010), who highlights that engagement activity relates to interactions between universities and students that go beyond academic engagement only. *'There are also non-academic ways that you can do stuff, just being a bit imaginative and engaging on a personal level'* (R20). '*How much you are actually part of the university as opposed to just going to the course and then leaving, like actually staying and doing extra activities and being part of societies'* (R7). Similarly, many respondents stated the various opportunities available to students to participate in engagement '*there are plenty of opportunities, the societies, whether it be sport or non-sport'* (R16) and '*the student union and all that sort of stuff that is extra from the work*' (R11). *'I'd probably say events as well, for students to be engaged, they will want to do something, go to something, have something to be engaged with, maybe for fun or to want to go and do it'* (R2). Kahu (2013) highlights that to fully understand the effects of SE, then a holistic approach is needed to understand both academic and non-academic initiatives. It is clear from the findings that students view both aspects of SE as important and both have a significant role to play in the outcomes of students, in different ways.

The concept that students need to act professionally and responsibly was also a theme that emerged from the data. '*I think that students and also the university does have a role. I think students should try and help, but the downside is, we aren't professional and we don't know what to do*' (R10). '*I think the tutors will only engage, if you're seen to be an adult coming to university, you have to show initiative and want to get engaged*' (R4). '*I think you have to show initiative, do stuff that makes you stand out, you have to show others that you are responsible and mature, so you can adapt in any circumstances'* (R16).

> *There wouldn't be many opportunities, if people didn't get involved and use more experienced students. We need to run societies, volunteers need to be mentors, I think more experienced students need to be involved and show responsibility* (R15)

Kori et al., (2016) endorse these findings and suggest that students are in charge of their own behaviour and agree that they have an important role that can determine their destiny, in a

positive or negative way. The findings also concur with the concept of students as co-creators (Cook-Sather & Luz, 2015; Judson & Taylor, 2014; Fitzgerald et al., 2016), suggesting that students indeed have an important role to play in engagement and as such, HE institutes can become a joint venture to ensure that students achieve ultimate success, which in turn fulfils the aims of HE providers. However, some of the findings have indicated that this is not always the case and often partnerships are not achieved due to lack of engagement from students, as well as staff too.

4.3.1.3 Awareness of Student Engagement Opportunities

When the participants were asked to provide examples of SE opportunities, it was clear from the results that all of the respondents had an awareness of various initiatives that were offered by the university. The examples stated (refer to Table 12), showed various approaches used to engage students, including academic initiatives, activities offered both internal to the university, as well as outside of the university setting, in line with the work identified by Bowden et al., (2019). Students also found out about such activities (refer to Table 13) through various channels and were aware of many initiatives mainly through marketing within the university setting.

> *I think students do have a role to get engaged in everything, but they need to take responsibility for making the most out of their time at university, but at the same time, it's also the university's role to make students aware of the opportunities, so it's a two-way street* (R7)

Researchers (Neier & Zayer, 2015; Imlawi et al., 2015) also highlight the importance of HE providers making students are aware of engagement activities. They identified that awareness is vital, acknowledging the positive impact SE can have on student outcomes.

Table 12. Examples of How Students Engage at University				
Academically	Lecture Support	Interaction in Class	Attendance	Engaging with Feedback
	Student Reps	Student Counsellor	Library	Study Support
	Career Workshops	Open Days	Seminar Support	Revision Sessions
	Drop-In Sessions	Academic Surveys	Student Support Sessions	Induction
Internal to the University	Sports Events	Fresher's Fairs	Student Support	Sport Facilities
	Clubs and Societies	Health & Wellbeing	Counselling	Social Facilities
	Cafes and Social Spaces	Volunteering	Study Abroad	Placements
	Careers	Student Union	Campaigns	Employability
	Central Support Sessions	Occupational Health	Student Ambassadors	Fundraising
External to the University	Outside Societies	Volunteering	Study Abroad	Placements
	Outside Networks	Guest Talks	Job Opportunities	External Campaigns

Table 13. How Students Heard About Engagement Initiatives				
Posters	Emails	Web	Library Adverts	Computer Adverts
Word of Mouth	Lecturers	Fresher's Fair	Societies Week	Sports Fair
ELearning Platform	Events	Open Days	Induction	Flyers
Students Reps	Guest Talks	Volunteer Week	Advertisements	Taster Sessions
Work Experience	Student Union	Social Media	Emails	Notice Boards
Drop In Sessions	Student Handbook	Part of Course		

4.3.3 Advantages and Incentives of Student Engagement

Similar to the findings revealed in study one, students had similar feelings to HE staff who suggested that such benefits fall into three categories namely: return on investment for the student; co-created value for the HE institution; and societal gains.

4.3.3.1 Return on Investment

The most common theme that emerged from the data related to health and wellbeing, which correlates to the findings identified in study 1 (Masika & Jones, 2016; Gunuc & Kazu, 2015). *'I think SE helps with wellbeing, health benefits and mental health'* (R20). '*Engagement helps to take pressure off and stress from the academic side. It can help give you a break from work, so you have a balanced life*' (R13). *'Doing social stuff shows you're a well-balanced person*

and not just a workaholic' (R8). Similar quotes suggested that SE could also help with student's "feel good". *'I am addicted to the feel good factor and SE can help that, doing something that makes you feel good, volunteering and stuff like that'* (R10). *'Students are more likely to stay engaged with the course if they feel good about themselves and SE can help that'* (R19). The issue of mental health and the role that HE providers play in addressing this was also stated.

> *I think there is an element of wellbeing with SE. I know it is prominent now and universities have a higher duty of care as they are under scrutiny to make sure students are ok. So I think getting students involved in activities does help overall, they feel better and are not lonely. The fear is that if someone is not engaging, they might be secluded and that lead them to not being a good state of mine* (R5)

> *In general, it's about making a student happier and the worst case scenario is that the student is anxious and they hate university. I think the top priority for tutors and for anyone is the students enjoying themselves and having a happy university experience, it's a domino effect* (R12)

> *It is a well-known thing that there is a decline in young people's mental health at university and it's a big step for them to go from living at home to living in a different place and making new friends. It's a massive jump and often it can impact upon your mental health. Becoming upset, bothered, anxious, lonely* (R10)

Similarly, two respondents suggested that SE can actually help you prepare for overcoming such mental health issues as it allows you to develop the tools to deal with such issues. *'I guess, if you have been involved in like sport and health, then you are prepared because your brain is engaged mentally and I guess that if things become stressful, you are ok because you can manage mentally'* (R11). *'I think it's definitely positive because you get into a mindset, being constantly active, so when the going gets tough, you can deal with it'* (R9).

Finn and Zimmer (2012) agree with the findings that student engagement can play an important role in enhancing student's achievement and wellbeing. The work by Castello et al., (2017) also supports the findings of the study, in identifying similar reasons as to why students choose to engage and the perceived benefits, as well as identifying factors such as

'loneliness' and personality traits that can have a negative impact on student's ability to transition to university life. The rise in awareness regarding HE students and mental health wellbeing has been well documented and such findings serve as a timely reminder how SE activity can have a very positive role in overcoming such issues however, it is vitally important that universities recognise that every student is different regarding personality and traits (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012), so HE providers need to take this into account when providing initiatives for a large student population.

Linked to the theme of wellbeing, many respondents stated that SE was important as it helped build relationships and friendships. *'Being involved in engagement can help you make friends, so you are not lonely'* (R8). '*The clubs and societies can help you make friends; from all the people you meet'* (R5). '*I'm still with my friends I met at induction, so it was more to do with meeting people and being happy, rather than the course'* (R6). As well as friendships, SE was also identified in helping build good relationships with teaching staff '*I don't know whether it's because my course is small, but I have really good relationships with all of my lecturers'* (R1).

> *I think on the whole, a high level of student engagement is a good thing. Everyone has said like the academic stuff and I agree with that, but I think SE can be quite social. Like sometimes if you have problems, you have a wide circle of friends to talk to or teaching staff* (R16)

> *University is about an experience, you can spend three years here and a lot of the time, you come straight from college. I think in terms of that it's about making the whole experience an easy transition for everybody and an enjoyable one, we pay a lot of money and you want to have a positive experience* (R13)

As well as the associated benefits of wellbeing and establishing relationships, many students suggested that participating in SE at university can help enhance many skills (refer to Appendix 7), endorsing the work by Neves (2016). These included conceptual, technical and human skills as suggested by the pioneering work on skills sets undertaken by Katz (1955), with the majority of respondents stating human skills as the most prevalent.

> *I would say to be honest, the part of your degree isn't what grade you get and the knowledge you have learned on your course, but more so the skills that you learn is more important*

> *for your degree. So technical skills, communication, leadership, responsibility, making presentations, you do all this in most jobs, so all these kind of things are vital* (R8)

> *I think university is quite good at recognising it is hard to get a good degree, if you are not prepared to engage. So they concentrate on developing those skills that are necessary to make sure you engage, work with people, work in groups, show teamwork, get involved and help develop many skills* (R13)

Other advantages of engaging that benefitted individuals related to academic and career/employability benefits. '*Engaging in SE, you get better grades, you are more employable, you are well-rounded and you have a lot to put on your CV*' (R10). '*If you go to lectures, you're going to get a better grade, you do well in university with your degree'* (R18). '*Engagement helps with independent learning, joining clubs, participating in class, meeting new people, can all help with your learning, deeper learning*' (R7). Many respondents stated that SE can help with employability, particularly enhancing a student's CV '*I think there is a correlation between people who put the hours in with extra-curricular activities and stuff to enhance their CV'* (R4). '*Because you have done volunteering, you can register these hours and it shows on your official university report'* (R6). '*You're going to learn a lot of different skills which is good for your CV. Working and being involved in different societies always looks good, so it will be good for employment*' (R21). '*Prospective employers will look at people and say yeah, they have gone above and beyond their time at university, which is good for job prospects'* (R2). Another noticeable theme that emerged from the data linked to employability, was the benefit that SE can help with networking and opening up opportunities. '*You can get a lot of connection if you are involved in SE*' (R16). '*I think the networking aspects of SE helps. If you're networking with students who are going to become qualified, that may help. But you also get to meet people external to the university who are already in employment*' (R17).

> *Last year I was lucky enough to be invited to a conference and I got speaking to people I thought I'd never be speaking to with vast amount of expertise and experience* (R1)

> *I think in terms of careers, it benefits the students because obviously it helps them either gain experience or helps them get a job afterwards, which benefits students and the employability statistics that the university has. It*

also makes university life more enjoyable doing things outside of your course (R4)

The findings support the research by Northey et al., (2015) suggesting that SE can aid deeper learning, as well as enhance career prospects (Balloo et al., 2017). It also aligns with the work by Lawson & Lawson (2013) who identify that many of the positive outcomes related to SE occurs outside of a classroom setting.

4.3.3.2 Co-Created Value for HE Institution

The respondents also suggested that engaged students can help the university too, by adding value through their engagement activities that benefits the HE institution in various ways. Students suggested that SE can help with university rankings '*engagement can help with the university stats, league table are great to see academically where a university is, as well as student satisfaction tables which are really important*' (R13). '*Might help them go higher up the league tables, also it might help with funding if you are rated higher, helps with student satisfaction surveys too*' (R12). '*If students aren't happy, then it will impact upon the university rankings, which I am guessing will impact upon their funding'* (R16)

I think as well as the university statistics and students saying they are engaged, you can put that information in the university prospectus and help advertise the university (R3)

Other comments suggested that SE can help a university's reputation. '*If students are engaged, they are happy which helps the university reputation'* (R10). '*If you were asked how was your time at university and you said, "it wasn't any good" and you went engaged, that that will have a negative impact on the university's reputation*' (R20).

I think it will have a big impact on the university's reputation as well. If someone graduates from the university and then goes to tell their family and friends "oh well I went and was really lonely and there was nothing to do. There were no activities at the student union". Then this would put people off going, so it works for the university as well (R2)

Similarly, comments were made regarding how SE can help with the relationships students forge with teaching staff. '*Basically, the fact that they are a student rep, the university has a*

better understanding of the students they are dealing with' (R9). '*Being a student rep role model, it helps out tutors as much as the student too'* (R1). '*It helps the lectures too, if you've got people actually interacting in class that is better for the lecturer and students too'* (R12).

The benefits stated clearly correlate with the previous work identified with many researchers who demonstrate the added co-created value that SE can bring to a HE institute (Trowler & Trowler, 2010; Henning, 2012). Rather slowly, it appears that universities are now recognising the added advantage that students can create value, through positive outcomes associated with branding, image, endorsements, marketing and promotion. However, universities need to ensure SE engagement is primarily for the benefit of students and now lose sight of that, in attempting to gain outcomes more associated with benefits for the HE institution.

4.3.3.3 Societal Gains

Again, following the same findings as study 1, respondents suggested that SE within HE can also help society as whole. '*Engagement can benefit the local community in many ways'* (R15). *'So I guess it benefits the city too, I mean there are loads of young people volunteering in societies around the city and doing things voluntarily for those societies'* (R7).

> *It helps form a collective organisation, not only for the university, but societies and the community too. The student union has many societies with funding that work in the local community, which is massive for helping the economy too* (R18)

> *I think universities want everyone to feel like one community, even though you're separated by your course and you have got different departments. Overall, we are all at one university, staff, students, whoever does what, we are all one group. So all the event, clubs, societies, spaces, give everyone the chance to be one big community that can help each other and society* (R8)

The benefits to the wider society are well documented in research (Thomas, 2012; McIlrath & Tansey, 2013; Fitzgerald, 2016; Barnacle & Dall'Alba, 2017) and highlight the importance that SE can play on benefitting a wider population, whilst at the same time enhancing the individual student to become global citizens. The role that universities play in working with

communities, at local, national and international are increasingly playing an important role in the UK, hence, the findings suggest that engagement activity can enhance this strategic aim.

4.3.4 Barriers and Disincentives to Student Engagement

Whilst it has been identified that there are many advantages and benefits to participating in student engagement, it has also been acknowledged that there are many barriers too. Similar to the findings in study 1, many respondents identified numerous reasons (refer to Appendix 6) why students did not engagement in such initiatives.

4.3.4.1 Transitioning

One theme that emerged related to the difficulties student had in transitioning to university life. '*It is hard to start at uni, when you don't really know what you are doing, or what is expected of you. You might be far away from home and you might be really homesick*' (R3). *'They might not engage with uni, cos you are really missing home, your family, familiar surroundings and people you know*' (R12). Similarly, respondents expressed that living at home during university can also be a barrier to engaging fully. '*We have people on our course that live at home so they tend to socialise with home friends and not uni classmates'* (R17). '*If you live at home, you don't tend to spend much time at uni, you just come in for lectures and then go straight home*' (R11). '*If you don't live in accommodation, you don't have the opportunities to engage with all the uni activities as much'* (R21).

Other respondents stated that the new environment can be challenging to adapt to. '*I think if I had half the information I know now when I was in first year, my anxiety levels would have been so much lower. You have never been in this environment before and it can be really difficult*' (R16)

> *I feel like you just build up a picture in your head or you have these expectations. I don't know where they come from, whether it's what people have told you or have been to university before. But when you turn up and it doesn't meet those expectations, it's easy to feel like you're not enjoying it and it's not what you thought it was going to be.*

> *And I suppose you feel like it's easy to look at other people and think "oh they seem like they are really enjoying it", but they are probably feeling the same as you* (R9)

> *For me it was really hard to transition to university, it was a lot harder to make friends than I realised. I was told by everyone that it would be great and easy to adapt. But it wasn't true, I found it really hard to integrate, I didn't particularly like the people that were in my halls and everything seemed difficult* (R7)

Helping students to transition into HE has been well documented by previous research (Thomas et al., 2017; Coertjens, 2017; Whannel & Whannel, 2015; Holliman et al., 2018) who have highlighted the importance of students recognising this perceived difficulty and having appropriate interventions in place to help students. Ishitani (2016) emphasises the importance of universities highlighting the expectations of HE and suggests that intervention strategies that attempt to address this issues need to be mindful that all students differ.

The findings also highlight that students who reside at home or students who live in university halls, struggle with transitioning to university in different ways, some struggling to make new friends because they live at home, whilst others may be homesick. Such issues highlight the complex nature that universities face when they try to put in place strategies in helping students transition to HE life. Money et al., (2017) highlight this when they suggest that HE institutes need to address the 'expectation gap' so that all students are fully aware of what is expected of them if they enter HE, regardless of their individual background or personal circumstances.

4.3.4.2 Other Commitments

Many respondents suggested that often students have other commitments that stop them from participating in SE activities, due to lack of time. These included childcare, working and caring for other family members. '*Perhaps they have to work because they have no money. I know for me I work every Saturday at home and that means I can't see my Uni friends on a weekend*' (R19). '*Maybe, you can't participate because you have kid or you may be older and have to care for your parents'* (R13). Shah & Cheng (2019) highlight the impact that other commitments can have on students at HE, supporting the notion that caring for children is a

major barrier to engagement. As has been documented, many students now entering HE are older students, who may have family to care for and hence, universities need to be aware that some engagement activities are less available to certain segments of the student population, due to such demands.

4.3.4.3 Financial

Similar to reasons stated above, financial concerns were raised as a potential barrier to SE. *'To be able to go to university, I have to work. However, working prevents me from being able to go out and do things I want to do. Like meeting up with Uni mates, joining clubs, going to gigs'* (R14). '*Money is a major barrier, I know sports teams are so expensive, it puts a lot of people off*' (R6). '*Could be financial issues, we have a lot of people on our course that miss lecturers because they have to work and earn money, to be here'* (R9). '*Finances might be a big problem, I know to join a sports club is really expensive and maybe if you are an international student, you don't have access to loans, then that will stop you'* (R4).

The issues preventing students engaging, align with the previous research (Griffin & Gilbert, 2016) who identified that many factors and "forces' can impact upon non-engagement namely: socio-economic, financial and other commitments whilst studying. It is clear that many students that attend universities today have positions of responsibility to care for other people, whilst at the same time work for financial reasons. Andrade & Alden-Rivers (2019) acknowledge this issue and have highlighted that now, more than ever universities need to offer flexible and life-long learning opportunities for students of all ages and backgrounds to accommodate such concerns.

4.3.4.4 Mental Health Issues

Whannel & Whannel (2015) identified that students 'identity' and personality may impact upon engagement. This was also reported by respondents who suggested that mental health issues and learning difficulties can also negatively impact upon SE. *'Feeling stressed and overwhelmed is common'* (R1). '*Feeling of being depressed or anxious doesn't help*' (R7). '*Mental health, there might be something going on in their life, that affecting them*' (R12).

> *Mental health wise, to do engagement might be too much. You can't fully engage with things when you have too much on your plate and things are getting on top of you* (R2)

> *I think maybe from a well-being perspective they may be struggling. They may have issues with mental health and not using the services provided by the uni and they feel alone dealing with their problems* (R13)

> *I think leading on from the mental health issues, when you are at uni, you're not just doing the work, you're also living on your own, cooking for yourself, washing, those kind of things. So maybe you are overwhelmed by things and it proves really hard to deal with the changes in your life* (R3)

Such statements correlate with the previous research by Hamilton Bailey & Phillips (2016) who have highlighted that often student's mental wellbeing is overlooked by HE institutes, even though it is a major reason for student attrition and there has been a significant increase in reported mental health issues affecting students in HE.

4.3.4.5 Lack of Confidence and Motivation

Confidence and motivation issues was also another themes that emerged from the data. *'Some people are very introvert and find it hard to join in'* (R10). '*Lack of confidence and not knowing who they can talk to doesn't help'* (R20). *'People might find it very intimidating, it can be really fearful for some people, mixing with people'* (R2). '*They may be shy, they may have low morale and lack of motivation*' (R13).

> *I would say in first year, you feel more anxious and timid. You don't really want to talk to your tutors, as it can be quite intimidating. It's not because you don't care, it's because you feel as though you don't fit in* (R1)

> *Motivation, they might just not be motivated, even if the support is there. It takes two sides to work in a way and if the university are doing all they can but at the end of the day it's just not working because the motivation is not there, then I mean you can't really do anything about this* (R16)

Whilst Payne (2019) suggests that confidence is a major 'driving force' for engagement, what her model fails to recognise is that lack of confidence can also be a 'resistant force' against

engagement. Other researchers (Khattab, 2015; Collie et al., 2017) have highlighted the need for universities to recognise that the student body is very diverse and hence, generic SE initiatives are not as affective. Understanding that students are different and respond to engagement in varied ways is needed to cater for students with distinct personalities.

4.3.4.6 Learning Difficulties

Two respondents commented that students may struggle to engage at university due to potential learning difficulties including dyslexia. '*Some students won't want to disclose this but they may have a hidden problem like dyslexia, often people hide that and this might be a reason why they don't want to engage'* (R7). '*Maybe they have a learning difficulty, it may be dyslexia or dyspraxia, something like that which stops them from turning up to lectures and participating'* (R13). Dryer et al., (2016) agree with these findings and endorse the need that further research is needed to fully understand the impact of learning difficulties have on students entering HE. Whilst universities do address learning difficulties, particularly focusing on the impact upon academic outcomes, they fail to see if learning difficulties may stop students from engaging in other non-academic engagement activities such as undertaking an overseas placement or volunteering in the community. As has been highlighted such initiatives benefit many stakeholders, but are universities fully aware if all these opportunities are achievable for all students.

4.3.4.7 Lack of Support

Receiving support from family and friends was stated as a potential barrier to engagement. *'I'm going to suggest childhood nature-nurture. If you have no positive engagement at all throughout your life from family, then you may find it hard and wonder what is the sense of it all, you have no direction from people to help'* (R4). '*Lack of support from family or home may stop you, I couldn't be at uni without my family support*' (R8). '*If you are really busy, you may lose touch with your family and if you don't have that help and advice when it's tough, you may get knocked back and start to dis-engage'* (R15). Stoessel et al., (2015) also agree that students who do not have support from family may be at danger of non-engagement and as such, may be more at risk of dropping out of HE. Collie et al., (2017) suggested that the

student typology entitled 'at risk struggler' typified that lack of social support (home and community) was a main contributor to such students not engaging within university and achieving their goals.

4.3.4.8 Cultural

Cultural differences have become an area that is increasingly being researched as a potential barrier to HE. Many researchers (Strayhorn, 2014; Aljohani, 2016; Boylan & Renzulli, 2017) have identified that cultural variance can impact upon student success. Similar findings were reported in the data, with respondents stating cultural differences could cause students not to engage including: age differences, being an international student and language barriers. *'For international students, you may feel alone because you don't know anyone who speaks your first language or where to find things, so it could be cultural*' (R2).

> *It might also be a different culture as well, they might know the language and know what everyone is saying, but an international student might expect one thing, but it's completely different in real life, which may impact upon them negatively'* (R5)

> *So just being in a new country can stop people engaging. They are an international student and see people Interacting in a different language and feel quite Overwhelmed. Also, the learning might be totally different, which makes it difficult for them to join in* (R7)

Whilst many universities try to address such issues related to language and may offer academic skills for students who have not studied in a UK institution before. What is apparent is that many staff that work with students from different cultures, have limited understanding of inter-cultural awareness. The growth in international students studying in UK universities and the emphasis on the internationalisation agenda has been well documented (Ilieva, Beck & Waterstone, 2014; HM Government, 2019), hence, it would appear that the training and development of staff is needed to fully address such concerns that have been raised in the findings and supported by previous research.

4.3.4.9 Size of Class

The increase in class sizes was another potential problem that could deter engagement. '*It depends on the size of the class, we have a very large class, so meeting people and getting to know them is really difficult*' (R21). '*On a big course where it is mainly lectures, you are not going to mix as much or get to know the lecturers. If the course is small seminars, then there are more opportunities to engage'* (R14).

> *Because I think at university level, there is often a blanket approach and that can sometimes be hard to engage with. So if the uni is putting on a massive event where hundreds of people are attending, you can feel like a bit of a lost person in a crowd'* (R4)

The strive for universities attempting to increase the number of students for commercial purposes is evidenced (Bolton, 2020) yet the associated impact this can have upon the student body has been stated by both students and staff in the research findings. Staff have suggested that large student cohorts can be difficult to engage with and a centralised, generic approach does not work, similarly students are also suggesting that class size can impact negatively. Whilst universities in the UK HE sector struggle to balance commercial security with a diverse portfolio, it would appear imperative that they take note of the difficulties that can arise from increased student numbers and amend strategic plans that balance engagement initiatives with larger student populations.

4.3.4.10 Difficult to Join

Respondents expressed that it was often problematic trying to join extra-curricular activities such as clubs and societies, particularly if you didn't have chance to enrol at the start of the academic year. '*Regarding the social things, if you try and join something in second or third year, people can be a bit mean and they are like not interested in you'* (R2). '*If you miss the opportunity to join a club in week one, it doesn't mean that you don't want to join, but it is really hard then to feel part of it, you can be made to feel really awkward*' (R20).

> *I am talking from experience here, in first year I tried to join a society around November time. I went along and I just thought everyone already knows each other, everyone is already engaging with each other and I just felt really out on a limb* (R16)

> *Has anyone tried to join a society or sport group once its already started that year because it's almost impossible to get hold of them. There is no way to contact them, no email, no phone number, you just can't get in touch or join late on* (R7)

The work by Castello et al., (2017) highlights such issues identified above, with regards to size of class and students' difficulty in joining in. They refer to it as "institutional neglect" by universities, in not recognising such difficulties and failing students in helping them to adapt and succeed in a university setting. In many universities today, students are allowed to enrol often weeks after teaching has started and subsequently do not have the opportunity to have a full induction and join extra-curricular activities from the start. The findings suggest that this can potentially cause issues for students, therefore universities need to recognise this concern and have contingency plans in place to overcome the problem.

4.3.4.11 Staff Buy-In

Previous researchers (Jang et al., 2016; Glock & Karbach, 2015, Thys & Van Houtte, 2016) have highlighted the importance of the role staff play in encouraging students to engage at university. This also emerged as an important factor identified by respondents. '*We had a two hour timetabled lecture and it lasted 20 minutes and that really riled me, the lecturer wasn't even bothered'* (R2)

> *My lecturers change every week so they never get to know you. I meet my personal tutor every month, but she never really notices me. There are always going to be barriers to students engaging, if staff don't seem interested and are more concerned about getting on with their work, rather than speak to us* (R15)

> *Lecturers will notice that some students are engaging in certain lectures. They also should notice when they mark work, whoever is reading it will know whether the students have engaged and done the extra reading. When they get the feedback, students have chance to chat to lecturers, but if students choose not to engage, then that can leave the lecturer feeling quite frustrated* (R7)

Egalite et al., (2015) endorse the findings above and stress the importance that staff within HE, need to fully embrace and engage with students regardless of their background. They

suggest that this is a crucial role of lecturers, yet often is an area that is neglected by some teaching in HE. This issue somewhat highlights the problem that universities now face in attempting to service various stakeholders in the diverse portfolio of work that academics undertake (Swartz et al., 2019). It also worryingly suggests that some academics would appear to 'neglect' the important role they play in engaging with students and the subsequent negative consequences this can have on the student body. As documented, students now question the quality of their HE education, more than ever and demand a high level of service and return on their investment (Sin et al., 2019), failure to do this can have serious ramifications for the university, so strategic leaders in HE institutes need to be fully aware if this is the case in their university and lead from the top of the institution to address the problems identified (Di Nauta et al., 2018).

4.4 Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate how students engage with their universities. The main aims of the study were to investigate: what students understood by the meaning of SE; their awareness of engagement activities and initiatives; their perceived advantages and benefits of SE; barriers that would stop students engaging at university; and whether they believed that students had a role to play in engagement.

The empirical findings clearly indicate that students had a good understanding of the meaning and intention of SE. Their understanding that SE was related to inclusiveness, relationships, teamwork, opportunities open to them, including both academic and extra-curricular clearly demonstrated that they had an overall awareness of the main objectives of such activities. The associated advantages of engaging in the many activities that they suggested, were apparent and were in line with the findings in study 1, identified by staff and other stakeholders in a HE setting. Interestingly, one of the main benefits highlighted was that engaging in SE activities can have a positive impact upon a student's health and wellbeing, as well as helping students transition into university life. As universities have a major "duty of care" to their students, such findings clearly demonstrate the positive impact, engaged students can have, not only to themselves but also to the wider society too. However, the findings also highlighted that HE providers need to be fully aware of their diverse student

population and not think that a generic SE policy will work for all, therefore must be mindful of individual needs when it comes to SE initiatives.

Many barriers to students engaging at university were highlighted namely: transitioning; other commitments; financial; mental health issues; lack of confidence and motivation; learning difficulties; lack of support; cultural difference; size of class; difficult to join in; and staff buy-in. Again, the issues of student health and well-being was raised, in particular mental health issues. This specific issue has been the focus of interest by many in recent years and has received much media interest. The rise in mental health issues impacting upon young people has called for an increase in funding and studies to determine interventions to help overcome the problem. It is clear that universities need to be aware of such potential barriers and focus resources on understanding the barriers in attempting to use strategies to help such students, so that all students regardless of their individual personalities or typologies are encouraged to engage in SE and reap the associated benefits. Another barrier that was stated, is the fact that students often find it difficult to join clubs, societies or initiatives if they do not access them in induction week or at the beginning of the activity. Simple measures can be implemented to ensure that "latecomers" are catered for. It is not a difficult proposition and many organisations have procedures in place to overcome such barriers, the role of the student union could help in this matter, particularly with reference to clubs and societies. Also, the size of the class and lectures was deemed a potential barrier to some students. As universities strive for increasing student numbers and also resource savings, they need to be mindful that large cohort sizes are not always viewed positively by students. The associated disadvantages have been identified by students and it has also been recognised by researchers regarding pedagogical disadvantages.

The notion that students have role to play in SE was a strong theme that emerged across all the focus groups. These findings correlate with similar findings in study 1 and suggest that students can indeed help co-create value within HE. The concept of service quality and the value of co-creation is a growing area of research that suggests that there are many factors that can impact upon optimum success.

The findings so far, have raised interesting viewpoints from staff and students and highlight important issues that impact how engagement is delivered within HE and how this is received from students. Gaining a greater insight into student's views across the UK sector will help

provide a more in-depth study hence, this thesis will now focus on student's views of SE from a wider population, addressing some of the issues already raised so far.

Chapter 5: A Quantitative Investigation of Student Engagement within Higher Education

This chapter will present the findings from the third empirical study further exploring student attitudes and behaviour around SE. The structure comprises of the research aims and an explanation of why an online quantitative survey was used to collect the data. The findings from the statistical tests undertaken will be outlined in relation to: engagement activity with academic and non-academic opportunities; student's views on their role within engagement; advantages associated with SE; barriers that prevent students from participating in engagement opportunities; and student typologies based upon engagement views. The findings reveal 4 different types of students that are grouped based upon: the type of engagement activity they undertake; the role they perceive of students within engagement; benefits and barriers to engagement. The final section will provide a conclusion to the study and management implications will be presented in the following chapter.

5.1 Research Aims

Fredricks et al., (2016) has suggested that due to the complexity of SE and the numerous dimensions that can impact upon participation, attempting to evaluate SE is difficult. For this reason, they suggest that utilising both a qualitative and quantitative approach to measuring SE is needed to allow a more meaningful insight. In light of this, the final study will involve a quantitative investigation of student's opinions and behaviours related to SE, building upon some of the issues raised in the previous two empirical studies, specifically the benefits and barriers to engagement from a student perspective. In particular, study 1 highlighted the perceived advantages of engagement and also some of the concerns that HE staff had regarding potential barriers that may impact upon students participating in engagement activities. Findings in study 2 revealed that many students agreed that they had a role to play in engagement, whilst also acknowledging the diverse range of activities that accounts for engagement within HE (both academic and non-academic). Hence, this study will draw on the initial findings from both study 1 and 2, to examine if similar perceptions are felt by students within HE to investigate: what students see as the benefits of engagement; what

barriers may stop students from engaging; what role students play in engagement; and what type of engagement activity do students undertake.

Research has shown that many evaluations of SE, only concentrate on academic activity (Leonard & Comm, 2018) therefore it will be interesting to explore the level of engagement that takes place from a student perspective for both academic and non-academic opportunities (Akareem & Syed Hossain, 2016). This is essential to help provide universities with an understanding of what types of initiatives are most appealing to students and how much time they spend on them, to identify if such engagement activities are effective and the perceived value that students place on them (Webb et al., 2017; Sin et al., 2019)

Staff and students have identified the potential barriers and disincentives to engagement, however, it has been recognised that there is very little research into whether such obstacles affect all students or only segments of the student population (Zepke, 2014; Paunesku, 2015; Khattab, 2015). In particular, the changing diversity of students now studying at university and whether they are more or less affected by such barriers is an area that warrants further research (Jahn et al., 2017; Cotton et al., 2017). This study will address the advantages and barriers to engagement, as well as finding out if certain personal characteristics (Collie et al., 2017) impact students engaging in different SE initiatives.

The role of the student has been a constant topic from previous research discussed in the literature review (Elsharnouby, 2015; Wawrzinek et al., 2017), as well as themes that have emerged from the first two studies. Hence, exploring student's views from a wider population will help identify if students feel strongly about their role at university and endorse or disagree with the view that students are co-creators within HE. Addressing the research questions identified will assist HE providers in gaining a fuller evidence-based insight into the issues raised so far, in an attempt to provide potential solutions to the concerns raised, whilst also identifying the positive outcomes of SE that students highlight.

5.2 Methodology

5.2.1 Design

The importance of questioning students and their views on engagement has been acknowledged by many as an important tool to understanding student's views on aspects of educational life (Slaten et al., 2018). Using questionnaires for data collection to address educational questions is commonplace mainly due to the advantages of being able to collect relatively large amounts of data in a short time period (Bartram, 2019). In recognition of the growing importance placed upon SE, surveys have evolved over recent years to attempt to investigate the many facets associated with engagement. Yorke (2016) acknowledges that the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) originally devised for North America, (with many countries now adapting the survey for national use) is considered one of the main tools used to evaluate student engagement within HE. Whilst the NSSE and subsequent derivations of the survey instrument have come under scrutiny (Tendhar et al., 2013), it has also proved a useful tool in providing dependable benchmarks in assessing engagement outcomes (Pike, 2013). Recognising the importance of the survey instrument, a review of the NSSE was undertaken to reflect a UK context with modifications made to some of the questions (Kandiko & Matos, 2013; Buckley, 2014) which subsequently formed part of the survey instrument. This study utilised an online questionnaire (refer to Appendix 8) design tool that investigated several areas to address the research aims. The questionnaire had the following sections:

Engagement within academic and non-academic activity and frequency levels (questions adapted from the NSSE survey) – this section asked students to identify what types of engagement activity they undertook whilst at university and how often they participated in such activities. It included 13 items related to academic engagement, 9 items related to non-academic engagement, as well as identifying the time spent on such activities in a typical week.

Perceived benefits of student engagement activities – students were asked to answer 14 statements related to advantages to engagement and endorse whether they agreed or disagreed with them.

Role of students within SE – this section asked students a series of 7 statements to identify if they agreed or disagreed with the perception that students have a role to play in engagement.

Potential barriers to SE – students were asked to answer 35 statement related to barriers that may stop students from participating in engagement activities and acknowledge whether they agreed or disagreed with them.

Demographics – the final section asked student to answer questions related to their personal demographics including gender, age, ethnicity, student and marriage status, family and dependents.

This study utilised an online questionnaire (refer to Appendix 8) qualtrics and the survey consisted of 5 point Likert scale questions, which are often used in surveys to gain opinions and views (Chyung et al., 2017) and all questions had to be answered before the participants could proceed to the next question. Using an online survey allowed for further geographical reach of potential participants as oppose to traditional approaches of face to face collection and are considered cost effective and timely alternatives to data collection approaches (Rowley, 2014)

5.2.2 Procedure

Following ethical approval from the Faculty of Health & Life Sciences Ethics Committee at Northumbria University, the survey was uploaded to the data collection website. At the beginning of the survey, a participation information page outlined the purpose of the study, the requirements of the participants and an explanation of how the research data would be used and stored. If the participants agreed, they were invited to take the survey and consent to the process.

At the end of the survey, a participant debrief page explained if they wanted to withdraw from the study and also if they wished to receive data about the results. The students were paid a small fee via the data collection company for participating in the research, the payment of which had been approved in ethical accordance with university policy. Data was collected over a 2-week period and the average time it took to undertake the survey was 7 minutes and 24 seconds.

5.2.3 Participants

A professional data collection company was used in helping to attract potential participants to undertake the questionnaire. The students were purposively selected from a large database, using criterion sampling (Etikan et al., 2016) based upon them currently studying for an undergraduate degree programme at a UK university and presently residing in the UK. A total of 1,411 participants undertook the survey (refer to Table 14). The sample consisted of students representing different gender, ages, ethnicity and marital status, as well as different levels of study stages and mode.

Table 14. Background Information of Study 3 Participants (n=1,411)

Gender	Age	Ethnicity
Male = 30.7% Female = 68.5% Other = 0.8%	18-20 yrs = 42.3% 21-29 yrs = 46.6% 30-39 yrs = 7.7% 40-49 yrs = 2.6% 60+ yrs = 0.4% Prefer not to say = 0.4%	White = 78.9% Mixed/Multiple Ethnic = 4.5% Asian/Asian British = 10.3% Black/African/Caribbean/Black British = 5.0% Other = 0.7% Prefer not to say = 0.6%
Student Status	**Study Mode**	**Study Year**
UK = 93.2% International = 6.8%	Full-Time = 85.3% Part-Time = 14.7%	Year 1 = 32.1% Year 2 = 29.0% Year 3 = 28.6% Year 4 = 8.5% Year 5 = 1.8%
Marriage Status	**Family & Dependants**	**Living at Home**
Single = 86.9% Married = 7.1% Civil Partnered = 2.0% Divorced = 1.3% Prefer not to say = 2.8%	Children = 9.6% Parents = 24.9% Other = 2.1% None = 63.4%	Yes = 36.1% No = 63.9%

5.2.4 Analysis

The data was uploaded into the IBM SPSS Statistics 26 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software data analysis system, which is commonly used by many researchers to undertake statistical operations. A series of tests (descriptive frequencies, factor analysis and cluster analysis) was undertaken to gain understanding of the data in relation to the research aims, the results of which will now be presented and discussed.

5.3 Results

5.3.1 Participation in Academic and Non-Academic Engagement

Students were asked to identify how often they have undertaken activities related to academic and non-academic engagement during the current academic year from a scale of 1 (never) to 5 (very often). Table 15 reveals that with regards academic engagement, *'being challenged to do their best work*' ranked the highest (73% often or very often), other highly

Table 15. Participation in Academic Engagement

In your experience at your institution during the current academic year, about how often have you done each of the following:	**Never (%)**	**Rarely (%)**	**Sometimes (%)**	**Often (%)**	**Very Often (%)**
Discussed ideas from your course with others outside of taught sessions (students, family, co-workers etc.), including by email/online	**5**	**15**	**29**	**35**	**16**
Worked with other students on course projects or assignments	**9**	**14**	**31**	**31**	**15**
Explained course material to one or more students	**9**	**13**	**36**	**30**	**12**
Worked harder than you thought you could to meet a tutor's/lecturer's standards or expectation	**8**	**18**	**33**	**30**	**11**
Asked questions or contributed to course discussions in other ways	**6**	**24**	**34**	**27**	**9**
Discussed your academic performance and/or feedback with teaching staff	**11**	**25**	**33**	**23**	**8**
Come to taught sessions unprepared (e.g. not completed assignments, reading, reports etc.)	**11**	**31**	**32**	**19**	**7**
Talked about your career plans with teaching staff or advisors	**30**	**30**	**25**	**12**	**3**
During the current academic year, how much had your coursework emphasized the following mental activities:	**Never (%)**	**Rarely (%)**	**Sometimes (%)**	**Often (%)**	**Very Often (%)**
Applying facts, theories or methods to practical problems or new situations	**2**	**9**	**23**	**36**	**30**
Evaluating a point of view, decision or information source	**3**	**9**	**22**	**37**	**29**
Analysing in depth an idea, experience or line of reasoning	**2**	**8**	**28**	**41**	**21**
Forming a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information	**3**	**11**	**31**	**38**	**17**
During the current academic year, to what extent has your course challenged you to do your best work	**1**	**5**	**21**	**46**	**27**

ranked items related to undertaking mental activities of *'applying facts, theories or methods to practical problems or new situations'* (66% often or very often); '*evaluating a point of view, decision or information source'* (66% often or very often) and *'analysing in depth an idea,*

experience or line of reasoning' (63% often or very often). Interestingly, the item that students engaged in the least related to employability, '*talked about your career plans with teaching staff or advisors'* (15% often or very often).

Table 16 highlights that non-academic engagement was undertaken less frequently than academic engagement, with the majority of students stating that they never participated in such activities. '*Taken part in a university campaign'* (83% never or rarely) scored the highest, followed by '*acted as a student rep or university ambassador'* (82% never or rarely). '*Volunteered in a club or society'* scored the lowest (66% never or rarely).

Table 16. Participation in Non-Academic Engagement

In your experience at your institution during the current academic year, about how often have you done each of the following:	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Sometimes (%)	Often (%)	Very Often (%)
Volunteered in a club or society	**53**	**13**	**15**	**11**	**8**
Participated in sport at my university	**62**	**12**	**9**	**7**	**10**
Involvement with the Student Union	**59**	**18**	**13**	**7**	**3**
Taken part in fundraising activities	**56**	**22**	**15**	**5**	**2**
Acted as a student rep or university ambassador	**74**	**8**	**7**	**7**	**4**
Taken part in a university campaign	**66**	**17**	**10**	**5**	**2**

When asked if students planned or have taken part in external engagement opportunities (refer to Table 17), nearly half of the students (42%) identified that they will participate in a placement during the course of their studies at university. 35% will undertake a fieldtrip as part of their programme and only 16% planned to participate in a study abroad programme whilst at university.

Table 17. External Engagement Opportunities

Have you or do you plan to take part in any of the following opportunities:	Yes (%)	No (%)
I have or will participate in an external placement organised by the university	**42**	**58**
I have or will undertake a fieldtrip as part of my course	**35**	**65**
I have or will participate in a study abroad programme whilst at university	**16**	**84**

Students were also asked to state in a typical week, what time they spent on a series of activities (refer to Table 18). '*Relaxing and socializing (time with friends, video games, TV or videos, keeping up with friends online etc.)*' was rated the highest (49% spent 16+ hours per

week), followed by *'preparing and studying in class'* (29% spent 16+ hours per week). '*Doing community service or volunteer work*' was rated the lowest (2% spent 16+ hours per week).

Table 18. Time Spent on Activities in a Typical Week						
About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing the following?	**1-5 hours (%)**	**6-10 hours (%)**	**11-15 hours (%)**	**16-20 hours (%)**	**21-25 hours (%)**	**25+ hours (%)**
Relaxing and socializing (time with friends, video games, TV or videos, keeping up with friends online etc.)	**6**	**19**	**26**	**24**	**10**	**15**
Preparing and studying in class	**22**	**26**	**23**	**15**	**7**	**7**
Working for pay	**52**	**14**	**11**	**11**	**3**	**9**
Participating in extra-curricular activities	**70**	**19**	**6**	**3**	**1**	**1**
Providing care for dependents (children, parents, etc.)	**86**	**4**	**3**	**1**	**1**	**5**
Doing community service or volunteer work	**90**	**7**	**1**	**1**	**0**	**1**

Explorative factor analysis was undertaken to analyse the data investigating the engagement activity of students with regards academic and non-academic action. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy = 0.833, which is an extremely high measurement of appropriateness for the factor analysis. Bartlett's test of sphericity reveals a significance value of 0.000, with initial eigenvalues of 49.98%. The factor loadings were calculated with a varimax rotation of the components. Table 19 highlights that 4 factors resulted from the analysis: non-academic engagement; cognitive engagement; engagement in academic communication; and student team engagement. Non-academic engagement involved students who participated in extra-curricular activities outside of a classroom setting including work with the student union, university campaigns and participation in sport. Cognitive engagement included students who participated in logical reasoning and analysis, who challenged themselves academically. Engagement in academic communication included students participating in various forms of questioning and debate, mainly with university staff but also with other students and family. Student team engagement involved students who discussed university work with their peers and undertook academic group work.

Table 19. Factor Analysis for Academic and Non-Academic Engagement Activity (Rotated Component Matrix Scores)				
Non-Academic Engagement				
Involvement with the Student Union	.782			
Volunteered in a club or society	.767			
Taken part in fundraising activities	.766			
Taken part in a university campaign	.729			
Acted as a student rep or university ambassador	.602			
Participated in sport at my university	.575			
Cognitive Engagement				
Analysing in depth an idea, experience or line of reasoning		.791		
Evaluating a point of view, decision or information source		.726		
Forming a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information		.691		
Applying facts, theories or methods to practical problems or new situations		.543		
During the current academic year, to what extent has your course challenged you to do your best work		.486		
Engagement in Academic Communication				
Discussed your academic performance and/or feedback with teaching staff			.746	
Talked about your career plans with teaching staff or advisors			.711	
Worked harder than you thought you could to meet a tutor's/lecturer's standards or expectation			.590	
Asked questions or contributed to course discussions in other ways			.535	
Discussed ideas from your course with others outside of taught sessions (students, family, co-workers etc.), including by email/online			.468	
Student Team Engagement				
Worked with other students on course projects or assignments				.845
Explained course material to one or more students				.734

5.3.2 Role of Students

Students were asked to rate whether they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements regarding what the role of a student was in terms of engagement from a scale of 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). '*Student engagement is a two-way venture between the*

university and student' was rated the most important (86% agreeing), followed by '*student engagement in higher education is very worthwhile*' (84% agreeing). '*Students have a role to play in engagement activities whilst at university*' was rated the least important (66% agreeing).

Further factor analysis was undertaken to analyse the data investigating the perceived role of students in engagement. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy = 0.790, Bartlett's test of sphericity reveals a significance value of 0.000, with initial eigenvalues of 63.8% and the factor loadings were calculated with a varimax rotation of the components. Table 20 reveals that 2 factors were derived from the statistical testing namely: pro-active engaging and co-creating. Pro-active engaging included dimensions of recognising that being pro-active will results in beneficial rewards and also that students should make themselves aware of activities available to them, as SE within HE is very worthwhile. The co-creating factor included dimensions of adding value through a two-way relationship between students and universities, as well as students being in charge of their own destinies.

Table 20. Factor Analysis for the Perceived Role of a Student in Engagement (Rotated Component Matrix Scores)

Pro-Active Engaging		
Students who are pro-active will get the most rewards from university	.780	
Students should make themselves aware of activities that the university provide	.680	
Students have a role to play in engagement activities whilst at university	.663	
Student engagement in Higher Education is very worthwhile	.619	
Co-Creating		
Students can act as co-creators of learning and teaching whilst at university		.781
Student engagement is a two-way venture between the university and student		.741
Whilst at university, students are fundamentally in charge of their own destiny		.491

5.3.3 Benefits of Student Engagement

Students were asked to rate whether they agreed or disagreed with a number of benefits associated with SE from a scale of 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). '*Students should*

feel valued by their institution' and '*university can help students develop many new skills'* was rated the most important (94% agreeing), followed by *'university gives students the opportunity to make new friends'* (90% agreeing) and '*happy students can help improve student satisfaction and university rankings*' (90% agreeing). *'Volunteering and fundraising is an important part of being a university student*' was rated the least important (27% agreeing).

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy = 0.874, Bartlett's test of sphericity reveals a significance value of 0.000, with initial eigenvalues of 55.4%. Table 21 reveals that 3 factors were derived from the statistical testing namely: social significance; proud of affiliation; and global citizenship.

Table 21. Factor Analysis for Benefits of Student Engagement (Rotated Component Matrix Scores)

Social Significance			
Students can have a bigger social network because of activities at university	.792		
University gives students the opportunity to make new friends	.791		
University can help students develop many new skills	.769		
University initiatives can help secure work opportunities	.574		
Being busy at university gives a student a sense of wellbeing	.506		
Proud of Affiliation			
Students should feel valued by their institution		.698	
Students should feel part of the community at their institution		.636	
University reputation is important to students		.634	
It is important that students are proud to talk about my university		.611	
Strong working relationships with lecturers is very important whilst at university		.597	
Happy students can help improve student satisfaction and university rankings		.498	
Global Citizenship			
Volunteering and fundraising is an important part of being a university student			.871
Participating in community events is an important aspect of university life			.808
Helping society is very important to university students			.788

Social significance included dimensions of being able to make new friends and increase your social network, as well as developing new skills and helping to secure work opportunities. Also the benefit of wellbeing was included in this factor. Being proud of the affiliation with your university and the identification you have with it was also another major factor relating to SE benefits. Dimensions related to feeling valued and part of the university, as well as the reputation of the institution and university rankings formed part of this cluster. Global citizenship was also another factor that students rated as a major benefit, suggesting that being able to help the community and society was deemed important by the students.

5.3.4 Barriers to Student Engagement

Students were asked to rate whether they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements related to barriers to SE from a scale of 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Students agreed that being supported was important to them: '*my family are very supportive of everything I do'* (75% agreeing) and '*I was encouraged to go to university'* (75% agreeing). The main concerns that students expressed regarding barriers related to feelings of anxiety: '*I get anxious if I don't know all the information I need when trying something new*' (74% agreeing); *'I sometimes feel overwhelmed when at university'* (72% agreeing) and '*I often get anxious'* (65% agreeing). '*My friends are not very supportive was rated the least agreeable*' (10% agreeing).

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy = 0.898. Bartlett's test of sphericity reveals a significance value of 0.000, with initial eigenvalues of 56.2%. Table 22 reveals that 8 factors were derived from the statistical testing namely: fear of social integration; other commitments; poor student-tutor relationship; learning difficulties; financial constraints; lack of social fit; lack of support; and mass teaching. Fear of social integration included dimensions of students suggesting that they struggle to join new clubs, make new friends, adapt to new situations resulting in anxiety, stress and lack of confidence. Other commitments were named as work, family and other important people. Poor student-tutor relationship related to how well students can or cannot interact with university staff. Learning difficulties related to dimensions of students struggling with learning and teaching and needing extra support. Financial constraints related to students not being able to engage in certain activities due to lack of financial means.

Table 22. Factor Analysis for Barriers to Student Engagement (Rotated Component Matrix Scores)								
Fear of Social Integration								
I struggle in new social situations	.814							
I lack confidence at university	.748							
I often get anxious	.736							
I find joining a new club really difficult	.724							
I don't make new friends easily	.715							
I get anxious if I don't know all the information I need when trying something new	.704							
I find it hard to adapt to new situations	.698							
I find large events overwhelming	.680							
I feel too stressed to take on other activities	.669							
I often struggle with communication whilst at university	.588							
I sometimes feel overwhelmed when at university	.581							
I have personal problems which stop me engaging whilst at university	.573							
My first experiences of university were worse than expected	.430							
Many clubs and societies are cliquey	.400							
Other Commitments								
I spend most of my time outside of university on work commitments		.761						
I have family commitments that take up a lot of my time		.717						
I struggle with academic work due to other commitments outside of university		.680						
I have commitments to other people that are very important to me		.628						
I have to work to support myself whilst at university		.611						
Poor Student-Tutor Relationship								
It's easy to find lecturers when I need support (minus)			.757					
My lecturers are very enthusiastic (minus)			.743					
My personal tutor doesn't know who I am			.598					

Learning Difficulties								
I struggle academically				.720				
I need extra support to help with my learning and teaching				.682				
Financial Constraints								
Some engagement activities are too expensive for me to join in (e.g. gym, sport clubs etc.)					.779			
I struggle financially at university					.769			
Lack of Social Fit								
There are cultural challenges associated with me being at university						.692		
My friends are not very supportive						.642		
Lack of Support								
I was encouraged to go to university							.658	
My family are very supportive of everything I do							.579	
Mass Teaching								
I am better when I work in small groups								.785
I find the class sizes too big at university								.499

Lack of social fit included cultural difficulties or finding it hard to gain support from friends. Similarly, lack of support was another factor, as well as mass teaching which referred to large class sizes which students regarded as a barrier.

5.3.5 Student Typologies

A cluster analysis was undertaken to investigate if groupings based upon the factor analysis findings (engagement activity, role of student, benefits and barriers to SE) resulted in student typologies, of which 4 clusters were identified. Using the Ward method and dendrograms, all factors were significant (.000), apart from two barriers (financial constraints and learning difficulties).

Table 23 and Table 24 highlights the results from the cluster analysis and reveals that students could be classified into 4 groups, namely: the cognitive team players (n=260); badge wearers (n=462); inquisitive learners (n=414); and societal climbers (n=275).

Table 23. Cluster Analysis Results of Student Typologies Based Upon Engagement Views

Typology	Cognitive Team Players			Badge Wearers			Inquisitive Learners			Societal Climbers		
Value	**High**		**Least**	**High**		**Least**	**High**		**Least**	**High**		**Least**
Engagement Activity		Non Academic		Non Academic				Non Academic				Non Academic
	Cognitive					Cognitive		Cognitive				
		Academic Comm.				Academic Comm.					Cognitive	
	Student Team				Student Team				Student Team		Academic Comm.	
											Student Team	
Role of Student		Pro-Active			Pro-Active			Pro-Active		Pro-Active		
		Co Creating		Co Creating				Co Creating			Co Creating	
Advantages		Social Significance			Social Significance			Social Significance			Social Significance	
		Proud of Affiliation		Proud of Affiliation				Proud of Affiliation			Proud of Affiliation	
		Global Citizenship			Global Citizenship				Global Citizenship			
Barriers		Fear Social Integration			Fear Social Integration		Fear Social Integration					Fear Social Integration
	Other Commit's.				Other Commit's.				Other Commit's.			Other Commit's.
	Poor Tutor Relationship					Poor Tutor Relationship		Poor Tutor Relationship				Poor Tutor Relationship
	Lack of Social Fit				Lack of Social Fit				Lack of Social Fit		Lack of Social Fit	
			Lack of Support		Lack of Support			Lack of Support		Lack of Support		
			Mass Teaching		Mass Teaching			Mass Teaching		Mass Teaching		

Table 24. Student Typologies Based Upon Engagement Views
Cognitive Team Players – these are students who view highly, cognitive and student team engagement. Students who want to challenge themselves intellectually to undertake the best work they can and demonstrate that they have the ability to analyse, synthesise and apply theory to practice. They are also keen to work with other students on academic matters. The main barriers that they regard as important are poor student-tutor relationships, other commitments and lack of social fit.
Badge Wearers – are classified as students who are mainly interested in non-academic and extra-curricular engagement activities, such as volunteering, working with the student union or participating in sport. They view the value of co-creating as very important and they see the main advantage of engagement as being proud to be associated with their university. The reputation of the university is extremely valuable to them and they very much feel part of the community and a sense of belonging at their institution. Their main motivation for engagement is to be seen to represent the university, outside of academic engagement.
Inquisitive Learners – are students who view social interaction as the main driver for engagement. They are very keen to discuss academic work and performance with university staff, but also like to talk about university outside of the classroom with peers, family and friends. The main barrier to engagement associated with social learners is fear of social integration, where they may often struggle in new situations or get anxious if they do not know all the information when trying something new. Such students like to be prepared and have all the information to hand, to avoid stress or losing confidence.
Societal Climbers – are students who are deemed to be pro-active and are motivated to engage for social status and global citizenship purposes. They are keen to use university to make new friends and increase their social network and view fundraising, volunteering and helping society as an important part of university life. They are confident, outgoing and not concerned about new situations. The main barriers to societal movers/climbers that they view as important is lack of support from family and friends, as well as large classroom sizes.

5.4 Discussion

5.4.1 Engagement Participation

The results clearly demonstrate that students engage in academic engagement activities with many stating that they participate in such engagement often. The findings align with the research undertaken by Manderanach (2015) who highlights that SE involves behavioural engagement (for example participating in group work); cognitive engagement (for example evaluating a point of view); and affective engagement (for example challenging yourself to do your best work and reach full potential). It also endorses the work by Fredricks et al., (2016) who suggest that engagement can take the form of social-behavioural (students behaviour during teamwork) and agentic (how student react to teacher's instructions). Similarly, the findings support the work by Wimpenny & Savin-Baden (2012) who suggest that engagement can also take the form of inter-relational transactions, relating to the relationships that students can form with other people.

Regarding non-academic engagement, students participated in these activities less frequently, with many declaring that they never participated in initiatives such as volunteering, sport or student union campaigns. Such findings do not align with the research by Lawson & Lawson (2013) and Lester et al., (2013) who suggest that students place highly, non-academic and extra-curricular activities that take place outside of a classroom setting, in particular research suggesting that students found participating in volunteering activities beneficial (Thomas, 2012; McIlrath & Tansey, 2013). Zacherman & Foubert (2014), whilst recognising the importance of extra-curricular activities for students within HE, do stress that often such engagement can result in negative consequences on student achievement, which may partially help explain the low uptake found within the results. It is important to recognise however, that a number of students did state that they have or plan to participate in external engagement opportunities (placement, fieldtrip or study abroad), whilst these initiatives may be part of the programme of study, often they are not compulsory hence the findings support the research by Fitzgerald et al., (2016) who suggest that great learning and engagement opportunities can reside in non-academic settings and students and HE institutes should focus on such opportunities.

As Kahu (2013) suggests when evaluating SE, a holistic approach is needed that measures all aspects of engagement. Hence, if this study only evaluated students from an academic perspective, the results may seem rather favourable in that it could be reported that students were engaging in a number of ways to improve and develop themselves. However, using the same students and data, it has been shown that when evaluating non-academic engagement, the results suggest less engagement. Hence, taking a holistic approach investigating both concepts is necessary to fully analyse and understand the overall situation.

5.4.2 Role of the Students

All respondents agreed that students had a role to play in engagement, suggesting two types of roles that students could undertake, namely: pro-active engaging and co-creating. Pro-active engaging was acknowledged as students who deem it their responsibility to be aware of such opportunities available to them and to participate in engagement, so that they could get the best return on investment whilst at university. These findings support the work by Balloo et al., (2017) and Tomlinson (2017) who highlight the importance of students wanting to enhance their self-worth and realise their full potential from studying within HE. Co-creating was regarded as students who viewed engagement as a two-way process between the student and institution and who saw students as being part of the added value that can be gained through co-creation. Supporting the work by other researchers (Healey et al., 2016; Wawrzinek et al., 2017) who suggest that many universities are now concentrating on co-creation, as they understand the value that can be gained from working in partnership with students and the added value that this can result in. Judson & Taylor (2014) suggest that universities who work with students as co-creators maximise the potential of not only students, but society as a whole.

5.4.3 Benefits of Student Engagement

Students reported three main benefits from participating in engagement opportunities namely: social significance; proud of affiliation; and global citizenship. Within social significance, students suggested that the dimensions associated with wellbeing and being

able to develop socially were important, which support the findings of Kahu & Nelson (2017) who acknowledge the beneficial aspects of SE associated with feelings of belongingness and wellbeing. Reschly & Christenson (2012) findings also concur with the results that SE can help with benefits of employment and work opportunities. Another dimension included skill development, which was reported as a major benefit by students, endorsing the research by Neves (2016). Proud of affiliation with the university concur with many researcher's views (Strayhorn, 2014; HEA, 2015; Masika & Jones, 2016; Bowden et al., 2019) that students who feel part of their institution and who are proud to be associated with it, are more likely to engage. Another dimension within this factor highlights the importance of the working relationships between students and tutors agreeing with the research by Gourlay (2015) who acknowledges the important role tutors play within SE. The findings also endorse the work by Henning (2012), suggesting that benefits of SE go beyond the individual student and that engaged students can help raise the reputation of a university through highlighting success stories that raise the profile of the institution. Global citizenship was also reported as a major benefit of SE, with students suggesting that being involved in community and helping society was an associated advantage of engagement, supporting the findings of Barnacle & Dall'Alba (2017) who also highlight how helping society and incorporating citizenship into student values is an output associated with SE. Interestingly, whilst students have acknowledged that volunteering and fundraising is a benefit of SE, the findings suggest that they did not participate in such activities that frequently.

5.4.4 Barriers to Student Engagement

The findings highlighted eight main factors that could potentially stop students from participating in engagement opportunities. Fear of social integration and anxiety as a result of new situations concurs with other researcher findings (Freeman & Simonsen, 2015; Hamilton Bailey & Phillips, 2016; Castello et al., 2017) who highlight that students often struggle at university due to inability to socialise or create networks. Aljohani (2016) also agrees that sociological aspects of students not being able to integrate is a major concern for universities, but is often overlooked. The research undertaken by Shah & Cheng (2019) suggesting that other commitments (work and family) can act as a barrier are aligned with the findings and also concur with Tight (2019) who suggests that 'modern day' students have

other focuses beyond university, in particular work commitments. The results highlight the importance that students placed on the relationships they have with university staff, in particular teaching staff. Poor student-tutor relationships were seen as a major barrier to engagement, agreeing with many researchers who highlight the important role staff play in engagement activities with their students (Jang et al., 2016; Glock & Karbach, 2015; Thys & Van Houtte, 2016; Gray & Di Loreto, 2016; Boles & Whelan, 2017; Payne, 2019). Learning difficulties was another concern reported by the students and aligned with the findings by Wawrzynski et al., (2012) who suggest that academic ability can potentially impact negatively on SE. The impact of financial constraints also featured as a barrier to engagement with students suggesting that they could not join additional activities due to lack of finance, which supports the work of Khattab (2015) who identifies that financial ability can have a negative impact upon engagement participation. Lack of social fit and lack of support were also reported as barriers to engagement. Egalite et al., (2015) concur with the issues regarding cultural challenges and students not feelings as though they fit into a university setting. Similarly, lack of support aligns with the views of Griffin & Gilbert (2016) who stress the importance of encouragement from significant others is essential for students to succeed within HE. The final barrier reported by the students related to mass teaching and large classroom settings, suggesting that such environments can result in less engagement. Endorsing the work of other researchers (Exeter et al., 2010; Zepke, 2014; Leach, 2016) who suggest that increased class sizes can prohibit student interaction and engagement.

The advantages and barriers highlighted identify with the work by Khattab (2015) who suggested that students can be classified into typologies depending upon a number of factors including: student aspirations and motivations; academic ability; financial capacity; and socio-economic barriers. Similarly, Collie et al., (2017) also suggests that student typologies depend upon student's motivations, personalities and academic ability. The results concur with the previous research in identifying that personal characteristics and associated factors can impact upon engagement activity, both positively and negatively. Hence, HE institutions need to know such factors that can potentially impact upon their student population.

5.4.5 Student Typologies

The importance of universities understanding the characteristics of their student population has been highlighted throughout the research (Kahu & Nelson, 2017) and the findings reveal 4 types of student typologies based upon their views regarding engagement, namely: the cognitive team players; badge wearers; inquisitive learners; and societal climbers. Understanding the differences between the student population is vital as Khattab (2015) suggests, so that HE institutes can determine what their student's aspirations and expectations are, to fully raise their potential. This belief is also acknowledged by other researchers (Dryer et al., 2016; O'Shea, 2016; Collie et al., 2017) who stress the need to understand the different perspectives that students may have with regards engagement. The typologies highlight that students are motivated in completely different ways and perceived advantages and barriers of engagement have varying implications. Whilst student typologies have been acknowledged and used in different circumstances within HE, these findings offer original and new insight by identifying how the various factors (benefits, role, activity and barriers) impact upon students. Hence, universities need to be mindful when adopting centralised policies or providing generic engagement opportunities, thinking that a service is being provided that caters for all students. The typologies acknowledge that students have very different views on what they deem important. For example, a cognitive team player is motivated to participate in academic engagement activities and a barrier they are concerned about relates to the relationship they may have with their tutors. Whilst a badge wearer is motivated to participate in non-academic activities (cognitive engagement being least valuable to them) and is least concerned about the relationship they have with their tutors. Cognitive team players do not feel as though they have an important role to play in engagement and they do not regard being proud of the affiliation they have with their university as very valuable. Whereas badge wearers value co-creating as very high and being proud of the affiliation they have with their university is a benefit that they value highly. Hence, two very distinct set of students that that have very different opinions and behaviours regarding engagement, yet do universities recognise such differences and address them? It is clear that universities need to determine the typologies within their student population to have a greater awareness and insight into their behaviour with regards SE, so that they can then make informed decisions regarding resources and engagement priorities.

5.5 Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate student engagement activity with regards academic and non-academic opportunities; student's views on their role within engagement; advantages associated with SE; and barriers that prevent students from participating in engagement opportunities.

The empirical findings clearly suggest that engagement is important to many students and various forms of engagement can occur namely: non-academic; cognitive; engagement in academic communication and engagement within student teams. Whilst many of the academic engagement opportunities featured, rated high with regards student participation levels, it was worrying that the non-academic activities were featured less favourable regarding participation levels. Many universities spend a lot of resources on such extra-curricular activities and use them for marketing purposes in attempting to recruit potential students. The findings would suggest that universities need to fully evaluate usage of such opportunities to see if they are using their resources most effectively and achieving the associated aims of such activity.

The role of staff within engagement was also another dimension that featured highly with regards levels of engagement participation. Such a result aligns with findings from both studies 1 and 2, in suggesting that staff can have a major effect upon how students view or participate in engagement. It would therefore seem imperative that such a message is conveyed to all staff (academic and professional) regarding the importance of their role in engagement and the emphasis that staff should place on it.

Similar to study 2, the concept that students have a role to play in SE was also reported in the findings. Students viewed roles as 'pro-active engaging' and 'co-creating', suggesting that students have responsibility regarding the relationship they have with their university and engagement opportunities. Hence, universities need to ensure that students are aware of their role and also highlight the benefits that can be gained from taking responsibility. Previous literature and also empirical results from the research suggest that some students find transitioning to university difficult because they are not fully aware of what is expected of them. Therefore, in helping students to overcome the 'expectation gap', HE institutes need to ensure that students are aware of the engagement role and the importance it has within

studying at university. Aligned to this, is the willingness for students to be co-creators of learning and teaching within HE. The importance that is placed on this concept within universities and how it is interpreted by staff is questionable. As has been discussed in the review section, the tensions regarding HE students as customers' highlights how some staff view the idea that students should not be involved in co-creating learning and teaching. If universities wish to fully embrace the view that students are co-creators, then this should be encouraged within all aspects of the life cycle of students whilst at university, particularly, with regards academic staff who may not see this being the role of students.

The benefits associated with engagement related to: social significance; proud of affiliation and global citizenship. Interesting, that students placed highly the ability to make new friends and create a larger network as one of the major factors, whilst also wanting to develop oneself. Such results align with the research that suggests that students want personal growth and a return on investment by attending university. They also want to be associated with quality institutions that they feel proud to be a part of and a sense of belonging. Additionally, students report that student engagement can help produce global citizens that help communities and society. Universities need to recognise the value of the reported benefits, as has been highlighted in the review section when institutes focus on measuring SE, often many universities may focus on factors such as degree outcomes. However, the results suggest that students view other aspects of engagement as equally important (social integration, proud of affiliation and global citizenship), yet often these aspects are not measured or taken into account.

Many barriers to students engaging at university were highlighted namely: fear of social integration; other commitments; poor student-tutor relationship; learning difficulties; financial constraints; lack of social fit; lack of support; and mass teaching. Some of the barriers overlap with the previous empirical results and again the issues around anxiety, struggling to integrate and adapt to new situations was prominent, raising the importance of help with transitioning to university once more. Regarding some barriers (financial constraints, lack of social fit and lack of support), whilst many universities have intervention strategies in place to help with these issues, they do rely on students to declare such obstacles. Some students may feel that they do not wish to state that they have no support at home or they have financial concerns and therefore staff may struggle to help them. Hence, HE institutes need

to be mindful that not all barriers can be overcome by resourcing interventions and a balance is needed, of producing the correct strategies that are workable and result in the desired outcomes, to be able to maintain a successful and commercially viable university.

Similarly, as has been highlighted with the student typology findings, fundamental to successful engagement policies is an understanding of the diverse student population and having knowledge of their behaviour and aspirations with regards engagement opportunities and how they view them. Not knowing such information, may result in universities wasting limited resources on engagement opportunities, which is not viewed as beneficial to certain student segments.

The findings so far, have raised interesting insights from both staff and students within HE regarding engagement. The subsequent discussions from the empirical findings have raised important factors that challenge the way universities address and deliver engagement opportunities. The following chapter will attempt to answer some of those challenges by suggesting recommendations that can be adopted within HE, in an attempt to help deliver successful engagement strategies to students studying at university.

Chapter 6: Summary and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This purpose of this concluding chapter is to provide an overall summary of the key findings from the three empirical studies. As each study has been discussed in the respective chapters (3, 4 and 5), the focus of this section will summarise the main results relating to the broad research aims namely: what role do staff and students play in SE; what are the advantages and what are the barriers of SE. As outlined in chapter 1, one of the main purposes of a professional doctorate is to help inform practice, that may result in organisational and/or policy change hence, recommendations related to SE for HE institutions will be presented based upon the evidence and knowledge gained from the research undertaken. The chapter will acknowledge the limitations of the research and provide suggestions for future research. Finally, a reflective discourse will be presented that explains the results of the professional doctorate journey undertaken by the researcher and contributions learnt to aid professional practice.

6.2 Summary

Through the review of literature and the three empirical studies undertaken, this thesis had three research aims, stated above. Study 1 investigated from a staff perspective, what their role was with regards SE, what they deemed to be the advantages of SE and were there any barriers stopping them from offering engagement opportunities to students. The findings clearly indicated that all staff were involved in some aspect of engagement and that there were many associated benefits to students, universities and society. The main obstacles that prohibited staff from being able to offer engagement initiatives related to issues concerned with the internal operations within their institute namely: resourcing, operational, processes and systems.

Study 2 explored engagement from a student perspective to investigate what they perceived to be the advantages of engagement, what were the barriers to students participating in engagement opportunities and whether they had a role to play in SE. Student views aligned with staff in that they thought the benefits of SE included a positive return on investment for

the individual student, added value to their university and societal gains. Results endorsed the view that students have a role to play in SE and can help co-create value within HE. Many barriers to students engaging at university were highlighted namely: transitioning to university; other commitments; financial barriers; mental health issues; lack of confidence and motivation; learning difficulties; lack of support; cultural difference; size of class; difficult to join in; and staff buy-in.

Study 3 expanded on the aims of investigating student's opinions of SE and surveyed a larger population of students studying throughout universities in the UK. Similar results aligned with previous empirical findings suggesting that students agreed that they had a role to play in engagement and that students could be seen to be pro-active in engaging and co-creating. Three main benefits were categorised by the students including: social significance; proud of affiliation; and global citizenship. The barriers to engagement were classified as: fear of social integration; other commitments; poor student-tutor relationship; learning difficulties; financial constraints; lack of social fit; lack of support; and mass teaching. Four types of student groupings were reported related to student views and behaviour with regards engagement namely: cognitive team players; badge wearers; inquisitive learners; and societal climbers.

The three studies highlighted some interesting findings which endorses previous research that outlines the complexity and intricacy of student engagement and how it manifests within HE (Kahu & Nelson, 2017). In particular, the diversity of engagement opportunities (Bowden et al., 2019) and how many stakeholders are involved in such delivery was apparent. The tensions that exist between the different sets of staff (academic and professional) was highlighted, supporting the research by Curran & Prottas, 2017 and Baltaru, 2018, as well as resource constraints that can potentially impact upon successful delivery of engagement initiatives (Quin, 2017). Students clearly indicated the importance of engagement and how staff play an important role (Egalite at al., 2015), hence the pressures that staff face need to be monitored and if needed, acted upon to ensure that such barriers do not negatively impact upon SE delivery.

The concept of the student v customer argument was also noticeable in the findings with all professional staff reporting that students were customers and all academic staff suggesting the opposite. The literature (Bunce et al., 2017; Guilbault, 2018) highlights how such debate

has received much attention in recent years however, whatever the view of a student is, the importance of engagement remains and the role that staff play in engagement has been shown through the results to be of extreme importance to students. Most worryingly the findings did highlight however, that some staff may not consider that they do not have a role to play in engagement, when it is clear that all staff that work within HE have responsibility in SE.

The findings demonstrated the many advantages that are associated with SE and also the main motivations of why students engaged. The notion of co-creation received mixed views from staff, but many students suggested that they do have an important role to play in adding value within HE, endorsing the research by Dollinger et al., 2018. How students are involved in this aspect within a university setting is questionable, yet the findings seem to suggest that many students are willing to play an active role and using students in all aspects of HE would appear to be beneficial as suggested by the work undertaken by the HEA, 2015.

Student motivation for engagement was very apparent in the fact that students participated in various engagement opportunities for different reasons. The literature (Balloo, 2017; Tomlinson, 2018) clearly highlights that students wish to receive a return on investment for attending university, but how such a return is measured needs to be actioned by senior leaders within HE institutes. As discussed many universities measure success for example through degree outcomes, student numbers or employability statistics however, the findings indicate that success and return on investment to some students may be measured through the network they create, making new friends or helping society.

Similarly, the barriers to engagement are varied and impact upon the student population differently. Whilst it is clear from the results and literature (Payne, 2019) that many universities have intervention strategies in place to deal with such issues for example, academic and health and wellbeing support, some barriers that students have reported may be overlooked or not even considered. As already stated social networking and integration is vitally important to some students, but social anxieties are also viewed by many students as a major barrier to engagement. Understanding such issues and the impact they have on students in different ways again demonstrates the complex and multifaceted issues that universities face and have to action.

Understanding the student population within the university setting has been shown to be essential to help address the issues highlighted and also attempt to deliver successful engagement strategies. The results and literature (Khattab, 2015; Collie et al., 2017) clearly demonstrate the varied and diverse nature of students studying within HE today and being aware of the views and behaviours they have with regards engagement is essential, as the student typologies (cognitive team players, badge wearers, inquisitive learners, societal climbers) identified within the research has demonstrated.

Through investigating SE from a holistic approach and questioning various stakeholders about SE, as well as exploring engagement from both academic and non-academic perspectives, the results offer an original insight into the issues associated with student engagement. In answering the research aims of the doctorate and as a subsequent result of the findings, the following section provides recommendations for addressing student engagement within higher education.

6.3 Recommendations

6.3.1 Senior Leadership Involvement

The findings clearly evidenced that SE is considered a major factor within the HE sector today with a growing emphasis being placed upon it within the strategic direction of many universities. The advantages of SE initiative have demonstrated that many benefits can be associated with successful SE initiatives however, 'buy in' from all staff is essential to accomplish such aims. SE priorities need to be led from positions of senior authority within universities to communicate the importance that is placed upon the associated SE strategic aims. Leading from the top of the organisation, with a senior member of the university executive having an assigned remit of SE will help to convey the important message that every member of staff, both academic and professional have a role to play in engagement, regardless of the position they hold within the university.

6.3.2 Student Engagement Working Group

As well as having a senior named person responsible for SE within the institution, implementing a working group that has overall responsibility for strategically leading and coordinating all SE initiatives within the university is essential. The findings clearly illustrated how all staff were involved in aspects of SE initiatives within the university hence, the need to have a working group that has an overall view of such activity will help with the strategic planning and implementation. Some universities within the UK may already have engagement working groups based upon certain initiatives for example, learning and teaching however, a holistic approach that encompasses all elements of engagement is lacking within the UK HE sector. Members of the group should consist of preferably the following: senior member of the university executive (chair); academic staff (ideally assigned people within each faculty who have a SE role/remit within their workload); professional staff from each professional support department within the university; and student representation. The working group should be responsible for producing SE strategic plans (annually, as well as 5 year plans) with resource implications that are presented to university executive for approval. The plans should be reviewed in a timely manner to analyse if the aims are being met or if changes need to be made.

6.3.3 Student Engagement Strategic Planning & Mapping of the Student Journey

As outlined the need for strategic plans related to SE are essential to fully understand the complex dimensions associated with SE and the range of initiatives involved. The findings have clearly demonstrated the wide range of engagement initiatives that are offered to students within HE from both an academic and non-academic perspective. It has also been highlighted that the SE activities take place throughout the 'HE student journey', with many activities taking place before enrolling at university, during university and after graduation. However, it was apparent that the mapping of such activities and what their intended aims are, is often lacking hence, having an understanding of the student life-cycle and when SE initiatives take place throughout that time period is essential to ensure that initiatives occur at the right time, duplication is avoided and the associated strategic aims are achievable. This

exercise should be the responsibility of the SE working group and should be undertaken and reviewed annually.

6.3.4 Typology of Students

Linked to the student journey mapping, is the need to fully understand the student population within the HE institution. As the findings have highlighted students engage within HE in different ways for a variety of reasons and the barriers to SE are applicable to certain segments of the student population. Understanding the implications of the barriers and recognising if they impact upon university students is essential to having the right intervention strategies in place to deal with the issues. Therefore, having knowledge of the types of students that are within the institution and mapping their student life cycle is also advisable, to understand if and when interventions are needed. Universities hold an enormous amount of data on their students, but how this information is used and for what purpose is questionable. Using it to understand the student body and analysing the type of students a university has with regards SE is paramount, this will help with overcoming some of the potential issues of non-engagement associated with certain student typologies, as well as providing insight into whether additional resources are needed to help overcome the problems.

6.3.5 Centralised v Autonomy Approach

The findings suggested that certain tensions exist surrounding some SE initiatives. Comments regarding 'joined up approach', 'top down' and 'they don't know what we do' emphasise some of the frustrations that are felt between members of staff within HE. Whilst it is recognised that for resource and cost saving purposes, some initiatives require a centralised approach, the concept that 'one size fits all' was deemed a potential issue that causes concern for some staff. The suggested recommendations already outlined will help alleviate some of these concerns however, allowing a level of autonomy would also be deemed beneficial. The recognition that the student body is diverse has been well documented and that not all students behave the same with regards SE. Hence, if staff wish to potentially engage with

their student cohort in different ways, this should be accommodated where manageable and resources allow. If staff can demonstrate that they will achieve better engagement with their students and justify the reason with resource implications, then allowing a level of autonomy will help empower staff to become fully involved with the importance of engagement.

6.3.6 Student Engagement Awareness Campaigns

Whilst it is clear that many universities already spend a lot of resources on awareness campaigns about various issues that may impact students to raise awareness and offer help and advice. The findings from the studies revealed the advantages and barriers to engagement, yet many staff were unaware of such issues and may often be detached from engagement activity. Aligned with some of the recommendations already made to highlight the importance of SE, running SE awareness campaigns, workshops or training sessions will help raise the profile and also highlight the key issues. Many forms of communications are used within universities to outline other strategic aims, yet SE seems to be missing or hidden behind other messages.

Raising the awareness of SE opportunities for students is also necessary to ensure that all students are fully mindful of the activities available to them and the associated benefits that can be gained. It will also help inform staff and students of the benefits and associated barriers, and how to overcome such obstacles or where to seek guidance. The inclusion of SE within communication channels at universities will help portray the message, raise awareness and reiterate the strategic importance. What message is portrayed is also an important factor that many universities overlook. The findings clearly indicate that social integration is seen by the students as a key benefit to be gained from engagement activity, but are universities focusing on what is important to students or what universities think are important to students. Hence, knowing what message is important and portraying that message is vital if awareness campaigns are to be successful.

6.3.7 Student Ambassadors of Engagement

Another way to raise the importance of SE and promote the benefits is to appoint student ambassadors within programmes, department, schools or faculties. Many universities through their student union use students as figure heads to promote other types of activity across the institution for example: sport, volunteering, student wellbeing and education. However, as engagement crosses all these activities, it would be useful to have assigned ambassadors that can coordinate and encourage students to participate in the various engagement opportunities. Aligned with SE awareness campaigns and the use of ambassadors, information pertinent to the role of students within HE needs to be promoted and disseminated to all students, starting before they enrol at the institution. This will help with highlighting the benefits of SE, as well as overcome some of the barriers (transitioning, difficulty in joining in and lack of motivation) which will hopefully result in increased levels of engagement. Use of SE ambassadors and the messages they portray would help in acknowledging the importance of engagement within the strategic priorities of the university, as well as endorse the level of significance placed upon it from university executive and other staff within the institute.

6.3.8 Intervention Strategies

Whilst some of the barriers impacting upon students engaging within HE have been acknowledged within the recommendations already outlined (lack of awareness, joined up approach, one size fits all), other obstacles require intervention strategies to help overcome the issues. The concerns regarding students transitioning to university would suggest that some institutions may need to provide more information about what to expect from university life. Many HE institutes already provide such opportunities relating to this issue including open days, virtual tours and taster sessions however, not all potential students access them. Hence, universities need to be mindful of this and whatever medium they use to help with explaining HE expectations, they need to evaluate if they are being used and address the concerns of the students who require them.

Another barrier to engagement relates to the size of classes and how some students feel less engaged within a large classroom setting. Whilst it has been recognised that universities rely

on large student numbers to be commercially viable, they need to be mindful that some students and staff find large classroom settings and mass teaching not beneficial to successful learning. Whilst having smaller classes may be more resource intensive, a cost-benefit analysis would be useful to evaluate if the benefits outweigh the associated costs and if possible the use of smaller class sizes should be utilised.

Many intervention strategies already exist within universities regarding student support and wellbeing. Issues such as metal health, language barriers, learning difficulties and cultural differences are often addressed by central support departments and professional staff. However, often such interventions are not known by both academic staff and students hence, the uptake of such strategies is marginal. Raising the awareness of the additional help students can receive is essential so that they can obtain additional advice and guidance to overcome the issues.

Similarly, some universities offer monetary support to students who are struggling financially whilst attending university. The use of this aid is reliant on certain criteria depending upon the university, allowing students to access such funds for engagement purposes would help overcome some of the concerns expressed by students. In particular, students who wished to engage in non-academic activities such as joining clubs and societies or undertaking a placement abroad.

Another barrier that students highlighted related to the difficulty in joining engagement opportunities if you arrive late or miss enrolment/induction sessions. Whilst universities often have a scaled down academic induction for students who enrol late, they do not always include other aspects, particularly non-academic activities that are available to students. Hence, it is recommended that late induction sessions include all engagement opportunities so students are informed and have the ability to join at a later date if necessary.

Likewise, another potential barrier that students raised related to other commitments (children, work, and family) that stopped them from being able to engage with certain opportunities. Many universities have strategies in place to help overcome these for example, distance learning, on-site nurseries and part-time provision. However, it would be advised that staff evaluate who their students are with regards the programme of study. Analysing in such detail will allow universities the insight into recognising if their programme

is being delivered in the format that attracts students (with other commitments) who can access additional engagement opportunities if they so wish.

Whilst intervention strategies are easy to suggest on paper or in policy documents, it is important to recognise that as already stated, there is a reliance on students to declare such issues if additional help is needed. Not all students will want to proclaim that they have concerns regarding finance or lack of support from family hence, universities need to be mindful of this and recognise that some barriers may be 'hidden' and difficult to assess if students do not wish to declare them.

6.3.9 Students as Co-Creators

The role that students play with regards SE has been documented throughout and the importance placed on using students to help add value through co-creation has been seen as valuable by many stakeholders within the findings. How universities do this is open to debate and the level of usage is questionable. If HE institutions really want to use students in all aspects of learning and teaching as co-creators, then policies should be adopted that recognise this importance. For example, how students are used as co-creators within a module can be demonstrated through the module descriptor that explains how students have been used, to what extent have they contributed to co-creation value and how will that be evaluated to ensure effectiveness within the module. Similar exercises can be undertaken for various aspects of teaching and learning for example programme design or teaching assessments. Such policies could ensure that all aspects of learning and teaching are compulsory with regards co-creation and the use of students, as oppose to a fragmented approach, with is often dependent on the individual views of the staff member.

6.3.10 Resourcing

As outlined in the opening chapter, the commercial viability of any UK university is critical in the increasing competitive marketplace they now operate in. It is clear from the findings and previous research, the benefits of successful SE initiatives are far reaching and involve many stakeholders. Given the diverse nature of SE and the wide range of activities, it is essential to

understand the resourcing implications associated with such activity. Whilst individual departments will resource and budget activities within their remit, not knowing the full extent of all the SE activity within a university may lead to resourcing inaccuracies. Such issues may result in duplication of effort, using resources for the same outcomes or wasting resources on activities that do not fulfil the aims. Hence, as part of the SE working group it is recommended that a full costing exercise of all resources needed for SE activity is undertaken as part of an annual planning exercise that is scrutinised and signed off by university executive. Within the plan, it is also essential to include workload allocation of SE activities that is applicable to all staff across the university, so that they receive a fair and equitable allocation for undertaking the same activity. Such resourcing plans should be reviewed annually and amended if needed, which will help provide a strategic overview of resourcing needs associated with all SE activity.

6.4 Limitations of the Research and Suggestions for Future Research

One of the main limitations to the research studies relates to sample size regarding the qualitative studies and the issue of generalizability (Smith, 2018). The qualitative studies, both interviews and focus groups were undertaken with relatively small samples and limited to one post-92 university in the UK. The reasons for doing so have been acknowledged in the respective methodology sections for each study however, it would be useful to expand on those studies and seek views and data from other universities, both in the UK and also further afield including post-92 and pre-92 universities.

With regards to the sample for study 2 relating to the focus group study of student's opinions of SE, the majority of the students that undertook the study were studying subjects in the Faculty of Health & Life Sciences. A larger sample including students studying a broader range of programmes from across all disciplines would help provide a more diverse student population and offer greater insight into student's views and opinions of SE.

Similarly, the majority of student respondents for both study 2 (qualitative) and 3 (quantitative) were younger students aged under 25 years. As highlighted in chapter 1, the nature of the student body is changing with more mature students now studying within HE. Hence, it is recommended that further studies questioning student's opinions of SE should

focus on older students studying at university so a more representative sample of the student population is taken into account.

The questionnaire used in study 3 asked students how many hours a week they participated in certain activities. It failed to offer students the opportunity to state zero hours, which was an error on the questionnaire design and should be added for any future surveys. This oversight had a minimal impact upon the main findings and subsequent conclusions of the study, as other items from the questionnaire were used to undertake deeper statistical analysis.

Whilst study 3, using a quantitative approach questioned a greater number of students studying in universities across the UK, given the growth in internationalisation within HE outlined in chapter 1 and 2, expanding the study to include universities internationally would be useful to gain an insight into whether views on SE differ globally. Also, finding views and opinions of SE from staff (both academic and professional) across the globe would offer insights from a different perspective.

6.5 Reflective Account

This section is a personal account of the journey undertaking in fulfilling the aims of the professional doctorate, as such it is written in the first person in line with the reflective nature of the discourse. As a teacher in sport management, one of the main motivations for undertaking doctoral studies was to investigate why some students really embraced engagement initiatives, yet others hardly got involved in any opportunities. I believe a key skill to the art of teaching is getting everyone involved and enthused and I wanted to learn and develop my ability in this area, hence, understanding the motivations and barriers to engagement became the focus for my study. Through undertaking this research and talking to colleagues and students, I have gained a greater insight into: the importance of engagement within HE; the benefits that can be gained from successful engagement initiatives; why staff sometimes struggle to offer engagement opportunities; and what barriers may stop students from participating in those opportunities. Such insight has enhanced my understanding considerably and will enable me in the future to offer advice and guidance to colleagues regarding SE initiatives to ensure that all students will be able to

participate in engagement opportunities, resulting in effective engagement policies that are beneficial for all stakeholders. In particular, understanding the issues faced by students and the importance they place on social integration or anxieties associated with socialisation was extremely insightful, which will hopefully aid my understanding to address such issues in the future. Similarly, having a greater understanding of the tensions that some staff feel between academic and professional employees and why such perceptions exist will help provide awareness to deal and manage such concerns.

Another major reason for starting the professional doctorate programme was to develop my skills in research as my confidence in this particular domain was lacking. Whilst the doctoral journey has indeed been extremely challenging, the research skills learnt have greatly improved my ability to work in this area. Undertaking research from both a qualitative and quantitative approach has broadened my understanding and 'refreshed' my working knowledge of research design and enhanced my ability to analyse and report research data.

I have presented two research papers from my doctoral research at international conferences, which was a great learning experience for myself and receiving feedback from leading researchers in the field helped improve my confidence, as well as assured my ability. I have also been invited to write a book chapter entitled 'Education in Sport & Physical Activity in Europe', again this is from the work presented at one of the conferences and an attendee approaching me after they had heard my presentation. I am also currently in the process of writing two research papers for peer reviewed journals from the findings of my thesis, which will hopefully result in successful publications and enhance my credibility in research.

The emphasis of the study aims has also allowed me to concentrate my efforts in work I undertake externally within two sport boards I represent. In recognition of the research work I have been undertaking, I have been asked to chair and run educational symposiums for the European Association of Sport Management, investigating issues related to the learning and teaching of the discipline. Working with leading sport scholars from around the world has enhanced my knowledge of global issues that are pertinent to the study aims and beyond. From this work, I have also been asked to act as a consultant for sport management curriculum within Europe and Africa, as it has been identified that my approach to teaching is very much about students and ensuring they are actively involved in learning. Such invitations and acknowledgements have given me tremendous confidence in my own ability to be seen

as an active researcher in this area, which is fundamentally an outcome of starting the doctorate.

I have also been asked to chair a working group on the World Association for Sport Management investigating how we can potentially initiate learning and teaching programmes within sport management across the globe (particularly in developing countries) linked to the Sport for Peace & Development Programme ran by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation). This is a tremendous accolade to be asked to coordinate this project and one of which I am tremendously proud of, highlighting that I am becoming known as an expert in the field of learning and teaching within sport management. Important to note that whilst I teach within the field of sport management discipline, my role within the university for a number of years has involved working comprehensively with numerous departments and disciplines. This reason, as well as the fact that engagement is universal to all students, was the main reason as to why I did not limit my study to only sport students, as I wanted to understand staff and student's views from a wide range of subjects.

Undoubtedly, the skills I have developed throughout the course of this professional doctorate have enabled me to become a better teacher. The research skills learnt, can be shared with my students and the wider implications of student engagement can be publicly disseminated with my immediate colleagues and further afield (as has already occurred).

In summary, I have learnt many new ideas and skills through the undertaking of the professional doctorate. My initial aim was to gain a greater understanding of SE and in particular to learn how I could improve as a teacher to ensure that students could participate fully in engagement opportunities. I believe I have achieved this but I have also accomplished much more personally and also enhanced many skills which will help me in my career in the future. With a growing reputation as an expert in the field of sport management, particularly in the area of learning and teaching, has enabled me to become a more engaged member of the profession who now has the confidence and ability to share insight, not only to my students but to the wider academic and professional community.

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Appendix 1. Interview Schedule – Study 1

Introduction:
- Purpose of study and aims of the interview
- Confidentiality explained

Role/Post:
1. What is your job title?
2. How long have you worked in this role?
3. What does your job involve at the University?

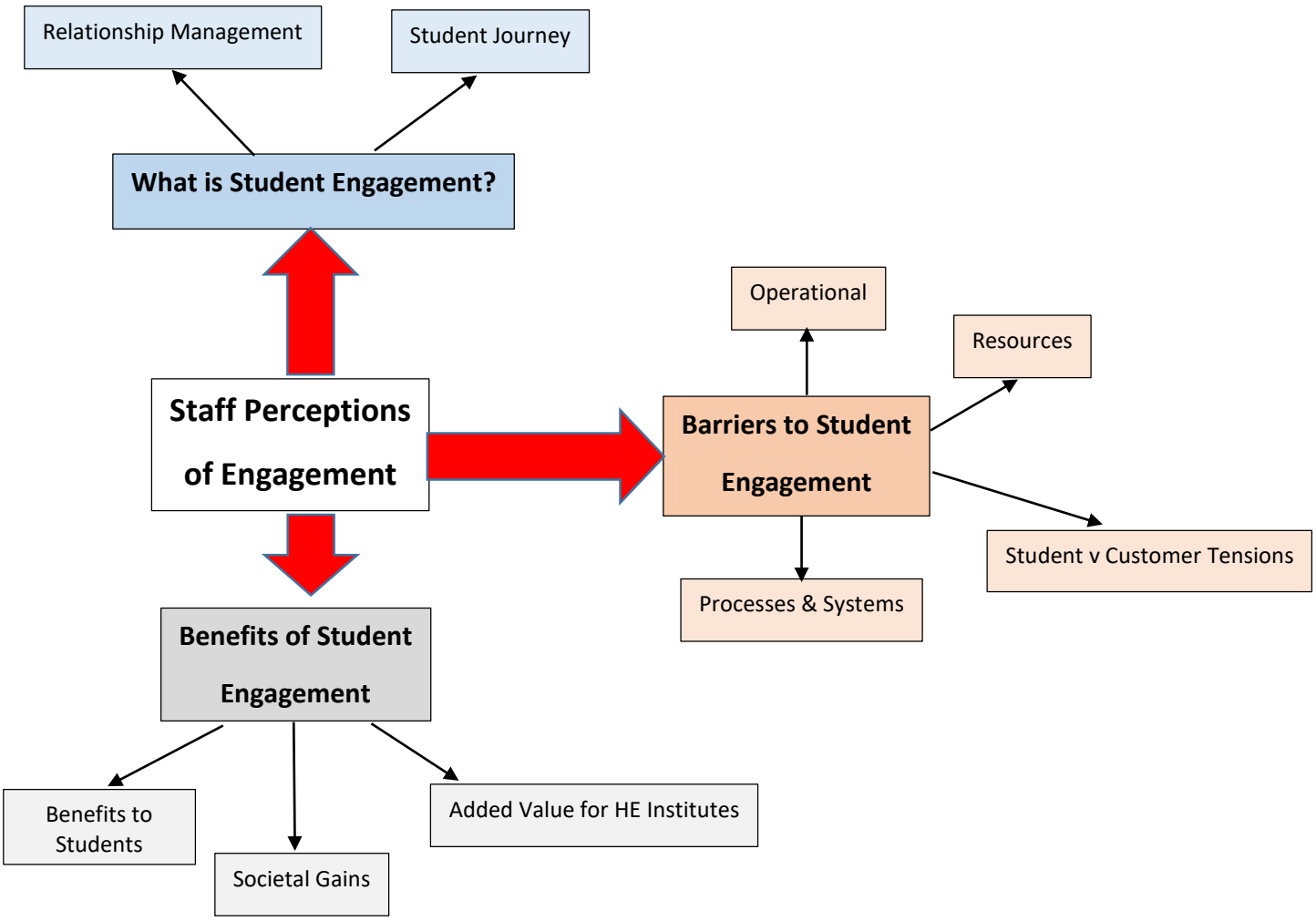
Engagement Activities/Initiatives:
4. How do you engage students at Northumbria University?
5. Do you use any initiatives/activities to try and ensure students are engaged?
6. Can you provide examples of how a student may engage with Northumbria University?
7. When does student engagement take place? (before, during, after?)

Engaged/Disengaged Students:
8. What does an "engaged" student look like, how do they behave? (do you notice any differences between the different types of students and their levels of engagement)?
9. What does a dis-engaged student look like, how do they behave?
10. Can you tell me about any instances/examples of the above?

Advantages of Student Engagement:
11. What do you see as the benefits of an engaged student?
12. Can student engagement impact upon student learning?
13. Can student engagement impact upon skill development?

Staff Role within Student Engagement:
14. What are the University expectations of your role with regards to student engagement?
15. Can you deliver those expectations? (Yes/No – why? If yes, how? If not, why?)
16. Are there any barriers to student engagement from your perception?
17. How do you evaluate student engagement within your role?
18. Would you like to add anything else?

Appendix 2. Thematic Map - Staff Perceptions of Engagement at University (Academic & Non-Academic)



Appendix 3. Focus Group Schedule – Study 2

Introduction:

- Purpose of study and aims of the focus group
- Confidentiality explained
- Introductions

Icebreakers:

1. What programmes are you studying?
2. How long have you been studying at university?
3. Why did you choose your programme of study and this university?
4. Do you work outside of university?

Engagement Activities/Initiatives:

5. What do you understand by the term "student engagement"?
6. Are you aware of any engagement activities that take place at this university?
7. Have you participated in student engagement initiatives?
8. If so how, when, why, how often?

Engaged/Disengaged Students:

9. What does an 'engaged' student look like, how do they behave (Billy)?
10. Explain what a typical week may look like for Billy?
11. What does a 'disengaged' student look like (Jane)?
12. Explain what a typical week may look like for Jane>
13. Do you notice any differences between the different types of students, their levels of engagement, their behaviour?
14. Can you tell me about any instances/examples of the above, from your own experiences?

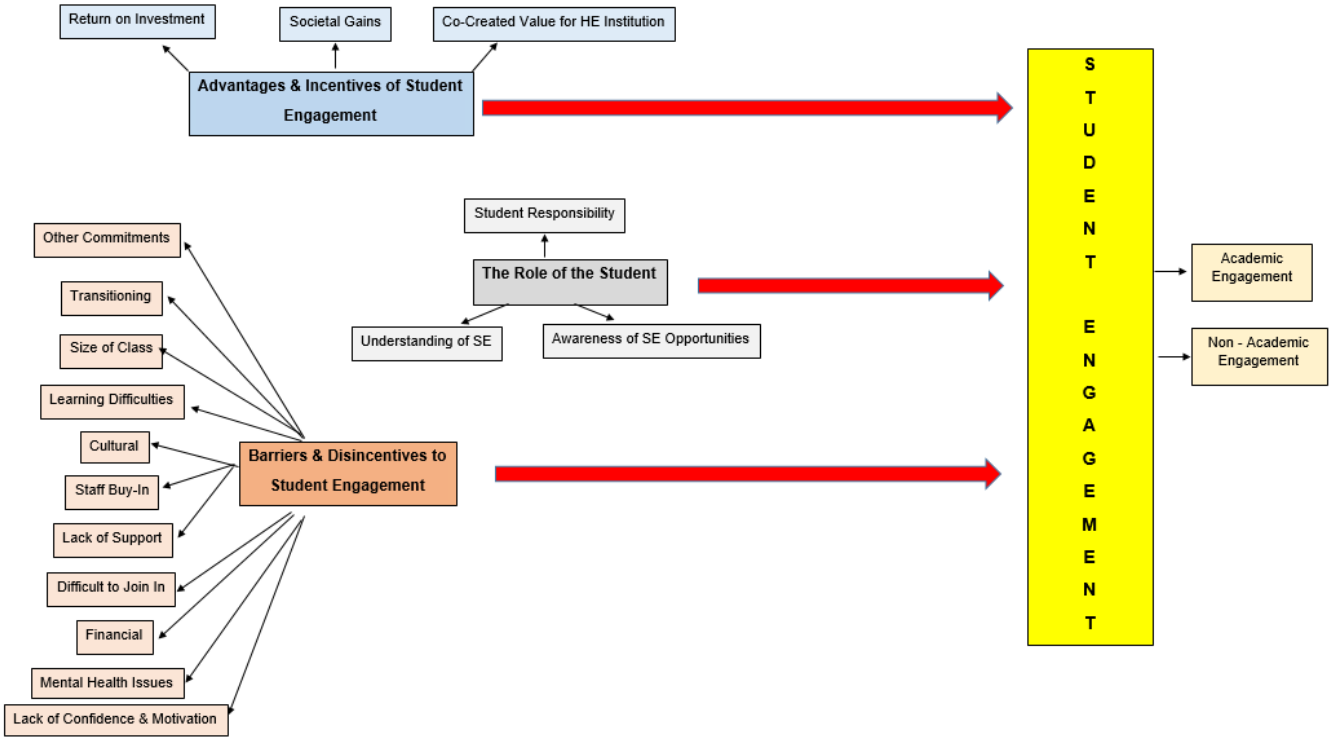
Advantages/Barriers of Student Engagement:

15. What do you see as the benefits of an engaged student?
16. What are the potential barriers to students participating in engagement initiatives?

Student Role within Student Engagement:

17. What are the university expectations of your role with regards to student engagement?
18. Can you deliver those expectations? Yes/No – why? If yes, how? If not, why?
19. Would you like to add anything else?

Appendix 4. Thematic Map – Student Perceptions of Engagement



Appendix 5. Engagement Examples and Perceived Benefits	
Focus Group 1	
Examples: - Student rep - Part-time job at gym - Spontaneous - Prints lecture slides - Several friendship groups - Will go out if asked - Football game - Regime during busy day – sets his alarm early - Football social - Sees his tutor maybe twice during the year - Football training - Turns up to all lectures	Benefits: - Confidence - Health benefits – active - Academic support - Communication - University Interaction with students - Exposed to more opportunities - Good time management - Motivation - Mental wellbeing - Football success - Role model (helps out tutors as much as himself) - Academic success - Adding to statistics - Pride - Conflict resolution skills
Focus Group 2	
Examples: - Sports teams - Sports social - Charity 24 hour events - Extra-curricular fund raising activities - Rep - Constant engagement with the S.U. - Organises events for the S.U. - Meets up with course mates - Volunteering LD Externally/Internally - Engagement with the staff - Attends every lecture - Reads through lecture notes/does pre-seminar work (Library) - 9am – Lecture - 10am – Library - 11am – Committee Meeting	Benefits: - Lots of references - Can register volunteering hours and use reference - CV looks good - Probably rarely bored - Strong leadership - Lots of friends - Time management - Initiative - Organisation - Communication - Adaptable/Acceptance - Leadership - Staying active & healthy (sports) - Organised so knows how to apply himself - University aware of student worries/positive/negatives/can initiate change - Large pool of connections

Focus Group 3	
Examples: - Reflection - Theatre group – participating for play - Student representation - Peer support - Feedback - Football/plays for fun/pub after socialising - Stays back in library to catch up on studies - Raises concerns - Volunteering in the community - Breakfast café in University - Goes to lectures prepared and participates	Benefits: - Increased independence - Health - Make friends - Increased skills - Networking - Communication skills - Confidence
Focus Group 4	
Examples: - Wellbeing yoga workshop - Breakfast at the SU - Great North volunteers event - Study support - Thursday karate - Society Social (Wednesday Night) - Guidance tutor meetings - Careers pop-in support - SU society events - Employed at SU (shifts) - Seminar prep and wider reading - Reading - Lectures & seminars - Volunteering - Goes to support session in the library - Revision workshop - Work experience - Uni gym – Trains x 5/week - Additional lectures - Rugby player training x 2 game weekend - Uni varsity team	Benefits: - Benefits community - Improved fitness - Better grades - Improves writing & research skills - Time management - Benefits lectures & organisers - Independence skills developed - Value for money from Uni fees - Degrees benefit because of higher engagement and better grades - More engagement means more sessions for other students and sessions might receive more funding - Wellbeing going to benefit - Better communication skills - Student satisfaction - Life experience CV/app forms - Lecture engagement - Confidence - Social life - Support team mates - How to deal with setbacks or failure - His study friends will benefit - Teamwork - Networking - Leadership - More fun/Make friends - Good work-life balance - Increased employability

Focus Group 5	
Examples: - Attends all Lectures - Societies and Sport Clubs - Library for work and revision - Attends all regular meetings with personal tutor – updates regularly - Volunteers in a volunteering society or as a mentor for younger students - Mixture of social interactions - Works at Student Union part time - Spends time on campus – gym and student union - Make good use of library resources	Benefits: - Benefit to Uni – if used, can offer wide range of services – more attractive to prospective students - Benefit for SU, Uni and other society members - Lots of friends and social groups - Going out in town – events - Balance of academic and social life - Good for his CV! - Well balanced person – not just a workaholic - Learning lots of skills – good employability

Appendix 6. Examples of a Disengaged Student and Potential Reasons	
Focus Group 1	
Examples: - Does not accept feedback/criticism - Poor attendance - Not many friends - Suffocating on external factors - Already judged the lecturers before they've spoken - Bad Grades - Low morale - Negative attitude developed? - Lack of motivation - Lives at home - Disorganised – missing deadlines - Isolated - Sits alone in lectures - No extra-curricular activities	Barriers: - Very shy - Doesn't have friends - She lives at home so is never on campus - Lack of motivation - Has a job so doesn't have time for extra-curricular - Isn't aware of such activities - Has children, so can't participate in many extra activities - At home they don't encourage or ask them how they are doing at uni. No role models in the family
Focus Group 2	
Examples: - Not meeting with tutors/supervisors - Not completing assignments on time or at all - Doesn't use the facilities/learning materials around her - May want to succeed but isn't motivated enough - Studies from home - Not volunteering/no connections - Socially not engaged - Missing lectures - Academically disinterested	Barriers: - Lack of motivation - Introverted - Other commitments – Work, Family - Lives at home - Money - Ill-Informed - Doesn't know - Might feel isolated - Lack of knowledge
Focus Group 3	
Examples: - Doesn't do extra curriculum activities - Depressed/low mood/closed off - Physical appearance - No reflection/switches off - Leaves work until last minute - Start day at home/attend when required - No friends outside of Uni - Aim for pass not excel - Miss lectures	Barriers: - Financial - Personal crisis - Childhood nature and nurture - Fulltime job/children

Focus Group 4	
Examples: - Upset & stressed - Does not know when things are on or what is available - Not attending Uni - Last minute assignments - No job prospects - Nights out - Lack of friends on the course - Poor marks - Not in any society - Doesn't care about Uni results - Doesn't go to any additional sessions - Attendance emails - Not happy with course - Never on Uni campus - Acting out of character - Poor exam results - Done no work experience	Barriers: - Works fulltime - Financial issues - Lack of interest in the course - Lack of support at home - Might not have the skillset to deal with knockbacks - Might feel out of control - Has a child – childcare issues - No work-life balance - Homesick/live away from home - No course friends - Time - Physical injury - Lack of resilience - Mental health - Depression - Caring responsibilities - Feeling a lack of control - Setback of some kind - Damaged confidence
Focus Group 5	
Examples: - Mental Health - Submitting work late or not at all - No societies, doesn't vote in SU elections - Lack of interest - Alone in lectures when she turns up - Lack of attendance - No progress/improvement in work - Not reading out to others - Doesn't discuss feedback with tutors - Might not enjoy going out (student lifestyle)	Barriers: - No plan for future - Finds it hard to talk - Older student - Has kids - Can't go out - Lives at home not on campus - Working to pay for something so no time for socialising - No one to talk to or ask for help - Overwhelmed with daily life - Feel alone – member of cultural/ marginalised group. - Doesn't know how/where to connect - International student

Appendix 7. Skills Gained by Participating in Student Engagement (using typologies by Katz, 1955)

Conceptual Skills:
- Academic
- Organisation
- Administration
- Teaching
- Intellectual
- Leadership
- Responsibility

Technical Skills:
- IT/Computer
- Financial
- Language skills
- Public Speaking
- Time management

Human Skills:
- People
- Communication
- Empathy
- Tolerance
- Conflict Resolution
- Teamwork
- Confidence
- Life Skills
- Independence
- Soft Skills
- Determination
- Motivation
- Adaptability

Appendix 8. Questionnaire – Study 3

Please tick the relevant boxes that apply to you:

Academic Engagement **In your experience at your institution during the current academic year, about how often have you done each of the following:**	**Very Often**	**Often**	**Sometimes**	**Rarely**	**Never**
Asked questions or contributed to course discussions in other ways					
Come to taught sessions unprepared (e.g. not completed assignments, reading, reports etc.)					
Worked with other students on course projects or assignments					
Explained course material to one or more students					
Discussed your academic performance and/or feedback with teaching staff					
Talked about your career plans with teaching staff or advisors					
Discussed ideas from your course with others outside of taught sessions (students, family, co-workers etc.), including by email/online					
Worked harder than you thought you could to meet a tutor's/lecturer's standards or expectation					
During the current academic year, how much had your coursework emphasized the following mental activities:	**Very Often**	**Often**	**Sometimes**	**Rarely**	**Never**
Analysing in depth an idea, experience or line of reasoning					
Forming a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information					
Evaluating a point of view, decision or information source					
Applying facts, theories or methods to practical problems or new situations					
During the current academic year, to what extent has your course challenged you to do your best work					

Non-Academic Engagement **In your experience at your institution during the current academic year, about how often have you done each of the following:**	**Very Often**	**Often**	**Sometimes**	**Rarely**	**Never**
Participated in sport at my university					
Taken part in fundraising activities					
Volunteered in a club or society					
Acted as a student rep or university ambassador					
Involvement with the Student Union					
Taken part in a university campaign					

Have you or do you plan to take part in any of the following opportunities?	**Yes**	**No**
I have or will participate in an external placement organised by the university		
I have or will undertake a fieldtrip as part of my course		
I have or will participate in a study abroad programme whilst at university		

About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing the following?	**1-5 hours**	**6-10 hours**	**11-15 hours**	**16-20 hours**	**21-25 hours**	**25+ hours**
Preparing and studying in class						
Participating in extra-curricular activities						
Working for pay						
Doing community service or volunteer work						
Relaxing and socializing (time with friends, video games, TV or videos, keeping up with friends online etc.)						
Providing care for dependents (children, parents, etc.)						

Perceived Benefits of Student Engagement Activities	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree 0r Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Being busy at university gives a student a sense of wellbeing					
University gives students the opportunity to make new friends					
University can help students develop many new skills					
Students can have a bigger social network because of activities at university					
University initiatives can help secure work opportunities					
Happy students can help improve student satisfaction and university rankings					
It is important that students are proud to talk about my university					
Students should feel part of the community at their institution					
Students should feel valued by their institution					
University reputation is important to students					
Strong working relationships with lecturers is very important whilst at university					
Participating in community events is an important aspect of university life					
Volunteering and fundraising is an important part of being a university student					
Helping society is very important to university students					

Role of Students within Student Engagement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Students have a role to play in engagement activities whilst at university					
Students who are pro-active will get the most rewards from university					
Student engagement in Higher Education is very worthwhile					
Students should make themselves aware of activities that the university provide					
Whilst at university, students are fundamentally in charge of their own destiny					
Student engagement is a two-way venture between the university and student					
Students can act as co-creators of learning and teaching whilst at university					

Potential Barriers to Student Engagement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I find it hard to adapt to new situations					
I get anxious if I don't know all the information I need when trying something new					
I don't make new friends easily					
My first experiences of university were worse than expected					
I have family commitments that take up a lot of my time					
I spend most of my time outside of university on work commitments					
I have commitments to other people that are very important to me					
I struggle with academic work due to other commitments outside of university					
I have to work to support myself whilst at university					
Some engagement activities are too expensive for me to join in (e.g. gym, sport clubs etc.)					
I struggle financially at university					
I often get anxious					
I feel too stressed to take on other activities					
I have personal problems which stop me engaging whilst at university					
I sometimes feel overwhelmed when at university					
I lack confidence at university					
I struggle in new social situations					
I am very self-motivated					
I feel comfortable being myself at this institution					
I struggle academically					
I need extra support to help with my learning and teaching					
My family are very supportive of everything I do					
My friends are not very supportive					
I was encouraged to go to university					
I often struggle with communication whilst at university					
There are cultural challenges associated with me being at university					
I find the class sizes too big at university					
I find large events overwhelming					
I am better when I work in small groups					
I didn't attend any induction activities					
I find joining a new club really difficult					
Many clubs and societies are cliquey					

My personal tutor doesn't know who I am					
My lecturers are very enthusiastic					
It's easy to find lecturers when I need support					

Demographics - please tick appropriate box:

Gender:	Male	
	Female	
	Prefer not to say	
Age:	18-20	
	21-29	
	30-39	
	40-49	
	50-59	
	60 or older	
	Prefer not to say	
Ethnicity:	White	
	Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups	
	Asian/Asian British	
	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	
	Other Ethnic Group	
	Prefer not to say	
Student Status:	Home Student (UK)	
	International Student	
Marriage Status:	Single	
	Married	
	Civil Partnered	
	Divorced	
	Widowed	
	Prefer not to answer	
Family & Dependants:	Children	
	Parents	
	Other	
	If other, please state	

Study Year:	
Full-Time/Part-Time:	
Do you live at home:	